



# EU Flavours Unlock Lunchtime Opportunity for Retailers and Operators

Authentic, wholesome and culturally inspired products appeal to  
time-pressed parents and professionals

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Retailers and food service providers are being encouraged to tap into growing consumer demand for more adventurous and health-focused lunch options by showcasing quality products from across the European Union. As part of the ongoing More Than Only Food & Drink campaign, the EU is shining a light on the role its authentic and diverse food offering can play in revitalising packed lunches and food-to-go.

## A Fresh Take on Lunchboxes

Nearly one in five UK parents (19%) admit that they lack inspiration when preparing lunchboxes, and 41%<sup>1</sup> cite lack of time as a key barrier. At the same time, food tourism is on the rise<sup>2</sup>. Recent surveys show that almost half (48%) of British holidaymakers recreate their favourite holiday dishes at home, with 37% prepared to pay more for special ingredients<sup>3</sup>. As such, there is a valuable opportunity for

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/fabulous/30418952/parents-lunch-boring-meal/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thetravelspsychologist.co.uk/f/what-is-food-tourism-and-why-is-it-growing-in-popularity/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/food/1782323/top-favourite-holiday-food-meals-recipes-cooking-home>



retailers to add interest and inspiration to their packed lunch by offering high-quality ingredients from the European Union.

Through the European Union's More Than Only Food & Drink campaign, retailers can discover hundreds of authentic EU products that can play a central role in delicious and nutritious lunches on the go for children and adults alike. Many carry the quality labels — Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) — which guarantee the provenance and methods used to make the products.

Lunchtime dishes - such as pitta bread with tzatziki, cucumber and **Manouri PDO** from Greece; pasta salad with **Halloumi PDO** from Cyprus; and **Tomaten von der Insel Reichenau PGI** from Germany; plus, sandwiches made with organic German rye bread and French Fromage Frais offer a variety of textures and flavours to suit all ages and preferences.

Retailers should also excite adults about their packed lunch choices, says Patrick McGuigan, cheese writer, educator and advisor to the More Than Only Food & Drink campaign:

“There’s no doubt that delis and restaurants have raised their sandwich game in recent years to lure consumers back, and we’re now seeing that same creativity filter into the grown-up lunchbox space. Decadent, loaded sandwiches are gaining popularity, often built with layers of flavour-rich ingredients. Charcuterie is a big part of this, as are cheeses like **Queso Manchego PDO** from Spain, **Comté PDO** from France, and **Noord-Hollandse Edammer PGI** from the Netherlands.

“Even traditional staples are getting a remix—such as the Reuben sandwich, which has moved beyond its classic Swiss cheese and corned beef format to versions using **Comté PDO**, Mozzarella, or even Burrata for a fresh twist. Other standout fillings include pulled lamb with whipped **Feta PDO** from Greece, roasted beef with **Jambon de Bayonne PGI** from France; and spicy meatball subs loaded with **Queso Manchego PDO** from Spain, French **Tomme de Savoie PGI**, and **Parmigiano Reggiano PDO** from Italy.

“It’s clear that consumers want more exciting lunch options and are open to trying creative flavour combinations,” Patrick adds. “For retailers, there’s a real opportunity here—curate ingredients that



work well as sandwich fillings, offer meal deal-style bundles, and use shelf talkers or QR codes to inspire shoppers with recipes. The key is to highlight ideas that taste great cold or can be easily reheated at work.”

## Capitalising on the Food-to-Go Boom

Meanwhile, lunchtime food-to-go is experiencing rapid growth. According to the Lumina Intelligence UK Food to Go Market Report 2025<sup>4</sup>, lunch now accounts for over 32% of all food-to-go occasions — the fastest-growing day part — driven by solo midweek missions, hybrid work patterns, and consumer desire for premium, better-for-you options. With the total food-to-go market valued at £24bn<sup>5</sup> and set to grow further, it represents a major opportunity for operators and brands that can meet evolving demand.

EU products - from PDO-certified cheeses and charcuterie to high-fibre sourdoughs and fermented dairy - tap directly into consumer appetite for authenticity and functionality. Additions like **Queso Tetilla PDO**, a conical shaped matured cheese from Spain, **Kalamata PDO** olives from Greece, or heritage tomatoes from Germany bring character and contrast to lunchboxes or deli pots.

“Health-led innovation is now central to food-to-go NPD, with gut health, brain-boosting ingredients and high-protein options dominating launches,” says Simon Atkins, an expert on the UK and EU bakery industry and advisor to the EU’s More Than Only Food & Drink campaign.

“Sourdough and artisan breads made with ancient grains are now extremely popular lunchtime options, meeting demand for cleaner labels and products with gut-friendly attributes. The rise of sourdough has accelerated the use of heritage grains such as Emmer, Einkorn and rye, as both artisan bakers and large-scale manufacturers look to create less processed recipes that align with this shift toward naturally fermented breads.

“This return to more traditional, minimally processed baking is also reflected in several of the EU’s protected GI products – such as Italy’s **Pane di Altamura (PDO)**, made with durum wheat semolina

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lumina-intelligence.com/blog/food-to-go/food-to-go-trends-2025/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lumina-intelligence-food-and-drink\\_lumina-intelligence-uk-food-to-go-market-activity-7307762808417382400-uhU7/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lumina-intelligence-food-and-drink_lumina-intelligence-uk-food-to-go-market-activity-7307762808417382400-uhU7/)



and a natural starter, or Spain's **Pan Gallego (PGI)**, known for its long fermentation and artisan quality. These heritage breads meet modern consumer demand for authenticity, provenance and gut health benefits.

“Heritage grains and naturally leavened breads are gaining traction not only for their nutritional credentials, but also because they're perceived to be easier to digest. While often thought to be lower in gluten, it is actually the extended fermentation time – which allows fermentable carbohydrates to break down – and the improved gluten structure that contribute to their digestive benefits.”

As UK consumers continue to seek out lunch options that are convenient, health-conscious and inspired by global flavours, EU products offer a compelling solution for retailers and operators alike. From elevating the everyday lunchbox to reimagining food-to-go with premium, functional ingredients, the More Than Only Food & Drink campaign showcases the versatility and value of Europe's most celebrated foods — bringing quality, creativity and provenance to every bite.

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

## ENDS

### 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](mailto:morethanfood_UK@agripromotion.eu)

