

Stars of the Show

Amid tough competition, two small-scale Scottish food producers each won an exhibition stand in the competition which was jointly held by **Scottish Grocer** and the organisers of the BBC Good Food Show Scotland last month.



Far right: Jean Alexander with her wonderful chocolates and preserves. Right: the Bush family, and below, Summer Harvest Oils.



VISITORS from all sectors of the food industry as well as the general public thronged to the BBC Good Food Show Scotland, which was held at the SECC, Glasgow, last month.

A competition to win an exhibition stand at the Show organised by **Scottish Grocer** and the BBC Good Food Show Scotland, attracted such a high standard of entries that the judges decided to award the prize to two companies: Lime Tree Larder and Summer Harvest Extra Virgin Rapeseed Oil. Here are their stories.

Chocolate jigsaws

JEAN Alexander is the founder of Lime Tree Larder, a farm-based firm which produces artisan chocolate products, ice cream, jams and chutneys.

Lime Tree Larder is based at Auchencloigh Farm in Kilbirnie, Ayrshire, which is run by Jean and her husband Alex. It's primarily a beef farm, but they also grow beetroot which is used in the firm's chutneys. The name comes from a row of lime trees at the farm's entrance.

Jean makes all the products, with some help from her mum and a part-time assistant in the run-up to Christmas. "I've always loved making things," she says. The number of beautifully presented and professionally made goods on their stand is remarkable, and it's hard to

believe that there wasn't a large team involved in producing the goods. There are beautifully decorated chocolate jigsaws, chocolate CDs decorated with Santas and presented in CD cases, chocolate shoes, chocolate-covered soft centres and chocolate bars in exotic flavours such as white chocolate with pink peppercorns.

The ice creams, while not on display at the Show, come in flavours that include Cinnamon, Ginger, Gooseberry & Elderflower, Lavender and Cracked Black Pepper & Balsamic (the latter three are all seasonal) as well as the more traditional Vanilla, Chocolate Classic and Strawberry.

Jean admits that she and her mother worked exceptionally hard to ensure that there was enough stock to present at the Show, but insists that she wants to keep the business small and manageable in order to ensure the highest possible quality. "My enjoyment is in making the products, not in managing people," she says.

Lime Tree Larder supplies a few farm shops, and they also sell their products at farmers' markets in Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.

Summer sensation

MARK Bush of Ferneyfold Farm is the man behind Harvest Extra Virgin Rapeseed Oil.

Until August 2007, Mark was an IT consultant working in an investment bank in London. He

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then moved to Perthshire with his wife, Margaret, to live on her father's farm, 12 miles west of Perth. The farm grows potatoes for sale at farmers' markets.

"We noticed that people were really embracing local produce," says Margaret. "So we looked to see what else we could do. Dad had been growing rapeseed for 25 years."

They thought about producing rapeseed oil, did some research into it, looked at the health benefits, and a pilot scheme followed in May. The product sold out at farmers' markets and farm shops, as well as one or two shops in the Crieff area.

Rapeseed oil has been getting a lot of positive endorsement from celebrity chefs recently, particularly James Martin on Saturday Kitchen and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall of River Cottage. Said to have half the saturated fats of olive oil and to be high in Omega 3 and Omega 6, rapeseed oil also contains vitamin E. It has a high burn point, which makes it ideal for roasting. Summer Harvest Extra

Virgin Rapeseed Oil is a non-GM product, Mark says.

At one point the oil became so popular that stocks ran out, but they now have enough seed to supply the oils through to next August. Mark currently sources out the pressing of the oil to another company, but they are hoping to buy pressing equipment soon.

Summer Harvest Oils has been used at Crieff Hydro, and Mark particularly wants to encourage chefs to use it in order to educate more people about the benefits of rapeseed oil. They are currently targeting restaurants, farm shops and delis, and hold tasting sessions.

Mark hopes to branch out into producing infused oil variants, and wants to collaborate as much as possible with other food producers. "We're trying to get as many local people involved as possible," he says.

"We're working with other farmers and producers. We're trying to use Scottish products." Mark is also on the lookout for producers of other food products who might want to use the oil.

"The amount of goodwill among food producers is amazing," he says.

"I wanted to be passionate about my job," he adds. "I enjoyed my job in IT but I didn't feel passionate about it. I am passionate about my job now."