

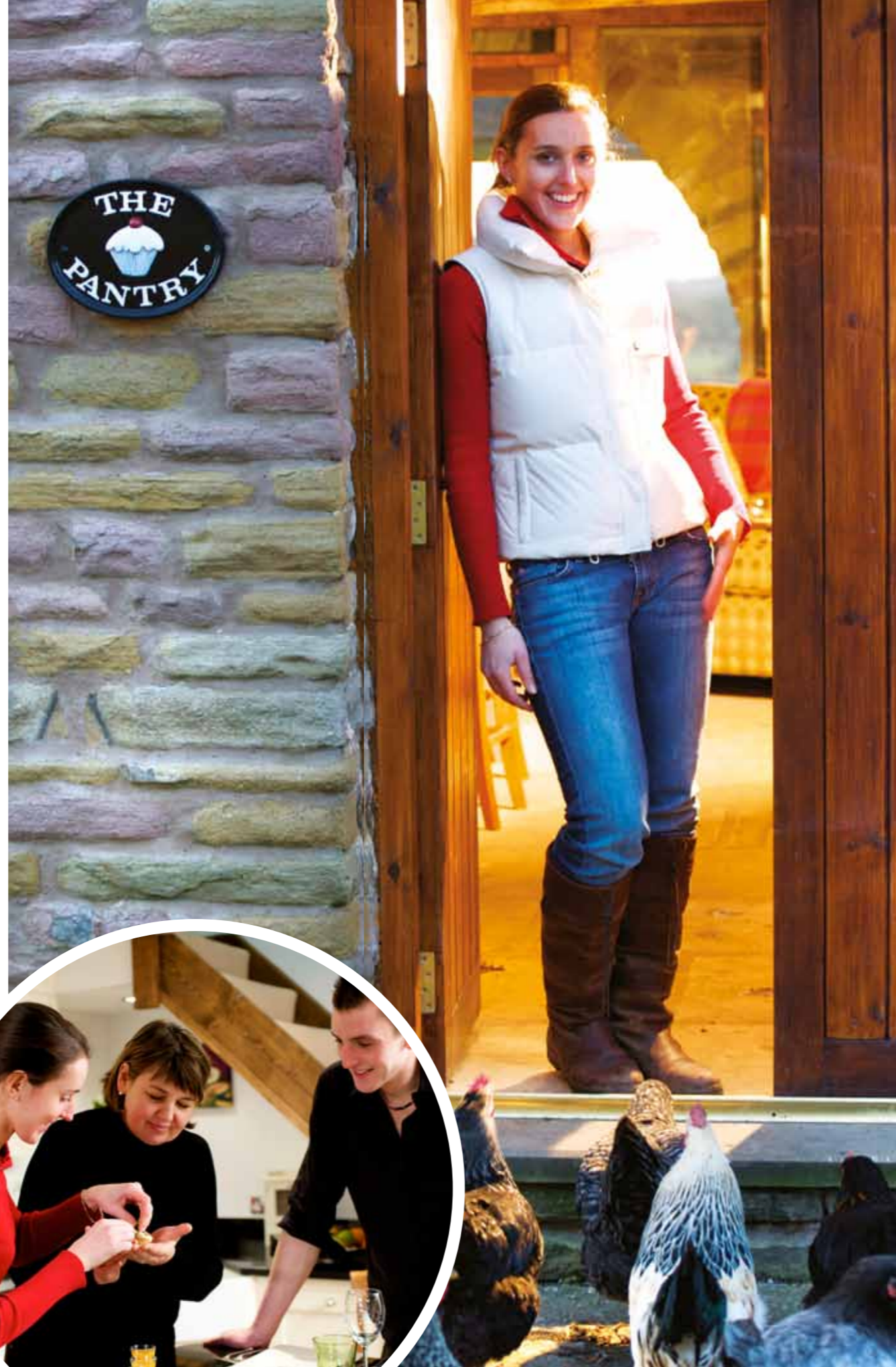
KEEPING IT LOCAL

Sustainable and locally sourced produce is becoming more and more popular. Here, we meet suppliers and owners who are working together to offer the best from their region

With the public becoming more environmentally aware and keen to support local businesses in these tough economic times, it's not hard to see why the trend for locally sourced and sustainable produce is growing. "Guests are becoming far more discerning about what they're eating and where it comes from," says assessor Keith Salmon. "I've witnessed people spending more time finding out the origins of the food than actually looking at the menu."

People aren't just committed to reducing their food miles, they also like to see handmade toiletries. "Many accommodation providers now stock locally made bathroom products and guests always appreciate these small touches," says Keith. "We do look at toiletries as part of our accommodation assessment and I'm always impressed to see something a bit more special and local on the shelves – you just need to make sure you keep any large bottles topped up as no one likes to think they've been used before."

Businesses all over England are now stocking handmade and sustainable products and some are even making things themselves. The following case studies demonstrate just some of the wonderful products that are on offer and the accommodation providers that are embracing them and the 'keeping it local' ethos.



Harrop Fold Farm, Cheshire

Harrop Fold Farm, which you may recognise from its appearance on the Channel 4 programme *Three in a bed*, is run by Sue and David Stevenson. Their daughter Leah, who was previously shortlisted for a Best Supporter of Local Produce award from Visit Chester and Cheshire, runs cookery sessions from a converted building in the farm called Leah's Pantry. She teaches secrets and techniques, including tips on how to get the best from the freshest local produce and courses on cupcakes.

"Homemade produce is a definite selling point here," says Sue. "It's what gave the farm its grade, it brings the guests in and it brings them back. They love the homemade fudge and shortbread in every room and the fact that we use our own meat and eggs, which come from happy animals, reared free range."

"It's important to support the local economy and especially independent businesses," Sue adds. "We always source locally, except in the rare instance where it might compromise on quality. We are constantly trying to keep up standards of quality and improve where we can."



Pure Lakes, Cumbria

With a background in chemistry, Sandra Blackburn was well placed to set up a toiletries company with her husband Iain and she spent a long time developing the environmentally friendly products before Pure Lakes was born. Now in its fifth year of trading, the business supplies about 100 hotels and B&Bs nationwide as well as a number of shops.

Laurel Cottage in Windermere is one of the guest houses that stocks Pure Lakes products. Owner Alison Ledger first saw the toiletries at the Best of Lakeland Hospitality Show about three years ago and she has been providing her guests with Pure Lakes hand soap, shower gel and shampoo ever since.

Alison loves the fact that she can support a local business and she couldn't be happier with the products. "It's like having your own local Body Shop," she says. "People love the smell and it's great that it's environmentally friendly. The packaging is pretty and simple and it looks good in the bathrooms."



Claire's Handmade, Cumbria

Claire's Handmade, which is run by Claire Kent and employs four people, produces a wide variety of preserves, chutneys and relishes using local ingredients whenever possible and no artificial additives.

In recent years, Claire has noticed an increase in local hotels and guest houses wanting to use local produce. "Even though it does cost places a bit more to stock our products as we can't compete on price with the national companies, we do compete very well on quality, food miles and supporting the Cumbrian economy."

Supporting the local economy is very important to owner of Dolly Waggon guest house in Keswick, Amanda McDonald. As a member of the Cumbria Business Environment Network she buys her meat from the local butcher, gets her toiletries from Pure Lakes and she uses Claire's Handmade's marmalade, jams and chutneys. "We only serve what we eat; we make sure we have the best produce," says Amanda. "Claire's products are not only nice and tasty, but local. Guests really appreciate this and some of them end up taking jars home."



The Sedbergh Soap Company, Cumbria

The Sedbergh Soap Company is a family business based on a working sheep and cattle farm at the foot of the Howgill Fells in Sedbergh. Owner Dorthe Pratt started making her own soap in 2007 after suffering with severe eczema all her life.

"All our soap is made, cut and packaged by hand," says Dorthe. "We grow most of our own flowers and herbs, including lavender, rosemary, mint, lemongrass, heather and nettles."

Dorthe mainly targets high-end hotels and restaurants as she believes they have the most interest in using local products. "The top hotels and restaurants have always taken ingredients in food very seriously - it's the heart of their business, so they extend that to buying other products," she says. "They are frontrunners in embracing local produce and already understand the whole local, seasonal ethos."

Grassington House is just one of many places that Dorthe supplies. Owners John and Susan Rudden couldn't be happier with the products. "We chose the Sedbergh Soap Company because the products are 100% pure and unique," says John "We like the old-fashioned personal service we receive from them."

Neal's Yard, Dorset

Owners of the Bull Hotel in Bridport, Richard and Nikki Cooper used to sell Neal's Yard Remedies products when they ran a shop in the town, so they knew how much they liked them. The Coopers decided that they wanted to continue to support the locally based company when they set up their hotel, in fact Neal's Yard is just one of many local businesses they support.

"As we're based in such a great location, we make the most of local meat and fresh fish on our menus," says Marketing Manager Billy Lintell. "Our guests love the fact that our local ethos continues with the toiletries that we provide."



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