



EU Experts Predict a Festive Season of Balance, Bold Flavours and Continental Classics

"Be ready for the trends, but lean on the classics" - EU 'More Than Only Food & Drink'

advisors share insights ahead of Christmas 2025

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As retailers begin planning for the festive season, industry experts behind the European Union's 'More Than Only Food & Drink' campaign have shared their insights into the food and drink trends expected to shape Christmas 2025. Drawing on expertise in beer, cheese, wine and bakery, their advice is clear: stay ahead of trends, but don't forget the enduring appeal of traditional European favourites.

Beer: Balance is the New Festive Norm

Beer expert and campaign advisor Mark Dredge predicts this could be the first Christmas where drinkers favour a more balanced approach to alcohol. "Many choose to abstain or alternate between standard and low-ABV beers," he explains.

He notes that countries with strong beer traditions were early to embrace no- and low-alcohol options. Germany, for instance, offers excellent alcohol-free lagers and wheat beers, while Spain produces superb alcohol-free lagers. Denmark's alcohol-free IPAs also stand out, but Mark emphasises that quality alcohol-free beers are now available across the EU.

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For those seeking higher-ABV brews, Mark recommends Belgian seasonal beers. He says: "I personally drink a lot of Belgian beer at Christmas because of the way it stands up to our traditional Christmas food. Belgian Christmas beers especially are strong and rich enough for the big Christmas flavours and are a natural fit for traditional festive dishes."

He adds: "Whilst some countries add festive flavours during the brewing process, the Belgians bring out the flavours of distinct yeast profiles such as clove - a characteristic that comes naturally from the yeast itself."

While Belgian beers are suited to all festive occasions, Mark highlights that chocolate pairs particularly well with Belgian sours and fruit beers. He also notes that cheese and beer share a natural affinity, and presenting the best beers to pair with chocolate and cheese is a great way to upsell and support the Christmas beer shopper.

For those planning larger gatherings, Mark says it's important to stock what the majority of drinkers want - with lager often being the crowd pleaser. "When it comes to lager at Christmas, it makes sense to upsell to the high-quality **Bayerisches Bier PGI** from Germany or **České Pivo PGI** from the Czech Republic, where there is heritage and pride in the production. We are also seeing a renewed interest in fruit beers, and again, I'd suggest leaning on the classic fruit beers from Belgium, such as Kriek or Framboise, which are made with real fruit and are a natural expression of the style."

Cheese: A Sales Opportunity in Every Festive Moment

Cheese writer and educator Patrick McGuigan sees cheese as one of the most versatile and valuable categories for Christmas.

Patrick says: "The cheese and charcuterie board is already a popular centrepiece at festive get togethers, and we're seeing a rise in cheese selection packs that make it easier for Christmas shoppers. Ready-made cheeseboards also provide a real opportunity to showcase premium EU cheeses. Retailers can help by using shelf talkers to give flavour profiles and matching ideas, for instance if you like **Gorgonzola PDO** from Italy – a creamy blue cheese with a bold, tangy flavour – you should try **Fourme d'Ambert PDO**, one of France's mildest blue cheeses with a smooth, buttery texture, or **Roquefort PDO**, which is saltier and more intense, made from sheep's milk and aged in natural caves. All pair beautifully with the rich sweetness of **Sauternes PDO** dessert wine from France."

Patrick stresses that Christmas is also a time to showcase cheese alongside the drinks, condiments, and crackers that enhance the experience. He says: "We've all had guests drop by unannounced, and a small selection of cheeses served with a few crackers and condiments makes a quick and easy

accompaniment to drinks. Retailers can help shoppers even more by merchandising these products near the cheese, as well as displaying drinks pairings, such as a **Champagne PDO** from France and **Valli di Porto Pino PGI** from Italy. Both offer freshness and acidity that cut through rich, creamy cheeses – making them natural festive pairings.”

Patrick believes that the trend for baked cheeses will continue and suggests that retailers look beyond Camembert, towards alternatives such as **Mont d'Or PDO**, **Pont-l'Évêque PDO** and **Saint-Marcellin PGI** from France, which come in their own boxes or dishes and are easy to pop in the oven. He also proposes stocking small festive-themed ceramic baking dishes (popular in France), cheeseboards and cheese knives alongside the cheeses for those seeking last minute gifts.

Patrick adds: “For Boxing Day, leftover cheese makes a great filling for Sandos - which have really taken off on social media this year. The versatility and range of EU cheeses can be paired with so many different condiments and charcuterie and present a great opportunity to cross-sell. It would be great to see retailers providing recipe inspiration for using up leftovers and creating the ultimate turkey Sando or grilled cheese sandwich.”

Wine: Less but Better

Wine specialist Neil McAndrew notes that many shoppers are approaching Christmas with a “less but better” mindset. While **Champagne PDO** remains a festive favourite, Crémant continues to rise. Retailers should also watch for a renewed interest in Blanquette de Limoux, Winzersekt from Germany, **Franciacorta PDO** from Italy, and quality **Cava PDO** from Spain.

Neil adds: “The classic regions always perform well during the festive period, as customers focus on certainty and consistency over experimentation. From France, Bordeaux (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc) and Burgundy (Pinot Noir, Chardonnay) remain firm favourites. Spain’s Rioja (Tempranillo, Garnacha) and Italy’s Chianti (Sangiovese) also continue to be popular choices, ideal for both gifting and celebrations.”

For the more adventurous, Neil suggests that retailers look for island wines and wines from Central Europe. He also recommends sweeter-style wines, particularly **Port PDO** from Portugal which continues to be a festive favourite - whether it is Vintage, Late Bottled Vintage or Tawny.

Neil emphasises the importance of offering an attractive range for mindful drinkers, noting that there are good examples of no and low-alcohol still and sparkling wines from classic regions like Provence and Bordeaux - with some of the best examples coming from Germany, which has been at the forefront of the technique. He adds, “Most German wines already have low alcohol to begin with. As there is less alcohol to remove, it results in a more traditional wine taste.”

When it comes to capitalising on the Christmas wine opportunity, Neil concludes: "The most successful retailers see their business through the eyes of their customers and take steps to ease the customer into making a selection they are happy with. Aside from displaying the wines in a coherent structure - i.e., by country or, as is increasingly popular, by style - which helps to promote lesser-known gems, make sure they can easily pick up the bottle and read the review or label information.

Focus on what you want to promote, stock up, and ask your suppliers to train your staff to sell with knowledge and confidence. Offer in-store tastings of recommended wines and highlight a smaller selection of staff favourites or best buys, with detailed notes on the wines and producers."

Bakery: A Return to Continental Classics

Bakery industry expert Simon Atkins predicts a return to traditional European bakes this Christmas. "We're seeing inspiration from German classics like Bienenstich (bee-sting cake) and festive soft pretzels, alongside a renewed focus on the traditional flavours of panettone after last year's wave of unconventional fillings," he says.

He adds: "Sourdough's popularity will be capitalised on by retailers marketing its inclusion in a range of bakes – from stollen to biscotti. Traditional panettone also includes a sourdough starter, so expect this to be much more prominently displayed."

Simon believes there will be a shift away from speculoos flavourings, which were extremely popular last year, with caramel and ginger flavours taking their place.

When it comes to party snacks, Simon anticipates a move towards more natural, long, slow food processing methods used across the EU. He cites dehydrated fruits and vegetables as a flavour-forward ingredient in both sweet and savoury bakes and predicts that the 'flavour bomb' of dehydrated mushrooms will feature in a range of party snacks – as well as truffle-based treats at the luxury end of the market. Shoppers can expect premium options made with Tartufo Bianco d'Alba from Italy or **Trufa negra de Teruel PGI** from Spain.

Desserts will also be inspired by popular EU ingredients. Simon comments: "When it comes to ready-made desserts, we are likely to see more caramel flavours and dark sugar toppings, in the style of France's iconic crème brûlée. Christmas will also follow the big trend of the year, as we are likely to see pistachio – such as **Pistacchio Verde di Bronte PDO** from Italy – in all manner of festive cakes, biscuits and, of course, chocolate."

Christmas 2025 is likely to see a shift towards more natural, less processed, and lower-alcohol options, as shoppers adopt a more balanced approach to festive indulgence. The high quality and stringent safety standards upheld across the EU - combined with its rich heritage and centuries-old natural production methods - offer retailers a broad selection of products to meet evolving consumer preferences. GI-certified specialities such as **Pane di Altamura PDO** from Italy, **Pan Gallego PGI** from Spain, and **Pain d'épices de Dijon** from France are just a few examples of how this heritage can be brought to the Christmas table in 2025.

For more information, please visit: <https://enjoy-its-from-europe.campaign.europa.eu/united-kingdom/en>

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Notes to editors:

In 2024, the European Union launched the 'More Than Only Food and Drink' campaign to promote the EU's incredible range of food & beverages across the UK market. The campaign aims to promote European food & beverage products to food and drink professionals in the UK, highlighting the key characteristics of the products (safety, quality, authenticity, and sustainability), with a focus on EU quality schemes - Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - as well as the EU organic label.

For any further queries, please visit our website or contact: morethanfood_UK@agripromotion.eu

