

Visitors choose Choc-affair as star of this year's Harrogate show



Chocolatier Choc-affair, run by Linda Barrie (left), was chosen as Best Stand in a poll of visitors, with one of those who voted receiving a WBC hamper of fine foods in a prize draw

Best Stand winner Choc-affair was among the fine food & drink suppliers celebrating after last month's Harrogate Speciality Food Show.

Ethical coffee supplier Martina Gruppo, aka The Coffee Fairy, secured a listing with eight Harvey Nichols stores after exhibiting at the show for the second year running.

Harvey Nichols' Claire Mossford and Harrods' Tim Howard were also among the buyers who

took part in a Feed the Dragon live buying panel at Harrogate, along with Sangita Tryner (Delillah deli), Georgie Mason (Gonalston Farm Shop) and Duncan Hider of distributor Hider Foods.

In the War of the Roses Cheese Challenge, supported by Rowcliffe, Lancashire cheese-maker and ex soap star Sean Wilson's Smelly Apeth lost out to Yorkshire Blue from Shepherd's Purse, which secured twice as many votes from show visitors.



Judy Bell (above left) of Shepherds Purse beat ex-Corrie star-turned-cheese-maker Sean Wilson in the War of the Roses



CHARITY BIRDS: Gonalston Farm Shop boss Georgie Mason (right) and her yellow friend Kibo worked the stands relentlessly at Harrogate to raise awareness of Mason's upcoming charity climb of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The Nottinghamshire retailer and husband Ross will scale Africa's highest peak in October to raise money for Lincs & Notts Air Ambulance and Cancer Research UK, and have adopted Kibo as their hard-to-miss mascot for the fundraiser.

Some FFD readers may already have met Kibo, as the bird is currently on a tour of independent food shops, supported by retail IT company LCCS. Shop owners who receive Kibo through the post are asked to take a whacky photo of their team with the bird and email it to LCCS for inclusion in its Kibo web gallery.

They then post Kibo on to another independent food store of their choosing. LCCS will donate £10 to the Kilimanjaro Challenge Fund for every store that takes part.

To support Ross and Georgie, who is pictured here with Lynne McCaw of LCCS, visit www.lccs.co.uk and follow the Kibo links.

better retailing

GORDON LEATHERDALE



I've been out and about, looking for fine food retailers that have really got things right, and you won't find a more fitting example than The Pear Tree Deli in Sherborne, Dorset – my home territory.

A combined deli and eatery, The Pear Tree encapsulates the attributes a deli needs if it's to prosper:

- **Market understanding:** The place was packed with the 'grey pound'. In fact, I don't think I saw a soul in the shop who was under 45. Using www.upmystreet.com, I quickly discovered that the female grey pound is the wealthiest demographic in the area, so The Pear Tree clearly knows who its core customers are. Upmystreet.com is a free and useful way to establish essential facts about your local market.

- **The offer:** With 45 covers, the Sherborne deli doesn't have an enormous restaurant but it serves 70 to 150 customers a day (according to one of the waitresses). At around a tenner per cover that's £343,000 per annum on foodservice. People will pay that much for lunch so long as they perceive they are getting value for money. I noticed The Pear Tree's soup comes in larger bowls than usual. At little extra cost to the deli, these dishes appear better value than nearby competitors.

- **Product mix:** There is balance between upmarket and everyday items, so it's easy for a customer to

"Upmystreet.com is a free and useful way to establish essential facts about your local market"

drop by to pick up both convenience products and treats. The shop feels special, but is also very 'busy' – the kind of shop you need to visit regularly.

- **Well trained staff:** The owner was away but the shop didn't feel like it lacked leadership. All sales staff were mature women. Perhaps as most customers are female, it makes sense to use the same demographic to sell to them. Many successful retailers, like the 'university outfitters' Jack Wills, operate on the same principle.

Staff at The Pear Tree clearly take pride in their work and are able to use common sense. The owner's attitude appears to be one of empowerment rather than over-management.

Interaction between chef and the shop staff was also strong. The chef seemed proactive in liaising with colleagues in the retail section, putting in an appearance several times during my visit. It was good to see, because it suggests he thinks diligently about what he can use from the shop to serve in the restaurant. He seemed completely in tune with the deli's ethos.

So there are four good tips from one brief reconnaissance mission: remember who your target consumers are, provide real value, choose your product range carefully to encourage regular customer visits, and empower your staff to think for themselves.