



Artisan food guide

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Quality key for Caherbeg Free Range Pork

In the second of a three-part series on the cross-cutting theme of food production, we meet Maurice and Avril Allshire of Caherbeg Free Range Pork

What is the greatest challenge facing artisan food producers?

There are several challenges including insurance, staffing and identifying new markets but with every challenge comes opportunity.

How do you feel Brexit will affect your business?

We source all of our meat locally but equipment will cost more as it will have tariffs and taxes added. This means that establishing a business will be more expensive.

How long have you been in business?

We have been happily in business for the past 19 years.

What is your greatest achievement in business?

Our sons joining the business. Aged 23 and 21, they are both now working in the business full-time post college. They are assuming more responsibility for day-to-day activities including processing and logistics and it is something we are very proud of.

What supports did you receive to start or build your business?

The West Cork Local Enterprise Office



Maurice Allshire.

(LEO) was really supportive providing us with both capital and training when we were starting out. I would recommend reaching out to your LEO to any new businesses.

Has your business won any local, national or international awards?

We have won an array of awards (over 40) at both local, regional and international level, achievements we are very proud of. One such example is us bringing home a medal in the 2007 European black pudding competition, Ireland's first such medal. Others include the Innovation and Enterprise Award from West Cork Farming Awards and Avril has won the SME Businesswoman of the Year 2019 in Network Ireland-West Cork 2019.

How many people does your business employ?

There are eight members of staff, four external employees and four family members.

What advice do you have for people thinking of starting a food business?

Believe in your product and be prepared to work long and hard to get it to market.

It is also very important to keep abreast of trends in the marketplace and to be fully informed in terms of any developing or existing competing product ranges.

How does your business embrace technology as it grows and develops?

Technology has had a positive impact on our business. For example, much of our orders now arrive via text to a dedicated order number. We also avail of online banking and all raw materials are ordered via email. Technology really helps to make the business more efficient

What do you love most about your business?

The variety from production to deliveries and everything in between – no two days are the same. We also love meeting our customers and new potential customers.

What is your ethos or mission for your business?

We are obsessed with quality.

How important is branding to your company?

Very. So much so that we have developed two separate brands for our products.

Checklist



Teacher tips

As mentioned in the first article, it is possible to create links throughout the new specifications with other learning outcomes associated with artisan foods to create a non-linear approach. Below is an example to possible links to Strand 1 and more links to Strand 2 and 3 will be included in next week's article.

Links

Strand 1 – scientific practices

1.3 Evaluating evidence – evaluate ethical issues related to agricultural practices.

1.4 Communicating – discuss, debate, reflect on and critically evaluate the outcomes of investigations, their own and those of others.

These are Caherbeg Free Range Pork which is made using meat from our own herd of free-range outdoor pigs (established in 1997) and our second brand, Rosscarbery Recipes, which is made from locally sourced Irish pork and beef.

How do you ensure that you get the best price for your product?

Our pricing is based on making a product that is affordable and allows for a margin to pay all expenses and make a small profit. We are not out to make a killing but a living.

Do you find legislation difficult and time-consuming?

Establishing a system to be compliant with legislation is not easy and the paperwork is time-consuming, but it is necessary. If a problem occurs, we have the records to show our compliance at all times. The bigger the product range and/or volume, the greater the paperwork volume.

Is your product totally sourced from Ireland or do you need to go outside the country for raw materials?

All meat is sourced within Co Cork from our own farm and other local suppliers, but other raw materials such as spices are bought within Ireland from specialist food ingredient suppliers and they would have to be produced outside Ireland.



Maurice, Willie, William, and Avril Allshire, Caherbeg Free Range Pork, Rosscarbery, Co Cork. \ Donal O'Leary



NEXT WEEK
Food production – more on artisan foods