



Enjoy a festive aperitif from Exmoor Distillery

Exmoor marks the spot

Head to our Exmoor towns and villages to stock up your pantry in preparation for the ultimate Christmas feast

WORDS: Rachel Mead

With Christmas around the corner, it's time to start thinking about seasonal menus for all those guests which are set to grace your dining table. How better to treat your friends and family, than by serving up locally-sourced produce from your doorstep?

The festive feel-good factor of shopping locally helps maintain our regional economy, keep our carbon footprints low and gives those tastebuds an unforgettable flavour of the West Country!

Aisha Elliott from Visit Exmoor is proud to share her enthusiasm for supporting local businesses, 'Exmoor is a wonderful place to visit during the festive period – we have some of the best traditional and artisanal food, drink and produce suppliers in the country which are showcased across a variety of events during the season and we can't wait to see what they have in store for 2023.'

LET'S BEGIN WITH OYSTERS

Nestled in the Class A waters of the North Somerset coastline,

'Oyster farming is more than sustainable, it's restorative! Sustainably farmed oysters are about as organic as it gets'

Porlock Bay Oysters take between three and four years to grow to table size. As the first site in England and Wales to have attained this top classification for Pacific oysters, Somerset foodies can count themselves lucky to add such a high-quality mollusc to our Christmas tables.

Ian, at Porlock Bay Oysters, recommends serving with an apple and radish dressing during the festivities by combining these two key ingredients with finely chopped shallots, honey, white wine vinegar and crushed peppercorns.

'Pacific oysters from Porlock Bay are some of the finest Pacific oysters around, and unlike other types of oysters, they have the advantage of being available all year round, even when there's

an 'R' in the month! Plus, oyster farming is more than sustainable, it's restorative! Sustainably farmed oysters are about as organic as it gets, and there's no manufactured feed – they feed on all-natural filtered producers from the sea.'

You can purchase oysters at the shop in Porlock Weir, or order online where they are packaged and delivered to maintain their freshness and quality. porlockbayoysters.co.uk

AN APERITIF

Whilst you're busy prepping those veggies and laying the table how about a pre-dinner cocktail made from local gin? Exmoor Distillery is an independent family business located on the southern gateway to Exmoor in Dulverton.

'We want our animals to be raised naturally, to grow at their own pace and have a limited environmental impact'

The Northmoor Gin combines the complex flavour of juniper with other unique botanicals to offer a gin with a 'country taste and smooth texture'.

Somerset gins, vodkas and rums are available to buy online and they are also offering festive hampers which can make an ideal gift.

exmoordistillery.co.uk

BETWEEN YOU, ME AND THE APPLE ORCHARD

You don't have to stray far from home before you chance upon a local cider producer but, shhh, have you heard of Secret Orchard Cider? Made with the wild yeast which is found on the apples, Joe and Todd make their cider through natural fermentation creating a very natural drink.

'We know as much as we can so that we can do as little as possible - it's a natural process.'

With 120 trees and apples sourced from local small holdings, Secret Orchard Cider has divulged that its cider is made from 100 per cent juice. You can buy online or find them at local farmers markets.

secretorchardcider.com

MEAT AND GREET

If you are after premium, organic meat which has been fed a herb-rich grass diet then Horner Farm meat boxes offer you a sustainable approach to your festive table. By allowing their animals to roam freely, and even access the hedgerows for extra nutrition, Holly and Mark are proud to say that their Beef Shorthorn, North Country Cheviot lambs and eclectic mix of

goats are grain and soya free.

'We want our animals to be raised naturally, to grow at their own pace and have a limited environmental impact' says Holly, whose meat boxes include selections of beef, lamb and goat meat.

You can pre-order special joints for Christmas and choose from a variety of meat boxes online or by visiting their farm shop. horner-farm.co.uk

THE WILD, WILD, WEST COUNTRY

Curtis Pitts is a third-generation deer manager who is harvesting wild deer from our West Country parklands to offer us the best quality, and sustainable venison for our tables this Christmas. In addition to this, Curtis Pitts Deer Services also stocks wild pheasant, wild partridge and wild mallard amongst other seasonal game meats.

Curtis says: 'I have a connection to the land. Welfare of the animals I deal with; and the environment are at the forefront of everything that I do.' For a wide selection of game, and possibly something different for the menu, head to the website. curtispiitsdeerservices.co.uk

VEG OUT

Good Vibe Veg is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) market garden in the Porlock Vale area of Exmoor which offers a local vegetable box scheme. Supported by Somerset Community Food, Good Vibe Veg is a sustainable business that is reconnecting people with the environmental benefits of growing and eating local vegetables. It has had huge

RIGHT: Horner Farm meat boxes offer you a sustainable approach to your festive table

PHOTO: JEFF COOK





PHOTO © JAMES WATSON
 OYSTERS BY THE SELWORTHY PANTRY

support thus far, so you will need to get in quickly for the Christmas vegetable boxes.
goodvibeveg@gmail.com

THE WINTER'S ALE
 First brewed nearly 30 years ago, 'Exmas' is one of Exmoor Ales' favourite seasonal ales.

'When we start making it, we know Christmas is on the way!' says Head Brewer, Tom

Davis. 'We deliberately make it quite full-bodied and malty to compliment the winter festive season, and the hops we add to this particular brew have citrus and spice notes, which helps the beer remind people of plum pudding and Christmas cake.'

As a relatively strong bitter at 5%, 'Exmas' also pairs well with many traditional seasonal foods such as turkey, cold meats

and strong cheeses. Exmoor Ales are situated at the gateway to Exmoor in Wiveliscombe, or online.
exmoorales.co.uk

THE CHEESEBOARD

You've pulled the crackers and finished your pud, but surely there's still some room for cheese and biscuits. In the run-up to Christmas, The Big



Cheese stocks more than 100 West Country cheeses, including cow, sheep, goat and buffalo varieties.

With a selection of hampers, cheeseboards and antipasti available, a trip to Porlock to stock up on these dairy delights will add variety

to your cheeseboard this festive season.
thebigcheeseportlock.co.uk

COMPLEMENTARY CONDIMENTS

For a twist on your usual preserves and pickles, Emma at the Selworthy Pantry has created a wide selection of alternative condiments and chutneys to add a festive flourish to each course.

'We only ever cook in small batches to ensure we keep the true authentic home-made

taste. Everything is done by hand, from stirring the por to the labelling of the jars.'

Locally sourced fruit and vegetables fill Emma's cottage kitchen as she creates her award-winning mulled wine jam, bucks fizz marmalade and cranberry, porri and orange churney. ♦
theselworthypantry.com

ABOVE:
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LEFT:
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