

The Grocer

Focus On: Northern Ireland by Amy North (amy.north@thegrocer.co.uk)

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The Story

Northern Ireland is fast establishing itself as a foody heaven. In last year's Great Taste Awards, producers from Northern Ireland swept the board and many are now enjoying booming sales elsewhere in the British Isles and further afield. The province's foody credentials are in for a boost in 2016, the year of food & drink in Northern Ireland.

So who are the champions of Northern Irish food & drink? What are the challenges and opportunities they face in boosting their business and cementing Northern Ireland's reputation for quality food & drink? And what's the aim of the 2016 year of food & drink? What does the coming year have in store?

Key themes:

The heroes of Northern Ireland: We're looking to profile Northern Ireland's most interesting and innovative food and drink companies, chefs, etc. Which brands have made it big elsewhere and how? Who's going to be the next big thing?

Fresh produce: Northern Ireland is home to some of Britain's biggest fresh produce companies, including Moy Park and Dun Bia. How are they performing? What advantages does being based here give? To what extent are they using provenance to cement a point of difference for their products?

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how Northern Irish producers are approaching new product development and the development of new markets and ways of doing business.

Heroes from the Great Taste Awards: We profile eight Northern Irish winners from last year's awards including launch date and RSP plus an image of each

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?