



Better by miles



From Cornwall to Cumbria, there could be a fantastic farmer near you. Here, in the second part of our series on eating locally sourced food, TV chef PHIL VICKERY tracks down some of his favourite suppliers from all over Britain

INVERARWE SMOKEHOUSES, ARGYLL, SCOTLAND

Inverawe Smokehouses is a family business, owned by Robert and Rosie Campbell-Preston, that produces a mouth-watering range of smoked fish and meat. Robert and Rosie took over the estate in 1980 and today the company is one of Scotland's premium suppliers of smoked produce, including wild smoked salmon, Argyll ham and venison pâté. The Queen has her smoked salmon from them every Christmas. Robert and Rosie

insist on maintaining the age-old



We are all eating home-grown food as never before and discovering the staggering range of delicious local produce on our doorsteps. Top chefs and leading restaurants all over Britain now buy many of their ingredients from excellent local food suppliers — and home cooks up and down the land are following suit.

TV chef Phil Vickery has spent nearly 20 years championing British food producers. He says, 'In Britain nowadays there is — finally — a growing groundswell of support for our own local producers.'

'People are becoming more sceptical of mass-produced, highly processed foods, which have been flown halfway around the world before they reach our plates. They are right to be concerned, particularly as the quality of our homegrown produce is second to none.'

Indeed, support for eating locally produced food is now so strong that a movement called the 100-Mile Diet (www.100milediet.org) has sprung up, encouraging people to eat food produced within 100 miles of where they live.

The 100-Mile Diet began in Canada when one couple, Alisa Smith and James MacKinnon, became so concerned about the fact that many ingredients they were eating had flown 1,500 miles from farm to plate, that they decided to draw a 100-mile radius around their home in Vancouver and try to eat locally for a year.

The benefits of the movement are simple: not only do freshly picked fruit and vegetables taste much better, but you're not adding to global warming due to carbon emissions from planes that transport fruits and vegetables to our supermarkets. Shopping at one of Britain's 550 farmers' markets or at farm shops around the country also helps to support local producers — as the £200 million revenue generated there annually goes directly to them.

Phil Vickery, who has travelled all over the world and prepared a variety of different foods, says, 'I have been lucky enough to meet some of the best producers of food all around the globe. But I always return to my British culinary roots.' Over the years, Phil has collected a number of favourite suppliers, some of whom he shares here with Weekend. He says, 'Some I have known for a long time and others I've discovered recently. But what they all share is a shining commitment to how they produce their foods and the quality they deliver.'



R-OIL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

R-Oil is produced by Hamish Campbell and his father, Robert, at their 800-acre farm in Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire. They have been growing rape seed, barley and linseed for

years, but, in 2005, decided to produce their own cold-pressed rape seed oil.

'Until now most rape seed has been cooked up in huge factories to yield cheap oil,' says Hamish. 'We were convinced that rape seed oil deserved much better. R-Oil has not been refined chemically — it's entirely unadulterated and natural.'

'Now, nearly all the top hotels and restaurants from Bath to Warwickshire, as well as many establishments in London — including the restaurant at the House of Lords and the Dorchester — use the oil.' Visit www.r-oil.co.uk



THE FINE BEEF COMPANY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

I met Polly Conroy a few months ago, while having lunch in a local pub. She explained that she reared beef correctly, using cattle bred especially for their flavour, mostly on her own. New companies contact me weekly, promising the world. Most are a waste of time, so I was initially sceptical.

However, I was very impressed by Polly. She rears Dexters, Old English Longhorn, Limousin, Charolais and Aberdeen Angus, all of them fed a natural diet and, once slaughtered, hung for 28 days. She sent me some Old English Longhorn sirloins and rumps. I cooked them carefully for my wife and youngest daughter —

the steaks were tender and full of flavour. And they tasted delicious. One of Polly's endearing features is the fact that she is still open about the fact she is learning her trade — and that, coupled with her enthusiasm and total belief in the importance of the diet and care of her animals, is really refreshing. She's going to produce proper beef burgers — when she does I'll be at the front of the queue. The Fine Beef Company, Little Kingshill, Buckinghamshire, tel: 01494 863392.



YE OLDE PORK PIE SHOPPE, MELTON MOWBRAY

Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire is renowned for hunting and its distinctive, traditionally cooked pork pies. The origin of pork pies is thought to date back to Roman times, but the earliest recorded one comes from the 14th century. However, it was during the 19th century that the pie came into its own as a convenience food that huntsmen could carry in their saddlebags. Every year, three million pork pies are made in the area by five firms, of which Dickinson & Morris is the oldest and most famous. The company's Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe has been popping out pies since 1851.

Stephen Hallam (right) is in charge of the simple process which involves mincing the meat, seasoning (a secret), making the pastry (also a secret) and even boiling pigs' trotters

to get the jelly. Every pie is made by hand. They truly are fantastic.

The way to tell a real pork pie is by the colour of the meat, which should be pinkish grey, not pink. The pinkness comes from nitrate salt added as a preservative. Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe, Nottingham Street, Melton Mowbray, tel: 01664 562341.



traditional way of smoking, which gives the most delicious oaky flavour. Inverawe Smokehouses, Taynait, Argyll, tel: 0870 4230236 or visit www.smokedsalmon.co.uk. Also available at Fortnum & Mason, tel: 020 7734 8040.

CARROLL'S HERITAGE POTATOES, NORTHUMBERLAND

Carroll's Heritage potatoes are grown by Lucy and Anthony Carroll at Tiptoe Farm, located in the River Till Valley in Northumberland.

Heritage potatoes are varieties that were popular in Victorian and Edwardian times, and then fell out of favour as more mass-produced ones took over. They are now enjoying a renaissance. It all started

in 2002 when Lucy and Anthony grew six

varieties of potato on a five-acre plot and then sold them at a local farmer's market in Benwick-upon-Tweed.

Since then, the business has thrived and they grow 20 different varieties, with such colourful names as pink fir apple, Highland burgundy 1936 and the salad blue, which is purplish blue. All are grown to the highest environmental standards.

Carroll's Heritage Potatoes, Tiptoe Farm, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Northumberland, tel: 01890 863833.



ANN MULLER, LIZARD PASTY SHOP, CORNWALL

Ann Muller, the pasty queen as she is affectionately known, has been making pasties for years, along with her mother, Hettie. It really is a family

affair, with her husband, Tony, son, Fergus, and daughter, Aine, also helping out. The basic ingredients never change: potatoes, swedes, onions, seasoning (mostly pepper), beef skirt and, of course, pasty pastry. I did once try to wheedle the recipe



out of Ann — but to no avail. There are lots of places making pasties these days — many of them not even based in Cornwall. But Ann's pasties are something else. You have to get to her shop early, because once they have all sold, that's it for another day. It's great to see a thriving family business built around something so simple.

I was taught that simple ingredients put together thoughtfully will always win — and here is a classic example of just that. Ann Muller Lizard Pasty Shop, Beacon Terrace, The Lizard, Helston, Cornwall, Tel: 01326 290889.

RIVERFORD ORGANIC VEGETABLES, DEVON

Riverford Farm's Home Delivery Box Scheme was started 14 years ago by Devon farmer, Guy Watson, and is now Britain's largest organic independent grower, supplying 30,000 homes a week. The success of his veg boxes is testament to Guy's passion for food.

'I want everyone to be able to enjoy good food and get the best out of it. On average, our food is grown 50 miles from where it's eaten,' he says.

At least 30 per cent of the vegetables and fruit in each box are grown at Riverford Farm, in the valley of

the River Dart in South Devon. The rest is provided by a series of 13 other family-run farms, which share machinery and labour, to produce more than 90 different varieties of vegetables and fruit from 800 acres of farmland.

Riverford is such a success story that Guy, 46, has now launched two other 'River' farms. River Ness supplies boxes from the sister farm in Yaxley, near Peterborough, and neighbouring farms.

In February, homes in the North and North-east can get boxes from River Swale with deliveries from Home Farm in Newby Wiske. Riverford Organic Vegetables Ltd, Wash Barn, Buckfastleigh, Devon, tel: 01803 767720.

SILFIELD FARM, CUMBRIA

There's not much you can teach Cumbrian farmer Peter Gott about how to breed wonderful, strapping great porkers. The time-honoured tradition of rearing happy pigs has been passed down through the Gott family for generations.

Silfield Farm is a real menagerie, with rare breeds such as saddlebacks, middle whites and Tamworths being bred. Deep in the woods you come face to face with wild boar (right); fearless, untamable and belligerent to the bone. Peter has also tried making his own air-dried Cumberland



hams and mutton. These products rival almost anything I have tasted from Italy or Spain, despite the fact they come from one of the wettest parts of the UK. Christine, Peter's wife, makes all the meat pies, some 1,000 a week, which are sold at the farm too. Silfield Farm, Endmoor, Kendal, Cumbria, tel: 015395 67669, Borough Market, London, tel: 020 7407 1002.

TRETHOWAN CAERPHILLY, CEREDIGION, WALES

Caerphilly is a traditional Welsh cheese from South Wales. It was popular fare for miners in the 1800s, who used to snack on it down the mines. Trethowan's Caerphilly is handmade by the family-run dairy using traditional methods, and is matured for two months to produce its delicious flavour.

Todd Trethowan (below right) started on his own in

1996 on his parents' farm and was keen to re-establish Caerphilly cheese in Wales. His brother Maugan (below left) joined him and now looks after the cheesemaking with his wife, Kim.

Maugan describes their cheese as having a 'fresh, lemony taste, slightly salty and well-rounded'. The prizewinning brothers now sell their cheese at stores such as Waitrose, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey Nichols and Neal's Yard Dairy, and Borough Market in London. It has won gold medals at national and international level. Trethowan's Gorwydd Caerphilly, Gorwydd Farm, Llandweli Brefi, Tregaron, Ceredigion, Wales, tel: 01570 490516.



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