

Digitally delivering Scotland's food and drink

Online orders helping firms cope with impact of pandemic

VisitScotland says it is optimistic that e-commerce can help get the Scottish food and drink sector through this year as businesses across the country report increase demand.

The national tourism organisation's Only In Scotland campaign has encouraged Scots to rediscover the unique experiences on offer here, following the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Visitors spend around £995 million annually on eating and drinking and [it accounts for the largest share of visitor spend](#) after accommodation and travel costs.

Research by Scotland Food and Drink suggests 70% of Scottish consumers believe it is important that locally sourced produce is available, and 49% of Scottish shoppers also claim they would be willing to pay more for Scottish produce.

Food and Drink fortnight runs until 20 September 2020, celebrating Scottish food and drink heroes who supplied groceries during lockdown as well as provide recipe ideas online, virtual cooking classes and tasting sessions while people were at home.

Many micro businesses have been experimenting with online orders and home delivery for the first time.

Paula Ward, Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland, said: "Scotland has world-class local produce and brands that

not only sell all over the world, but enhances our tourism product to visitors here at home. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the tourism and events industry. However, our sector has shown great resilience to rise to the most challenging year we have ever had, and to adapt and innovate to new ways of reaching customers. Online sales and deliveries can provide opportunities in new markets, as well as added convenience for existing clients. Being able to buy products and goods all year round even when visitors are not on holiday is a great way to generate more income.”

Lucy Husband, Market Development & Business Engagement Director at Scotland Food & Drink, said: “The impact of Covid-19 has changed the way we shop and forced many food and drink businesses to significantly adapt their approach.

“While more and more of us are shopping for food and drink online, the appetite for high-quality, local products remains strong. In fact, our research shows that 70% of Scottish consumers believe it’s important to have locally sourced produce available, and 49% of Scottish shoppers also claim they would be willing to pay more for Scottish produce.

“We proudly launched our SupportLocal.scot directory during lockdown to meet that demand and provide a useful platform for businesses to reach new consumers. In this incredibly difficult time for so many people, food and drink producers have shown resilience in their ability to innovate and adapt. Scotland boasts some of the best food and drink products in the world, and we should all endeavour to support local producers and enjoy the fruits of Scotland’s larder.”

Tim Roads launched marketplace website [Schop](#) late last year in Edinburgh, offering locally sourced food and drink from independent retailers. Schop, is an Old Scots word which is derived from French échoppe which means a market stall or small shop.

Tim said: "So far the business we have generated this year has surpassed our expectations. We are on course to double our initial target of orders for the year. During lockdown a lot of people tried us because many shops were running low on stock and our community of small suppliers had the contacts to source ingredients and sustain production. People based abroad were finding us online and then telling relatives in the UK. As people had turned to us in need, we kept prices the same rather than try and capitalise on the situation and we were able to turn this into more profitably.

"Although things levelled out a bit since restrictions lifted, many customers are returning to us because of the quality of fresh, seasonal produce. We tend to stock items that are having a good season to maximise the taste and customers value this level of insight and it gives them that important connection to the land. This has been a particularly good year for Scottish strawberries and blueberries."

"Schop's delivery service is carbon-neutral and we use as little packaging as possible and where packaging is required we endeavour to use either reusable, compostable or recyclable. So residents and visitors can leave no trace when they enjoying our food on the go. Because of our success we are able to rent a unit soon and are planning to work with an Edinburgh chef to offer meals in our deliveries. There's a great community of small businesses working together."