

Farm cultivates the gourmet potatoes market

THE humble spud has helped a family-run farm conquer the national and international market.

The Carroll family have run Tiptoe Farm at Cornhill in the scenic Till Valley in Northumberland, eight miles west of Berwick, since the 1930s.

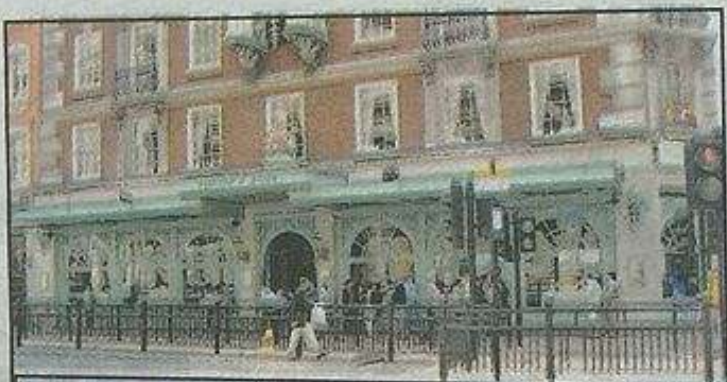
But in the last four years, husband and wife team Anthony, 47, and Lucy Carroll, 42, started to experiment with a range of heritage potatoes after being praised by friends and neighbours for their garden produce.

Now the couple's unusual and colourful potatoes – including some varieties which date back nearly 150 years – are being served in restaurants as far away as Hong Kong.

Their success in the British market has also been cemented with the decision by historic gourmet food store Fortnum and Mason to stock some of their 20 varieties.

The quintessentially British store, which has been in existence for more than 300 years, started serving the family's traditional potatoes last year as part of their catering service, but have now decided to sell three varieties, including Pink Fir Apple, which dates back to the 1850s.

Mrs Carroll said: "We are delighted our potatoes are



GROWING BUSINESS: Farmers Anthony and Lucy Carroll, right, are producing potatoes for Fortnum and Mason and restaurants as far away as Hong Kong.

now in Fortnum and Mason.

"I think they have chosen us because of our heritage and because we offer something different, and I think that fits in with their background."

The last month has also seen their produce being served in the luxury Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Hong Kong, after bosses spotted the items through the Northumbrian Larder – a regional food and drink

group which encourages and develops members to provide local food for the national and international market.

But the Carrolls' spuds are still in abundance within the region – their potatoes are now being stocked at shops in Longframlington, Longhorsley and Cornhill, all in Northumberland, as well as being served at Oldfields restaurants in Jesmond and Durham.



Picture: Lewis Arnold