

DELIVERING GROWTH THROUGH WHOLESALE

Case study – Millers Larder



Jean's Journey

After 10 years in business making artisan piccalilli chutneys and pickles, Jean Miller is still learning and, by her own admission, every day is a school day – which is no surprise considering she is a former primary school head teacher.

Today, Millers Larder – established in South Lanarkshire by Jean and her husband, George, in the family's kitchen – is gaining traction for its handmade produce in both retail and foodservice markets by focusing on provenance and quality, using seasonal ingredients and local suppliers as much as possible.

As a farmer's daughter growing up in Dumfries and Galloway, Jean is very aware of the importance of farming to Scotland's food and drink industry. Learning her skills in the kitchen from her mum and granny, she is also keen to give something back through her work with schools, colleges and chefs.

From a small base supplying farm shops, butchers and delis, classically trained chef Jean has slowly but surely established Millers Larder as a business that refuses to compromise on taste and quality.

Its flagship product is the award-winning Perfyit Piccalilli which Jean proudly describes

as "tangy and zingy but also mellow". Gluten free and suitable for vegetarians and vegans, it is available in 260g jars and 1kg foodservice tubs. The product was the winner of Foodservice Product of the Year in the 2016 Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards.

Other products in the Millers Larder range include Spicy Tomato Chutney and Avondale Apple Amber Chutney.



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Millers Larder – Delivering Growth Through Wholesale

Jean Miller decided to take part in the Delivering Growth Through Wholesale Programme (DGTW) after being approached by the Scottish Wholesale Association (SWA) and having already made inroads into the wholesale channel via SWA member Braehead Foods.

"I'm a great believer in making connections – they are so important," says Jean. "I have always realised that wholesale is the way forward for my business but being part of DGTW reaffirmed that for me and in the future wholesale will be my bread and butter. Wholesale is essential and I want to build my connections."



Benefits Of Doing Business With Wholesale

Since completing the programme – launched by the SWA in partnership with SAOS and Scotland Food & Drink in 2021 to educate and engage with producers on the opportunities provided by wholesale – Millers Larder has seen total sales through the wholesale channel reach a five-figure sum and total turnover soar even higher.

The company has forged strong relationships with five wholesalers as a direct result of DGTW and is working successfully with Braehead Foods, Lomond Wholesale, Mark Murphy Dole, Dunns Food and Drinks, and their veg supplier Premier Produce Scotland.

While Millers Larder operates out of Jean's EHO-approved commercial and home kitchen in Stonehouse, the flagship Perfyit Piccalilli

product is outsourced to East Ayrshire Council's Central Production Unit in Kilmarnock, which has allowed the business to upscale. She is unable to secure SALSA accreditation for her home kitchen so outsourcing to East Ayrshire Council was crucial.

This private-public collaboration also means that the five wholesalers have complete validation and traceability of procurement and production. It is also, says Jean, a good example of how a private company can collaborate with a public body.

Building trust and getting to know people has been important to Jean's success in securing business with wholesalers.

"I'd recommend DGTW to other producers looking to get into wholesale," says Jean. "It's been a game-changer for me and just speaking to people – at the DGTW workshop, during your one-to-one session, and when you're speaking to wholesalers – you become more confident and you want to see others be successful for the wider benefit of the food and drink industry."

"It's been a game-changer for me"



Opportunities For Improvement

While Jean's experience of participating in the DGTW programme has been extremely positive, there are learnings to be gained for some wholesalers – communication being one of them.

"Sometimes people don't get back to you – that is the reality," she comments. By that, Jean means expecting someone to reply to emails and return calls.

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While Jean appreciates that everyone's time is valuable, a key ask from the DGTW breakout sessions was for wholesalers to respond to producers. She goes on to say that "it puts you off trying again and can be very disheartening", and adds that a courtesy reply of "no thank you" or "the time isn't right" is better than silence and allows both parties to know where they stand.

About Delivering Growth Through Wholesale

The SWA Delivering Growth Through Wholesale Programme (DGTW) was launched in 2021 to educate and engage with producers on the opportunities provided by the wholesale sector.

Designed in conjunction with SAOS and Scotland Food & Drink, and supported by the Scottish Government, the initiative equips local Scottish producers with the insights and strategies needed to successfully navigate the landscape of the Scottish wholesale channel.

The training consists of two half-day virtual workshops, followed by bespoke one-to-one support, covering content such as navigating the diversity of Scottish wholesale, recognising the value of wholesale as a vital route to market, developing an effective Scottish wholesale strategy, and other tools for success.

As of March 2024, there have been over 230 new Scottish product listings via 59 new wholesale partnerships – with both producers and wholesalers working together to bring exciting and innovative products to a wider audience.

To find out more, contact us at info@scottishwholesale.co.uk



Photo 1: Jean with Stuart Rose, executive chef, Sodexo at the Scottish Parliament

Photo 5: Jean with New College Lanarkshire Cumbernauld Campus chef lecturers Paul Clark and Tom Devlin, and their HNC professional cookery students



The Scottish Wholesale Association (SWA) is the official trade body for Scotland's food and drink wholesaling industry. SWA members are 'the wheels to Scotland's food and drink industry', supplying products to over 5,000 independent convenience stores, 30,000 catering, hospitality, tourism and leisure businesses, and the majority of public sector establishments across Scotland.

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