



Northern Ireland
visitor inspired

'How to' guide
Maximising the potential
of Northern Ireland's
fabulous food





Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Northern Ireland – a great destination for lovers of good food.

From farmers' markets to hotels, fine dining restaurants to bakeries, the skill of our top chefs and the quality of our local produce offers a truly memorable experience. The sector has the potential to grow significantly and now is the time to embrace this opportunity!

This 'How to' guide contains some tips on how you can use food to celebrate the best of Northern Ireland and enhance the visitor's experience.

With such fresh produce on hand, it's no wonder the Northern Irish food scene is vibrant, exciting and surprising. Let's make the most of what's on our doorstep!

For even more information on how you can maximise the potential of Northern Ireland's fabulous food, visit www.nitb.com/insights



TIP 1

CHANGE YOUR MENU

- 'Local' is the new buzz word! Use local ingredients on your menu to whet your visitors' appetites. Be proud. Don't forget to tell your visitors that the ingredients used are born and bred in Northern Ireland!
- Put your individual stamp on your menu. Be bold. Celebrate local food traditions and recipes but tailor them for yourself. Perhaps your new take on a traditional dish will become your signature!
- In Northern Ireland we welcome visitors from all over the world with lots of different tastes and traditions. Consider this on your menu. Be pragmatic – keeping all your customers happy.
- Flexibility is important. Be realistic. Highlight anything on your menu which you are happy to adapt, be it without nuts or dairy produce or something else. Your customer will be delighted that they can still experience your dish by having it tailored to their needs.

“Our menus are dictated by the produce available on the day. This gives us enormous flexibility and ensures that only the freshest, tastiest fare makes it to the table – nothing less than our diners expect”

Nick Price - Chef Director
Nick's Warehouse,
Belfast



TIP 2

CELEBRATE THE SEASONS

- Celebrating the seasons can contribute to both wonderfully authentic Northern Irish delights as well as making sound business sense. Be realistic - by buying what's in season you can make sensible cost savings that can be used to enhance other elements of your business.

Danny Millar's Seasonally Inspired Larder List

Celebrated chef, and Northern Ireland Tourism Awards winner, Danny Millar is a shining star of the vibrant NI food scene.

"The NI food scene has just come on leaps and bounds. Local suppliers are working harder than ever, producing artisan product that appeals to both those who cook it, as well as those with discerning palates, who have now come to only expect the best. Our food industry is growing and it's just getting bigger. Now is the time to celebrate it and be proud. It's alive and kicking we just need to keep up the momentum!"

Danny Millar - Head Chef
Balloo House,
Killinchy, Co. Down

Danny has put together a list of seasonal suggestions for your larder to take you through the year.

Spring must haves

- Rhubarb
- Purple Sprouting Broccoli
- Lamb

Summer must haves

- Strangford Lough Langoustines
- Local Mackerel
- Strawberries

Autumn must haves

- Wild Mushrooms
- Plums
- Venison

Winter must haves

- Strangford Lough Scallops
- Cabbage
- Parsnips

TIP 3

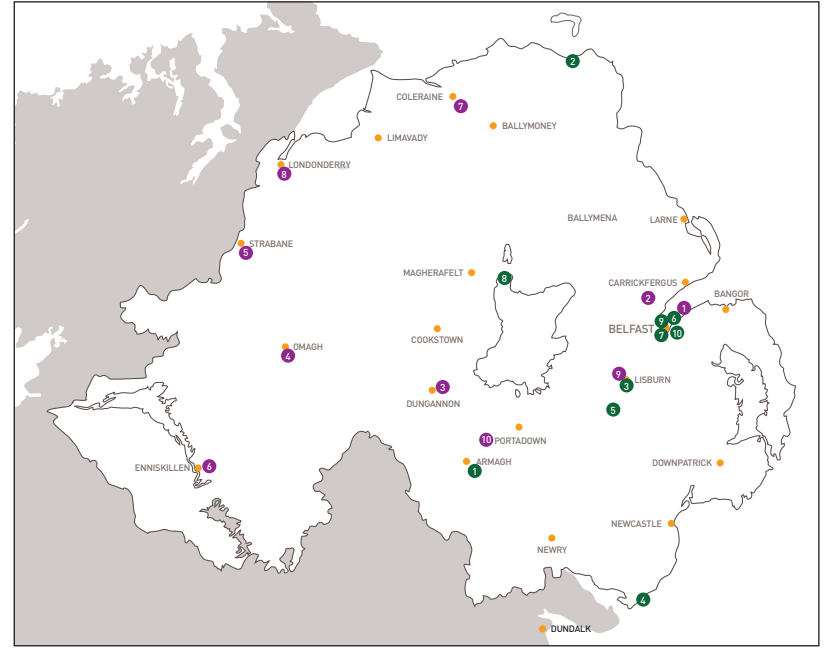
WHET YOUR APPETITE AND THAT OF OTHERS...

The trend for local produce and the quality of the Northern Ireland offering, is celebrated in a vast array of Farmers' Markets, along with Food Festivals and Events.

Whether you are an exhibitor or a visitor at one of these events, inspiration is guaranteed! Mark your spot and identify which markets and events are closest to you.

"I attend Farmers' Markets three times a month throughout Northern Ireland. How do you get good taste if you don't use good ingredients? I am a local produce advocate. I use local ingredients in my own produce and I sell it locally too!"

Joan Boyd - Owner
'Home Bakes',
Dungannon, Co. Tyrone



FOOD FESTIVALS AND EVENTS CALENDARS

- 1 Apple Blossom Festival (Co. Armagh) May
- 2 Auld Lamas Fair (Co. Antrim) Aug
- 3 Hilden Beer Festival (Co. Antrim) Aug
- 4 The Festival of Fish (Co. Down) Aug
- 5 Hillsborough International Oyster Festival (Co. Down) Sept
- 6 Belfast Food & Drink Festival (Co. Antrim) Sept
- 7 Garden Gourmet, (Co. Antrim) Sept
- 8 Lough Neagh Food Festival 2009 (Co. Londonderry) Sept
- 9 Continental Market at Belfast City Hall (Co. Antrim) Nov/Dec
- 10 St. George's Christmas Fair and Market (Co. Antrim) Nov/Dec

FARMERS' MARKETS

- 1 St. George's Food and Garden Market (Co. Antrim)
- 2 Coleman's Garden Centre Farmers' Market (Co. Antrim)
- 3 Tyrone Farmers' Market (Co. Tyrone)
- 4 Omagh Farmers' Market (Co. Tyrone)
- 5 Strabane Farmers' Market (Co. Fermanagh)
- 6 Enniskillen Farmers' Market, (Co. Fermanagh)
- 7 Causeway Speciality Market (Co. Antrim)
- 8 Walled City Market (Co. Londonderry)
- 9 Lisburn Farmers' Market (Co. Down)
- 10 Stonebridge Group Farmers' Market (Co. Armagh)

Visit discovernorthernireland.com/food for more details.

TIP 5

CELEBRATE THE STORY OF YOUR PLACE

- Be genuine. Appeal to your customers' desire for uniqueness, tell them the story of your place and create an emotional connection to last a lifetime. When was your premises built and by whom? Perhaps it's been in the family for generations. Chart the history of the place with pictures on the wall or other memorabilia.
- Continue the story of your place with your customer. Be brave. Ask them to write down their experience in a story book.
- Celebrate your staff and pay testament to their efforts. Your staff help to make your place come alive for the visitor.

“Beechill House is a plantation house and listed building. The original owners, the Skipton family, were aristocrats. We keep their memory alive through the delivery of our fine dining menu.”

Patsy O’Kane - Owner
Beech Hill Country House Hotel,
Derry, Co. Londonderry

TIP 6

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

- Be brave. Keep informed through nitb.com which hosts a range of up-to-date research and information.
- Attend insight days and masterclass events. Visit www.nitb.com/industrydevelopment for more details. Find out about tomorrow's customer to grow your business.
- Feedback is vital. Until we know what works and what doesn't, how can we improve? Provide a feedback book and encourage your customers to complete it. Ask for suggestions of what they'd like to see. Encourage your staff to review it and take the information on board from the top down.
- Invite customers to return to sample dishes and improvements inspired by their suggestions.
- Think about the activities on offer in your locality. Be challenging. What festivals and outdoor activities are on offer and how can you tailor your food offering to compliment them? It may be as simple as a picnic basket for an outdoor festival.

“We record the details of all our visitors in a ‘Visitor Log’. This information ranges from standard contact details and dates stayed, through to more detailed preferences, whether they favour tea or coffee, how they like their steak cooked through to where they went while staying with us. A couple of minutes work can help enhance that personal impression immeasurably for repeat customers.”

John Mathers - Owner
Newforge House,
Magheralin, Co. Armagh

TIP 7

SHARE YOUR RECIPES AND CREATE AN ENGAGING EXPERIENCE

- Make your customers think about you and your dishes for more than just one serving. Cookery schools offer a great opportunity for tourists to experience and learn about NI's real culture through food.
- Don't underestimate how good you are. Be confident. NI's authenticity enhances the visitor experience – and it creates lasting memories.

Menu 1: from Danny Millar, Balloo House, Killinchy Serves 4

Roast wood pigeon salad with pear, hazelnut, chicory and gin vinaigrette

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • 4 wood pigeons | • 1 red chicory |
| • 2 dessert pears | • 100g baby red chard |
| • 100g toasted hazelnuts | • 100g watercress |
| • Juice of 1 lemon | • 50g butter |
| • 8 crushed juniper berries | • 50ml gin |
| • Zest of ½ lemon | • 1 tsp brown sugar |
| • 4 sprigs of thyme | • Sea salt and black pepper |
| • 100ml hazelnut oil | |



Method:

- 1 Marinade the pigeons in crushed juniper berries, zest of ½ lemon, picked thyme leaves, black pepper and 2 tbsp hazelnut oil (for 4 hours or preferably overnight).
- 2 Heat a non-stick pan and add pigeons to the pan, skin side down. Cook each breast for 2 minutes and then finish off with 3 minutes in a hot oven.
- 3 Leave to rest for 4 minutes, remove breasts from pigeon, return carcasses to pan, roast lightly, add gin, lemon juice and brown sugar.
- 4 Check seasoning, strain and keep warm.
- 5 Slice pear into matchsticks, squeeze juice of ½ lemon, add remaining hazelnut oil and lightly season with salt and pepper.
- 6 Add the salad leaves and roughly chopped hazelnuts.
- 7 Toss in dressing.

Assembly:

Place salad on a plate, carve pigeon breasts and place around salad. Drizzle gin sauce over pigeon breasts and add a little more hazelnut oil. Tuck-in and savour the flavour.

Menu 2: from Wayne Carville, Mourne Seafood Bar, Dundrum

Hand dived Strangford scallops with pea mash, black pudding cream & parsnip crisps

Ingredients:

- 3 Hand dived Strangford scallops
- Mashed potatoes
- Parsnip
- Black pudding
- Crushed garden peas

Method:

- 1 Boil potatoes, drain, pass through masher with salt, pepper, cream & butter to make a smooth mash.
- 2 Add some cooked and crushed garden peas to the mash & mix gently.
- 3 Parsnip crisps – wash a parsnip, then with a potato peeler, slice lengthwise along the parsnip to form long slivers. Fry these in hot oil (180°C) until crispy, then drain and leave to dry.
- 4 To make the black pudding cream – fry off the pudding in some olive oil, then add a little chicken or fish stock to de-glaze the pan. Reduce the stock until almost evaporated, then add whipping cream to the pan, mix gently and set aside. Check seasoning.
- 5 Cook the scallops using a heavy based pan, pre-heated until smoking. Place the lightly seasoned scallops on to the pan for approximately 30 seconds on each side or until nicely browned. Leave to rest under heat for 3-4 minutes.

Assembly:

To build the dish, place the scallops on top of the pea mash and drizzle with the black pudding cream. Garnish with the parsnip crisp, serve immediately and enjoy!



TIP 8

ADD VALUE

- Value for money will always be a winner. Think about how to build in added value – can you use local seasonal produce to make cost savings which you can pass on to your customer?
- What other added value does dining with you give? Become noted for exemplary customer service; careful presentation and quality produce that melts in the mouth; weekly two-course value meals or present specific offers for slower periods.

“Our staff work ethic is to improve the service that is delivered every day and provide a lasting impression for customers”

Gemma McHenry - Owner
The Central Winebar,
Ballycastle, Co. Antrim



TIP 9

GET ONLINE

- While traditional marketing methods remain very important, the internet means we're all on show globally! Be confident. Keep your website up to date. Perhaps you can have your menu on the site or even detail upcoming events and theme nights at your premises.
- If you are already using your website to your advantage and wish to take the next technology step, consider social media sites. This realm provides a new and powerful way of marketing your business and best of all, it's free! It can allow you to promote yourself, receive feedback, adapt and change. It's also great free advertising. Be confident.

"Having your menu on your website provides instant access for the visitor, particularly in regard to group enquires, saving valuable time and telephone explanations. It literally paints a picture for the customer and is now an industry standard"

Paul Shortall - Director of Sales
Lough Erne Golf Resort,
Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh





TIP 11

GO FOR AWARDS

- Quality and the validation of that quality through awards, drives many customers. Believe in yourself and enter for relevant awards. Taking part will build both your confidence and your profile. If you are lucky enough to win, make sure everyone knows about it. Don't forget to include any accolades in all your literature, display them in your premises and on your website.
- Be creative. Perhaps there are opportunities to champion your own award. Can you turn this around to make it a customer award for the 'Best Monthly Customer' or indeed acting on customer suggestions, the 'Best Customer Devised Menu'?

"Ever since 1919 when we won our first award for butter, the creamery has gone on to win top prizes from the World Cheese Awards, the British Cheese Awards, Ireland's International Cheese Awards and Nantwich Cheese Awards. We are proud of our product and our awards underline our commitment to both quality and excellence."

Mervyn McCaughey - Managing Director
Fivemiletown Creamery,
Fivemiletown, Co. Tyrone



SOUP VEG
£1.50

