



# TASTE THE ISLAND™

**A Celebration of Our  
Food and Drink**

A guide for the delivery of world-class  
food and drink experiences

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# TASTE THE ISLAND

I welcome and support the involvement of Tourism NI in Taste the Island delivered in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. This celebration is particularly exciting as it comes hot on the heels of Northern Ireland's recognition as "Best Food Destination" at the International Travel and Tourism Awards 2018.

As part of the visitor experience, food and drink presents an opportunity to drive economic growth, which in turn supports our strategic ambition to develop both the seasonal and regional extension of tourism. Taste the Island is also an opportunity to motivate visitors to travel to Northern Ireland by offering a compelling programme of authentic food and drink experiences from September to November 2019.

There is a spectacular energy simmering in Northern Ireland and this initiative is the perfect way to celebrate the quality, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship within our food and drink industry.

The regional roadshows organised as part of Taste the Island aim to re-energise and inspire our food and drink industry to build on the positive foundations already laid down by a successful Year of Food and Drink in 2016.

We encourage those working in the food and drink industry in Northern Ireland to get behind the initiative, take part in industry workshops and use the platform as a way to motivate both international visitors and locals alike to enjoy the high quality produce available here.

We look forward to working with our industry partners to deliver what will be a hugely exciting time for food and drink.



**John McGrillen**  
Tourism NI Chief Executive



# GET READY FOR TASTE THE ISLAND

## The Task

Globally, we are known as a land of green fields and pristine waters, a windswept coastline and a mild wet climate giving us bountiful, sustainable and high-quality food produce. And that's before we take into account the warmest of welcomes and the legendary hospitality which uniquely sets us apart.

*"We are creating some of the most exciting food and drink stories ever experienced on this island and our ambition is to bring our food story to the world"*

Internationally, our food and drink products have gained significant reputation share over the past few years, however perception as a place with great food and drink experiences is not yet fully realised.

In 2017 there were an estimated  
**4.9 million**  
overnight trips in Northern Ireland

Estimated expenditure associated with these trips was  
**£926 million**  
These are the highest estimates on record.

Food and drink consumption accounts for around  
**£350m**  
or 30% of total visitor spend

We've done the research and know that in order to respond to the rapid growth in travel today and increasing visitor expectations around food and drink; an initiative of scale is required to maximise our full potential in all areas. The international competition is intense, if we want to ensure that the tourism industry capitalises fully, this initiative will have to grow on a sustained, annual basis.

We want to channel Northern Ireland's food renaissance and leverage our accolade as 'Best Food Destination' awarded at the International Travel and Tourism Awards 2018/19.



***"We know that our food and drink experiences are world class, now we want everyone else to know that too"***



## The Idea

# TASTE THE ISLAND

### What is it?

Taste the Island is a collaborative initiative developed in partnership with Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. It is an annual celebration of our food and drink culture across September, October and November.

Experiences will include visits to food producers, distillers and brewers; food trails, food festivals, participation in traditional skills, opportunities to forage and fish or sit back and enjoy our best modern cuisine in traditional pubs, small-town cafés, restaurants, city bistros and Michelin-starred experiences, to name but a few. The extensive programme will seek to create an awareness and renewed appreciation at home and abroad of the strength and richness of our food culture.



# Our Food and Drink Story

Forget tired stereotypes and unearth a food and drink culture that is being reimagined with extraordinary passion and originality by generations of new and old chefs and creative producers and suppliers. Our farmers and fisherman are pushing the boundaries as modern hunter gatherers while respecting the landscape and sea. They provide our food producers and chefs with incredible ingredients, to forge one of the world's best-kept gastronomic secrets.

If travel is all about discovery, today's visitors will uncover a renewed appreciation for the natural ingredients offered by our lush landscape. Matched by an ever-evolving cuisine, we are transforming outdated clichés into experiences that challenge perceptions of modern and traditional. With its mild climate, green landscape and coastal waters, confident chefs are eagerly reclaiming our food heritage and proudly showcasing our local fare.

Easily traversed yet remarkably varied in its breath-taking landscape, our diverse countryside gives true local flavour to regional gastronomic experiences.

We are witnessing an explosion of exciting immersive experiences for visitors looking to unlock authentic culture, from charming countryside cafés to stellar Michelin-rated dining, gastropubs to small-batch breweries, verdant farmlands to locally inspired tours and trails.



In recent years, Northern Ireland has made significant strides in strengthening the breadth and quality of our food and drink offering.

The Year of Food and Drink in 2016 was a highly successful initiative that inspired new food experiences and fostered an appreciation for our delicious food and drink.

The year long celebration increased our visitor satisfaction and generated increased demand for Northern Ireland produce in international markets.

Our success in achieving international standout is evident as we celebrate Northern Ireland being voted 'Best Food Destination' 2018/19 beating off competition from San Sebastian, Cork and Txotx!

Taste the  
Greatness  
NORTHERN IRELAND

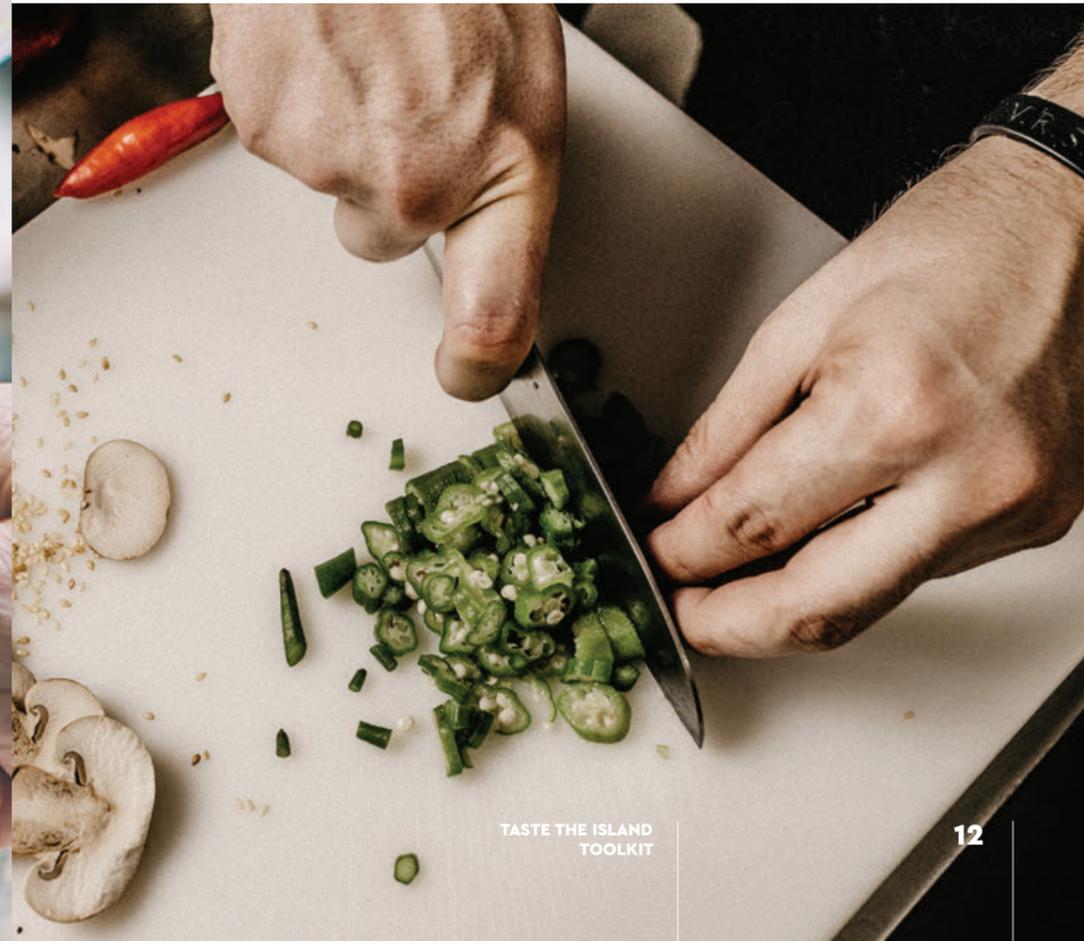
 **WINNER**  
Best Food Destination 2018/19



## The Celebration

Northern Ireland's food and drink renaissance continues; from our chefs winning international awards to renowned food writers singing the praises of our ingredients and our cooking.

We know that food has an unmatched ability to communicate a unique sense of place – providing a direct connection to the history of a place, the soul of its people and the rhythm of daily life. Taste the Island will tap into our imagination, inspire creativity and stimulate development, leading to exciting new food and drink experiences and events. These experiences and events will create lasting memories for visitors and help generate additional revenue.



## The Value

The prize is significant. In 2018, food and drink consumption accounted for 30% of total revenue from visitors to Northern Ireland, equating to over £350 million. Central to the success of Taste the Island will be the passion and participation of people and businesses from across the full spectrum of food, drink and tourism.

Economic benefits will include:



REPEAT BUSINESS



TOURISM REVENUE GROWTH



GROWING REGIONAL SPREAD



INCREASING DWELL TIME



EXTENDING THE TOURISM SEASON



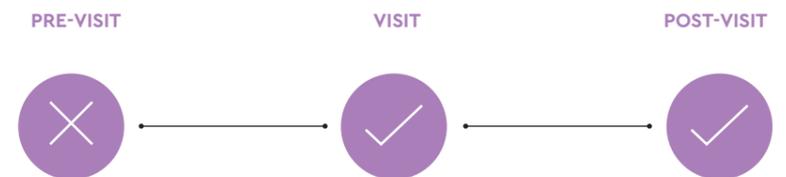
INCREASED BEDNIGHTS

And it's not just economic benefits. There's also the pride that comes from creating and delivering brilliant visitor experiences that are representative of place, and the confidence that accrues from delivering excellence. 2019 is just the start of an inaugural programme, and we are confident that through collaboration and partnerships, the positive impacts of the initiative and its legacy will be felt for years to come.

## The Reason

While perceptions on the quality of our food and drink experiences have improved, much remains to be done. Research shows that before visitors come here on holiday, many people don't really consider Northern Ireland to be a food destination.

But there's good news, as research shows that post-visit the quality of our food and drink is repeatedly praised by the pleasantly surprised visitors. So, there's a gap between perceptions globally and the reality, a gap that Taste the Island can help to close by presenting a new narrative in national and international markets.



Additional sales in 2019 will most likely be from the domestic market, and from those international markets where there is a relatively short lead-time between decisions to travel and arrival.

# Shared Success

Sustainable employment is the ultimate measure of success in our tourism and food and drinks sector, and the benefits of a strong sector go beyond economics.

Other benefits include the contribution to vibrant local communities and rural life, critical acclaim from international food writers, and high levels of visitor satisfaction.

## Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland's Food and Drink Tourism Landscape



While the numbers grow on a monthly basis, the graphic helps to illustrate the current success of the food and drink industry.

So, what will success look like for Taste the Island? Taste the Island will be successful when, together, we achieve the following:

- A programme packed full of innovative food and drink themed events and experiences running across September, October and November.
- Food and drink experiences that are world-class such as agri-tours, experiences that are hosted by producers, farmers and fishermen, more opportunities for visitors to meet the maker and so on.
- An enhanced role for food and drink in existing festivals and events that take place during Taste the Island as well as brand new events that focus on food and drink.
- Strengthened and expanded relationships between producers and the food service sector and increased availability of local food and drinks across menu offerings.
- Enhanced skills to make visitor experiences saleable and more commercially viable.

## What now?

This guide outlines what Taste the Island is about and gives some ideas on how to get involved. Food and drink are an essential and growing part of the visitor experience. The potential is significant. Get involved to maximise the opportunities for your business and your industry.

### BALLYMALOE HOUSE

Guests at Ballymaloe House in East Cork can step into the kitchen, roll up their sleeves and learn the secrets of bread baking from the pastry chef. They'll need to be early risers though, as the bread baking lesson takes place at 7.00am. If that's a bit too early, visitors can also collect eggs from the hen house or visit the pigs. Other events throughout the year include art and photographic exhibitions, wine events and concerts in the Grainstore. [www.ballymaloe.ie](http://www.ballymaloe.ie)



### OX RESTAURANT

The strong belief at 1 star Michelin restaurant Ox in Belfast is that the seasons are set as nature intended, and that imagination and creativity help bring them to life. By working closely with local suppliers, menus are created around the best available seasonal produce. The ethos extends to their drinks menu which features alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks from all over the island.

[www.oxbelfast.com](http://www.oxbelfast.com)



### BLAKES OF THE HOLLOW

Renowned for its traditional heritage, Blakes of the Hollow is one of the most famous and well recognised Victorian pubs in Northern Ireland. It is a must see attraction which has graced County Fermanagh's shores for over 125 years. The bar keeps its tradition to the best of its ability and yet suits all different age groups. The snugs are a testament to this, crowded with groups of people looking for a famously poured pint of Guinness or a delicious Irish coffee.

[www.blakesofthehollow.com](http://www.blakesofthehollow.com)



### SLOW FOOD FESTIVAL

The Slow Food Festival celebrates the best of local, clean, fair food. Held annually in Guildhall Square, Derry~Londonderry, this major celebration showcases the best of our producers, chefs and brewers from across the North West. Winner of Best Tourism Experience NI at the 2018 TNI awards, this established event continues to grow and attract visitors from across the island. Featuring a Slow Food Harvest Market, talks & demos, tours and tastings, street food, family fun and much more!  
[www.derrystrabane.com/food](http://www.derrystrabane.com/food)



### BRUNEL'S RESTAURANT

Head chef Paul Cunningham has earned himself a reputation as one of the most adventurous restaurateurs across Northern Ireland, with his passion for consistently excellent food earning him both critical acclaim and numerous awards. Paul always wanted to work with local, seasonal produce. Inspired from an early age by his grandfather, Paul has fond memories of his role model teaching him about the landscape, about using the earth to grow fresh fruit and vegetables, and about the best spots on his doorstep to forage the wonderful shellfish, sea vegetables and herbs that were readily available.  
[www.brunelrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.brunelrestaurant.co.uk)



### ARMAGH FOOD AND CIDER FESTIVAL

Festival visitors to the iconic city of Armagh and its surrounding fruit-laden orchards can expect to raise more than a glass to an incredible spread of mouth-watering events. An international extravaganza featuring multiple can't-miss events in venues right across Ireland's Orchard County.  
[www.visitarmagh.com/festivals/food-cider/](http://www.visitarmagh.com/festivals/food-cider/)



# Be part of the Taste the Island Programme!

We want to increase the availability of great food and drink experiences across all parts of the day.

Whether you're a food producer, a chef, an accommodation business, a food network trail, or a farmer whose passion for the land is matched by your love of telling a good story, Taste the Island presents a wonderful opportunity to expand your food tourism offering and leverage a global shop window.

Ingredients will include a genuine interest in providing high quality local food and drink, ideas and enthusiasm to develop a brilliant experience, and passion to deliver excellence for the visitor. You can do something on your own or in collaboration with others. It can be something big or small, something that happens once during Taste the Island or something that becomes a regular part of your operation. We want to create a multifaceted celebration all across our food island. For the plan to work, we invite you to host a Taste the Island celebration of your own.

Here's how we've broken it down:



#### TASTE OF PLACE

Food Service | Restaurants | Accommodation | Pubs | Cafés | Visitor Attractions



#### MEET THE MAKER

Food Producers | Breweries | Distilleries | Food Hall | Retail | Farmers Markets



#### MAKE IT YOURSELF

Food Producers | Breweries | Distilleries | Food Hall | Retail | Farmers Markets



#### TRAILS & NETWORKS

Food Networks | Visitor Trails | Food Tours | Activities



#### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festivals | Small events | Pop-ups | Food Series

*\*Taste the Island brand guidelines will issue early July*



## Know your visitor

Understanding your visitor is a good starting point. Who are they? What interests them? Does your current offering appeal? What more can you do?

Food and drink experiences can influence where people go and what they do. With the economy performing well, domestic demand for Taste the Island in 2019 is likely to be people taking a short break, in addition to their main holiday, most likely overseas.

The three priority segments in the ROI Market are Active Maximisers, Open to Ideas and Open-Minded Explorers. In international markets, Taste the Island can help close the gap between pre-trip perceptions and the on-the-ground reality. The international target segments are Social Energisers, Culturally Curious and Great Escapers. Help paint a picture of your target customer by understanding their motivations. As a result, you will make better decisions about your food or drink experience. See [www.tourismni.com](http://www.tourismni.com) for more details on customer segments.



## ROI priority segments

### ACTIVE MAXIMISERS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Diversity, like to squeeze in as much as possible on a short break
- Enjoy energetic activities (but not extreme) and have a strong sense of adventure
- Passion for outdoors and the natural environment
- Looking for unique and mind broadening experiences
- Digital a very significant influence
- Focussed on getting a good deal
- Actively research online
- Need to be connected (Wi-Fi etc.)

#### BEHAVIOURS:

- Most likely to take breaks with friends, enjoy outdoor holidays or travel for a specific event
- Prefer hotels over B&B or Guesthouse



### OPEN TO IDEAS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Conduct research online, consider reviews and influenced by media
- Price and deal important
- Openminded and interested in the outdoors, sport, music and history
- Seeking organised 'energetic' but not adventurous activities, motivated by nature/outdoors
- Like to plan and have an itinerary
- Value for money important and influenced by deals
- Likes 'easy to get to' destinations and scenic natural surroundings

#### BEHAVIOURS:

- Over index on outdoor and sport/activity breaks (but also could be travelling with family)
- Prefer hotels over self catering



### OPEN-MINDED EXPLORERS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Wish to engage with local people and local culture
- Seeking unique experiences and are interested in learning
- Want high quality hotels and food
- Appreciate and enjoy the natural environment and scenic beauty
- Enjoy planning breaks, doing a lot of research and rely on traditional media and tourism websites more than other segments

#### BEHAVIOURS:

- Most likely to take a city break, cultural break, followed by get together with friends or attend event
- Travelling with friends or partner
- Most likely to stay in a hotel



## International segments

### CULTURALLY CURIOUS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Want to broaden their minds, explore new culture, landscapes and history
- Want authentic, engaging experiences
- Want high-quality offerings at mealtimes

#### EXPERIENCES THEY LIKE:

- Food festivals/events with local cuisines
- Visit local producer, processor, distiller and brewer
- Local food markets
- 'Catch and cook' and 'make your own' activities
- Guided trails and tours
- Long-table dining
- Experiences that blend food with culture/arts/adventure/wellness



### GREAT ESCAPERS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Want unique experiences outside the main tourist thoroughfares
- Want rural holidays and food that is good-value, of a wide range (to suit them and young families), and relevant to local activities

#### EXPERIENCES THEY LIKE:

- Self-guided food and foraging walks/trails that are linked to landscape/seascape
- Farm visits
- Specialist food shops, bakeries and markets
- Non-intrusive, high-quality food offerings, picnic baskets, food trucks
- Long-table dining



### SOCIAL ENERGISERS

#### ATTITUDES & DRIVERS:

- Want fun, exciting, novel experiences
- Like sharing on social media

#### EXPERIENCES THEY LIKE:

- Urban food tours
- Affordable gastronomic experiences
- Shared experience dining
- Food trucks and stands
- Non-traditional dining, pop-ups
- Socially responsible food concepts
- Indoor food halls, multi-concept
- Food and drink pairing events





## Delivering a Taste of Place

More and more, visitors want to experience different cultures through food and beverage-based activities.

They want fresh, locally sourced, seasonal food. They enjoy meeting producers, brewers, distillers and farmers. Food festivals, food trails, food tours and cookery schools are all high on their radar.

Great progress has been made in recent years but there's more we can do. By shifting the emphasis away from a cohort of food enthusiasts to the majority of food service providers, we increase the overall quality and availability of the food and drink experience for visitors. Integrate the place story of your destination into your overall story and experience.

With the rise of online social media, increasing the visibility of dishes at all food service levels, businesses should seek to differentiate the offering by drawing on the past to create something new that withstands any fads. Articulating your story and treating a plate as a reflection of that can elevate a dish to an experience and a memory. Now more than ever, it is time to reveal the hidden magic behind the menus and put the link between place and culture at the forefront of our tourism offering.



### MEWS RESTAURANT

Mews Restaurant in Baltimore, West Cork has a strong focus on seasonal foods from the region. It works directly with the small farmers, market-gardeners, foragers and fishermen of West Cork to source its ingredients, letting their intrinsic natural flavour take centre stage. It's an approach that's certainly working – Mews received a Michelin Star for 2019.

[www.mewsrestaurant.ie](http://www.mewsrestaurant.ie)

### WEE BUNS COOKERY SCHOOL

Wee Buns Cookery School is located in the beautiful countryside of County Tyrone on the outskirts of the village of Moy.

Wee Buns offer a range of cooking and baking classes in a small purpose built kitchen for adults and children. Classes focus on using the best quality ingredients, making the most of local and seasonal produce.

Whether you are an absolute beginner wanting to learn some cooking and baking classics or a more seasoned cook we have classes to suit. You will learn key skills and techniques in a fun and friendly environment, that will allow you to cook and bake with confidence. And you will have a selection of our great, tried and tested recipes to take home.

[www.weebuns.com](http://www.weebuns.com)



### ARMAGH CIDER COMPANY

Visit Armagh Cider Company and see how they make their award-winning cider 'from blossom to bottle'. Walk through the orchards and share in the highs and lows of growing the Armagh Bramley Apple – awarded PGI status. Move into the cidery where the apples are pressed and fermented. See the vats of cider maturing – waiting to be filtered and blended. Next, step into the bottling plant where all our cider is bottled as well as several craft beers. Finally, progress to The Pulping Loft where all our ciders and juices can be sampled. Learn how the various blends are made and taste the difference.

[www.armaghcider.com](http://www.armaghcider.com)



### GAME OF THRONES® AFTERNOON TEA AT BALLYGALLY CASTLE HOTEL

Ballygally Castle Hotel offers a Game of Thrones® Afternoon Tea which will delight fans of the world renowned show as well as those who love the indulgence of a delicious afternoon tea.

[www.hastingshotels.com](http://www.hastingshotels.com)

### FOCUS ON

#### RECIPES AND MENUS

Focus on our natural larder e.g. meats, dairy, plants and seafood. Concentrate on simple recipes that are grounded in provenance. List suppliers and even food miles on your menu or ingredients list.

#### PROVENANCE

Focus on the ingredients, the land and people that produce them. Tell the story of your relationships with farmers, growers and artisan producers. Understand local farming methods and the terrain.

#### TELLING THE STORY

Be creative in allowing your customers get a sense of this relationship – through photo walls, featured suppliers, social media, guest appearances. Ensure all frontline staff know your story and have passionate belief in it.

#### SIGNATURE DISHES AND DRINKS

Develop a signature dish and drink that's created from ingredients that are local or within a defined radius. Celebrate your regional makers. Think about where your visitor engages with you and your food – what about pop ups in unusual tourist locations or outdoors?



## Meet the Maker Experiences

High quality and authentic food and drink products are at the heart of food and drink tourism. But they're not enough on their own – a memorable experience must also be provided.

### COMPONENTS OF A BRILLIANT FOOD/DRINK EXPERIENCE

#### AUTHENTIC PRODUCT

Getting this right is at the heart of the experience.

+

#### HIGH QUALITY SERVICE

Going the extra mile can make all the difference to the customer. Be sure to also make it easy for people to find out about you and easy for them to book or buy your experience.

+

#### DISTINCTIVE STORY

What's distinctive? How has your local place shaped you and what you do?

+

#### NARRATION

How you and your team interact with people to tell your story impacts their enjoyment. People love guided tours, but you can also use other interpretation tools.

The right combination of product, service, story and narration means visitors can engage with local people, local culture and local customs.

Northern Ireland already delivers some wonderful experiences, but there is potential and demand for more.

### VISITS TO YOUR FARM, FISHING BOAT OR WORKSHOP

As the food experience most sought after by visitors, these visits provide a direct connection between the visitor and real people and real food.

### Global Trends



**Climate Conscious** – driven by a growing awareness of the damage plastics are doing to the environment, businesses are shifting towards eco-conscious packaging, and single-use plastic is being replaced by multi-use and compostable.



**Plant Based** – the shift towards plant based eating continues to grow rapidly meaning businesses need to improve range and quality of menu offering to win customers and drive satisfaction.



**Craft Food and Drink Pairing** – More consumers are exploring food and drink combinations that enhance their sensory experiences beyond wine, with non-alcoholic beverages, craft beer and whiskey.



**Small Plates** – Dining out is changing, consumers are moving away from formal menu structures to a more convivial offering focused less on frill and more on flavour.

## FOCUS ON

### YOUR PLACE

What's different about farming or fishing in your particular place? What are the challenges, the benefits, the peculiarities? How have you come to be here? How do you express your connection to your place?

### YOURSELF

Let visitors know a little something of yourself, your motivations, your food philosophy. How you learned your craft and from whom. Perhaps you have talented hands, a creative mind or expert know-how?

### YOUR INGREDIENTS

Explain the uniqueness of ingredients, highlighting the freshness of your end product.

### YOUR CRAFT

Describe the craft – its origins, the traditions that surround it, the nature of the process, and how has it been passed from one generation to the next.

### YOUR PASSION

Tell visitors why you do what you do and ensure your team live and breathe that passion too.

### ARE YOU NEW TO HOSTING VISITORS?

Here are some tips to help deliver a great experience:

- Introduce yourself and make eye contact
- Use an informal and friendly personal style and tone
- To gauge people's knowledge, ask and encourage questions
- Tailor the tour to suit the audience – content and length
- Include opportunities to taste the food or drink
- Let people have a go at making something
- In advance, provide online booking and be clear about dates, times, durations and if you welcome individuals or just groups
- Easy to find, use GPS coordinates, entrance signage
- Provide phone numbers and email contact details
- Don't forget, give people the opportunity to buy product to take away with them at the end of the visit

**If you are new to this, start small, perhaps selecting just one set day, afternoon or even just an hour per week. Stick with it and make yourself available at a time that others can depend on. It will take time to build up awareness that you provide this new experience so collaborate with local tourism businesses to help spread the word.**

## BREWING AND DISTILLING

Perhaps you offer tours, or you meet visitors through farmers markets or through working with local restaurants? When choosing drinks, people often choose a drink that they want to know more about, as well as drinks based on their taste. Components of the experience may include:

### LANDSCAPE

Tell visitors about local grain farming, the soils, the climate and how they all impact the raw ingredient and the end product.

### CULTURE

Immerse the visitor in the culture of brewing or distilling in the area – the rise and fall of the industry and its current resurgence.

### PEOPLE

Present your drink as an extension or reflection of the people who make it.

### PROCESS

Visitors want to know how their drink is made. Your experience can include aspects such as hop variety, ageing the beer, the barley mixture of your whiskey, the botanicals in your gin, the apple crushing, pressing and fermentation processes for your cider. Include tastings and make the experience hands-on!

### FOOD CONNECTION

Pair your drink with local food and regional dishes to allow visitors appreciate the interaction of the tastes and flavours.

### AVAILABILITY

Let visitors know where they can buy your product during the rest of their holiday and after they get back home.

## BUSHMILLS DISTILLERY

Bushmills Distillery is said to be the oldest licenced distillery in the world. It's certainly Ireland's oldest working one. Visitors can take a tour and see how this global icon is made. The experience encompasses a visit to the Mash House, Still House, Cask Store and Bottling Hall and after all that, a little dram by a roaring fire.

[www.bushmills.com](http://www.bushmills.com)

## GUINNESS STOREHOUSE

At Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, visitors are promised a "multi-sensory tasting journey that brings the distinctive flavours of the iconic stout to life." There's a choice of visitor options including The Guinness Academy, The Taste Experience (a 1.5 hour tutored Connoisseur session) and the STOUTie, where the visitor's selfie is recreated on the head of the stout.

[www.guinness-storehouse.com](http://www.guinness-storehouse.com)

## WHITEWATER BREWERY AND TAP ROOM

On your visit to Whitewater Brewery, you will hear about the generational family journey to brewing award winning beers. Learn about the process with a tour of the brewery and learn how they make their famous beers including Maggie's Leap! Don't forget to head back to the new tap house to try some ales and hear some tales.

[whitewaterbrewery.com/tours/](http://whitewaterbrewery.com/tours/)



# Make it Yourself Experiences

## Hands on experiences!

Today's visitor likes the sense of immersion from taking part in an activity, not just as a passive listener/viewer. They're looking for experiences that will deliver benefits such as new learning, cultural experience and overall wellbeing. Visitors want to feel a connection with the places they visit – through the people they meet and the experiences they have. Increasingly, people want experiences that will have a lasting impact – for example to learn a new skill.



The world's no. 1 travel experience is a cooking class in Italy! The Tuscan Farmhouse cooking class offers fresh pasta, an apron and a stunning view of the Tuscan countryside.

(TripAdvisor 2018)

Education is a critical element to understanding a country's food culture. Learning to cook with the best local, seasonal ingredients to understand a country's culinary traditions and food heritage is a quick sure way to build lasting ambassadors for our food.



### FOCUS ON

#### TRADITIONAL DISHES

Think about traditional skills that would appeal to culturally curious visitors e.g. making traditional breads including Soda Farls and Potato Bread or our Lough Neagh Eels!

#### MODERN FOOD

It's not about dispelling our image as the land of potatoes and bread, it's about claiming a new status as an island with the world's best potatoes and bread.

#### DAIRY AND BREAD

Both icons of our food scene today, cheese making, butter churning and bread making experiences are growing in appeal.

#### INVOLVING ACTIVITIES

Reinforce the idea of where our food comes from: collect your own eggs for breakfast, strawberry picking, garden foraging etc.

#### DON'T FORGET THE DRINKS

Whiskey blending, gin infusing and pint pulling are all experiences of appeal. Irish coffee making class anyone?

#### CATCH AND COOK

Cookery schools could partner with their local fisherman to develop a catch and cook experience for visitors.

#### ADD VALUE

By sharing stories, cultural nuances and takeaway recipes.

#### GET THE KIDS INVOLVED

Kids are naturally creative, let them experiment, learn and become our future food ambassadors!

### BOYNE VALLEY FOOD NETWORK

Collaboration is at the heart of Discover Boyne Valley Flavours where producers, farmers, restaurants, distillers and accommodation businesses all work together to showcase the fresh, local produce from the local area in Meath and Louth. Boyne Valley Food Series is a calendar of events that celebrates the land, the heritage, the people and the produce. Running from March to December, events range from guided food tours to weekend farm retreats and from themed events to street feasts. [www.boynevalleyflavours.ie](http://www.boynevalleyflavours.ie)



### ENNISKILLEN TASTE EXPERIENCE

The Enniskillen Taste Experience starts at Enniskillen Castle where customers are gently guided around the island town meeting local producers and suppliers. Visitors are treated to an array of tastes, nibbles and drinks along the way.

[www.enniskillentasteexperience.com](http://www.enniskillentasteexperience.com)



### TRACEY'S FARMHOUSE KITCHEN

Step into Tracey's 18th century thatched barn on the spectacular shores of Strangford Lough to experience a day of authentic Irish baking. This charming home is as beautiful inside as are the stunning landscapes that surround it outside. Upon arrival, you'll receive tea and coffee, as well as a warm Irish welcome from your host. Then, get ready to start baking as you're shown how to make a delicious delicacy known as Irish Fruit Soda Cake. With that in the oven, prepare for a taste of heritage as you learn how to make staple Irish history food items; Potato and Soda bread. These delectable goods will be enjoyed with handmade butter, dulce butters, jams and your choice of tea or coffee.

[www.traceysfarmhousekitchen.com](http://www.traceysfarmhousekitchen.com)



## Tours, Trails and Networks

Collaborating for success, there is strength in numbers!

The power of a passionate, well-organised food tourism network focused on visitor impact can't be underestimated. They provide a template for much of what needs to be achieved by demonstrating how food and drink can greatly enhance the tourist experience while boosting economic development and strengthening local food systems.



Food tours are the fastest growing tour experience category in the world.

(AirBnB 2018)

Coming together with other businesses and producers in your area can create a more appealing destination for a visitor and open up new tourism opportunities. Cross business collaboration with producers has the potential to boost local trade and drive tourists to your destination. Key to the success of a food network is the shared place story and saleability of its experience components.

From the visitor's perspective food and drink are not usually the driving factor but part of their overall holiday. Where they sleep, the local attractions, entertainment on offer, the landscape and scenery all play a part too.

Food and drink experiences can play a significant role in any visitor's trip when brought together with the various other elements of their stay to create a more encompassing and engaging visit which make your destination stand out.



### FOOD TRAILS

For visitors, the word 'trail' suggests a self-guided, well-planned route with clear directions. Effective trails go beyond a simple directory of all that's edible in the area. They succeed when there's real collaboration between members as well as a memorable overall story.

- The story of the trail should connect it to the place and be reflected by each trail member.
- Establish common standards for all stops on the route.
- At each stop, have a clearly defined, recognisable point of arrival so the visitor knows they are in the right place.
- Reinforce the connecting story at each location – through signage, leaflets, wall displays and through the people.
- Make it sensory and immersive – engage as many of the senses as you can. Also, give visitors the opportunity to take part, not just to listen or to look. Have product available for people to buy and take back home.
- Make the experiences 'purchasable' at any business involved in the network.
- Cross promotion is a key indicator of a successful trail so ensure that each member is aware of and positioned to sell the other.

### TASTE AND TOUR

Home of the multi-award winning Belfast Food Tour as well as other signature food & drink tours and bespoke private & corporate tours and experiences.

Belfast Food Tour will take you 'off the eaten track' on a 4-hour food & fun-filled guided walk through the city centre. No need for breakfast, nor will you need lunch.

Local expert guides will ensure you get a flavour for the city and the magnificent and authentic produce of Northern Ireland.

[www.tasteandtour.co.uk](http://www.tasteandtour.co.uk)



### TOAST THE COAST

Satisfy your hunger for a journey to celebrate the delicious local food along the Antrim Coast Road & Glens, part of the world-famous Causeway Coastal Route, stopping off from Whitehead to Cushendun.

Enjoy a range of handmade, hooked & harvested food on a full day of tasting and eating. Celebrate what is traditional and newly formed recipes on the best of local foods and delight in the tastes from local award-winning producers. Toast the Coast with the 'water of life' and get into the spirit of Northern Ireland.

[www.toastthecoastni.com](http://www.toastthecoastni.com)





### AUNT SANDRA'S CANDY FACTORY

Aunt Sandra's Candy Factory is renowned as one of the finest purveyors of hand made chocolates, fudge and boiled sweets made from 100 year old recipes. A visit to the shop is like taking a trip back in time where visitors can look in on the production process and see how chocolate and fudge is made.

[www.auntsandras.com](http://www.auntsandras.com)



### LOUGH NEAGH TOURS

Lough Neagh Tours offer guests an opportunity to immerse themselves in heritage, history and hospitality around this unique lough – the largest in the UK and Ireland. Departing from Belfast city centre to the shores of Lough Neagh, an area world renowned for its folklore, flora, fauna and eel, guests are transported to an untapped wilderness likened to the Florida Everglades. Be one of the first to experience its untouched landscape, to meet the locals and to sample the unique charm and fantastic culinary delights.

[www.loughneaghtours.com](http://www.loughneaghtours.com)



### FOOD TOURS AND FORAGING EXPERIENCES

Holiday highlights are created when the visitor takes an active role in the experience, and food tours and foraging really deliver in this experience. While the expert or the tour leader is often into food, they must also create and tell a memorable story.

#### URBAN TOURS

Each stop is a chapter, like a chapter of the tour's overall story, a good relationship between the tour leader and the various stops will permeate across the visitor experience.

- Make it an experience: include sensory elements – opportunities to taste, touch, smell etc.
- Also, visitors love to have a go at trying out something new – make it immersive.
- Not too serious: although the main interest is the food, enjoyment is also a primary motivator.

#### FORAGING EXPERIENCES

Immersive exploration at its best, triggering all the senses as your visitors explore and taste the hedgerows, by-roads, green fields and shorelines.

- Story: tell the story of our ancestral cuisine, our survival instincts and traditions, our wild food.
- Taste: incorporate a picnic made from locally foraged produce.
- Added value or additional revenue stream: create a reference book of wild edibles as a take-away or write a recipe book based on wild ingredients.



## Festivals and Events

Food and drink can play a starring role in delivering great festivals and events. And that's not just where food and drink is the main theme but across the wider spectrum of festivals and events.

Whether you want to enhance the food and drink offering at a festival that's taking place during Taste the Island or you're creating a brand-new food and drink-themed event, the possibilities are endless and the demand from customers is growing.

Attend one of the Taste the Island industry workshops to start the ideas flowing or to set your plans in motion.

### FOCUS ON

#### POP UPS AND KITCHEN TAKEOVERS

Particularly in unusual venues. Of course, this involves a keen focus on logistics and planning, but it can deliver a wonderful experience in an atmospheric venue. Remember that customers want unique experiences and are happy to pay more for an unusual event that creates brilliant memories.

#### TOURS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Give visitors the chance to watch chefs at work and to learn about the ingredients, processes and skills involved. They are particularly powerful when they engage the senses – not just sight but sound, smell, touch and taste – and when they use a storytelling style to connect with visitors. This means a chef/cook who doesn't simply deliver a dry script but brings it to life.

#### MULTI-DISCIPLINARY FOOD EXPERIENCES

Food can play a central role in all types of festivals – arts, literature, wellness, adventure. If you're a festival organiser or festival committee whose expertise lies in areas other than food, don't worry. Just link in with your local restaurant or food producer to explore how you can work together to bring food centre stage. Your festival audience will thank you for it.



### TICKETY MOO

An ice cream farm shop with a difference! – Visitors can watch its herd of award winning pedigree jersey cows being milked and then visit the ice cream parlour and enjoy fantastic flavours such as: Bubblegum Mallow, Balsamic Strawberry, Rhubarb Crumble and custard, Double Caramel Fudge Chunk and many more!

[www.discovernorthernireland.com/Tickety-Moo-Irvinestown-Enniskillen-P60077](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/Tickety-Moo-Irvinestown-Enniskillen-P60077)



### BROIGHTER GOLD

Nestled among the yellow fields of Oilseed rape in Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, you will find Broglasco Farm, home of Broighter Gold Rapeseed Oil.

Behind every bottle is a wealth of history. This local product, grown on the field where the Broighter Hoard was discovered, along with the colour of the cold pressed oilseed rape gives the product a brand image.

The Broighter Hoard or now more commonly known as the Broighter Gold, is a hoard of gold artifacts from the Iron Age of the 1st century BC found in 1896 in a field close by Broglasco Farm. The hoard included a 7-inch-long (18 cm) gold boat, a gold torc and bowl and other jewellery.

At the Broighter Gold ÉCONOMUSÉE workshop, both Leona and Richard work hard all year to produce a premium product.

[www.broightergold.com](http://www.broightergold.com)

### EVENT SUGGESTIONS CONTINUE

#### MAKE IT EXCLUSIVE

Intimate and exclusive events such as surprise chef demos or tasting menus that are only revealed on the night create an excitement and a buzz for certain customer segments. The more exclusive, the more special the customer will feel. The more exclusive, the higher the value placed on the event.

#### LEARNING LUNCHES

Lunches with informative guest speakers on health, environment, or cooking demos.

#### LONG-TABLE DINING

Social dining, arising from the sharing economy. It's about the food and the drink, but it's also about the fun and the interaction.

#### USE UNIQUE AND FANTASTIC INGREDIENTS

One of the best ways to set your food event apart is with special ingredients you can't find just anywhere. Think a pre-release of a product that's about to become hot, or a rare, foraged seaweed etc.

#### GOODY BAG FOR CONFERENCE GUESTS

If you're organising a conference during Taste the Island, include a local food product in your goody bag.

#### CONFERENCE ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME

If there's an entertainment programme for conference delegates, consider a visit to a local food producer or arrange a talk/demo from a local chef.

#### FOOD AND ADVENTURE/WELLNESS PAIRING

Whether on holiday or not, people who actively look after their health like to make good choices on what they eat and drink, and on how much exercise they take. There is a growing interest in combining food with adventure/wellness for short breaks.



# CREATING AND SHARING

# 2

# Creating and sharing your food and drink story!

Key to great storytelling and effective promotion is having a clear, well-defined and consistent food or drink story. Keeping it short and to the point is best.

The three values that are most important when it comes to telling your story are:

## AUTHENTICITY

Real, genuine stories that are not contrived.

## INTEGRITY

Honesty and transparency is key.

## CREDIBILITY

Trustworthy as a reliable source.

Today's consumers don't want to feel they're being sold to. These three values will always encourage content that connects. Content is king, it is predicated that in less than 2 years, 80% of internet content will be video.

Once you've identified your story, the list of places where you can use it is endless. They include your farm or boat, at your workshop or production site, on your website, on social media, on your menus, on your chalk boards, at farmers markets, during special events and so on.

Social media offers a brilliant opportunity for you to create and add to your business brand personality online. An active presence, paired with excellent content and a captivated audience can increase awareness and attract new customers. With billions of active users across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube there is no better medium to reach a target audience.

### Where can I source imagery?

Tourism NI's Media Library has high quality, downloadable food and drink images at [www.tourismni.com/media-centre/media-library1/](http://www.tourismni.com/media-centre/media-library1/)

# Promoting your food and drink experience

- Share your food story with us to feature in the Taste the Island programme.
- Collaborate with local tourism businesses (accommodation, visitor attractions etc). Let them know what you're doing for Taste the Island and jointly promote the offering.
- Often, the impact of front of house personnel as key expressions of a businesses food ethos is underestimated. Ensure your staff know your food and drink story and enthusiastically play their role in it.
- Ensure your website has a dedicated section for events and visitor offerings that can be easily found from the home page.
- Tag your website with search friendly terms – Taste the Island, Irish food, trail, foraging, farm visit, food festival, etc.
- Invest in high quality imagery and short video clips on your website and social media.
- Consider driving sales of specific events through social media channels.
- Send an invite to past customers to visit again.
- Make it easy for the visitor to find and contact you – 'Contact Us' details prominent, respond to messages etc.
- Focus on making your offering saleable online ie. easy for a customer to book.
- Let your tour operator partners know about new food experiences – it may not result in additional sales this year but could influence buying decisions for 2020 and beyond.
- If you work with Online Travel Agents (OTA) or other online platforms such as Airbnb consider promoting your experience on those channels to drive sales.



GETTING  
READY



## Taste the Island is a three month long celebration of our incredible food and drink offering.

It will involve farmers, fishermen, food producers, brewers, distillers, chefs, restaurants, the wider tourism and hospitality industries, and the public bodies and agencies that support development of the sector. There are no limits.

The Taste the Island programme will be full of exciting, mouth-watering experiences and events taking place all over the island. To build that calendar, we want to tap into the imagination, the belief and the passion that have brought the sector through a powerful resurgence in recent years.

Once the Taste the Island programme of experiences and events is developed, it will be supported by an extensive promotional campaign, using online and traditional media, including tv, and implemented in both domestic and international markets.

3

## TASTE THE ISLAND

Event Timeline



## TASTE THE ISLAND

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

ONGOING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR;  
COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS, SUPPORT FROM DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, ETC.

## Over to you

### HOW TO SHARE YOUR BRILLIANT PLANS.

Here are a few ways to engage more closely with Tourism Northern Ireland and get your plans out there and into the world....

#### Get listed

If you are delivering an experience to visitors, make sure we know about it. Be sure to get listed on our consumer site. To create your product listing, please contact [tidi@tourismni.com](mailto:tidi@tourismni.com)

If you are already listed, find out how you can make the most of your web presence here: [www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/marketing/making-the-most-of-your-online-web-presence/](http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/marketing/making-the-most-of-your-online-web-presence/)

#### Get online

If you are throwing an event which you'd like us to consider for inclusion on our website and promotional calendar for Taste the Island, simply contact [tidi@tourismni.com](mailto:tidi@tourismni.com) to request a new event and contributor agreement form

#### Get registered

If you want to be informed of and receive information on industry support, events and masterclasses, subscribe to the Tourism Enterprise Development (TED) Growth Programme at [www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/programmes/tourism-enterprise-development-programme](http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/programmes/tourism-enterprise-development-programme)

#### Get social

Join in the conversation on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and share your updates using #Tastetheisland and #DiscoverNI. From chats to photographs and videos, find all the latest news on our website and social channels

#### Get uploading and downloading

Pay a visit to the Tourism NI Media Library- Digital Asset Manager (DAM). The DAM houses multiple media formats including images, videos, press releases and files. Register for access at [www.tourismni.com/media-centre/media-library1/](http://www.tourismni.com/media-centre/media-library1/)

#### Keep updated

As Taste the Island evolves, so too will the updates. Keep an eye on [www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/food-tourism/taste-the-island/](http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/food-tourism/taste-the-island/) for project information

#### Talk to us about business supports

There are plenty of training supports available to businesses who want to improve and grow in tourism. Visit [www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/](http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/) for more information

#### Tourism Ireland Industry Opportunities

Submit details of your Taste the Island experiences and events to 'Have a story to tell?' and upload offers at: [www.tourismirelandindustryopportunities.com](http://www.tourismirelandindustryopportunities.com)

Contact the team on:

[tastetheisland@tourismni.com](mailto:tastetheisland@tourismni.com)



CAUSEWAY LASS

 Tourism Ireland

 tourism  
northernireland

 Fáilte Ireland  
National Tourism Development Authority

COLERAINE

