

Media Release
Issued: 23 May 2020



Savour the Flavours to relaunch

Dumfries & Galloway's food and drink brand, Savour the Flavours, is to relaunch from today, backed by the team who delivered the original project. The goal is to help put businesses in the driving seat of shaping industry recovery in the region, with a series of online industry gatherings planned.

Savour the Flavours was a ground-breaking industry-led project that ran between 2009-2013 to boost the regional food and drink industry. It encompassed the whole spectrum of the food and drink supply chain; working with producers, chefs, retailers, manufacturers, event managers, schools, caterers, market organisers and consumers to help raise awareness of local produce. Led by food and drink businesses themselves, the organisation created a stronger, more robust and more connected local food and drink industry; and it pioneered innovative approaches to food tourism, such as region-wide food festival Flavour Fortnight.

The brand is relaunching as a series of online industry discussion groups, which will start on Tuesday 26th May. It will be facilitated by the core team who previously ran the regional food and drink organisation; Liz Ramsay, Lorna Young and Ian and Rachel Findlay.

The industry-only online meetings are open to any business operating in the food and drink or hospitality sector. The discussions will be used to inform potential future activity and to cascade key information to the public agencies assisting with the covid economic recovery.

Liz Ramsay, former Project Manager of Savour the Flavours, said:

“The key to local businesses recovering from the trauma of lockdown is communication and collaboration. The food and drink industry is a community; one that is connected through complex supply chains and mutually beneficial trading relationships. It's important that we build networks of communication, and we think the Savour the Flavours brand will help create a safe space for businesses to open up about their challenges, and also explore new ideas.

“The food, drink and hospitality industry in this region consists of mainly small, family run businesses that are often at the very heart of their communities. The people who run these businesses are at an all-time low - the emotional impact of this can't be understated - so we want to create a place where people can speak with others who are facing the same challenges.

“Savour the Flavours was at its strongest when our industry came together under one umbrella, and the key to that was in listening to each other, supporting, collaborating and helping. That approach is needed now more than ever.”

Dave Smith, former Chair of Savour the Flavours, and Director of the Buccleuch Arms Hotel in Moffat said:

“It was an exciting, challenging and successful time leading Savour the Flavours and being a part of highlighting and showcasing the great food of Dumfries and Galloway.

“I am now even more excited to fully support the plans to revive the Savour the Flavours brand and I am delighted to see the former Savours team launch this initiative. Savour the Flavours transformed the food and drink industry in Dumfries & Galloway, and six years on it is clear that the brand - and

the team - remains highly regarded and trusted by the industry. That trust, and their experience, is needed now more than ever before.

“This initiative has my unreserved support, and I know this revival will be enthusiastically welcomed by the industry. I am excited for the team and the sector and will observe their future success with great pleasure.”

Sarah Burchell of Annanwater and Chair of Dumfries & Galloway Farmers' & Community Markets Association said:

“I'm so pleased that Savour the Flavours and the original team are relaunching the brand in this way. Many local businesses are keeping in touch and sharing ideas through social media, but it's not quite the same as having an actual conversation with people who understand the challenges of trying to navigate this crisis as a small business.

“Savour the Flavours was always about the people in our industry working as a team. If we can recreate that community spirit in an online, socially distanced way, then that will help enormously in restart and recovery in this time of crisis, and beyond.”

Russell Pearce of Brodies of Moffat, and former Chair of Dumfries & Galloway Chefs Association, commented:

“Relaunching Savours the Flavours at a time when we need to pull together makes sense. Covid has had a massive impact on all our lives, reshaping what was once seen as normal. As we approach the easing of lockdown I can see the benefits of Savours the Flavours to help and support each other, a sounding board if you like.

“Some hospitality businesses have managed to diversify a little, others like Brodies haven't. We all need to streamline our businesses to survive another winter, because the tourist season, if it happens, will be very short. This approach will give us an opportunity to share our thoughts with others who are in the same boat, and hopefully to come out of this grim pandemic stronger, together supporting the industry within our region.”

Food and drink is Dumfries and Galloway's most valuable economic sector by a considerable distance, with an annual turnover of £1.29 billion, employing 13,700 people*. A regional food and drink strategy published two years ago by Dumfries and Galloway Council and DG Food and Drink, set an ambitious growth target for the sector of £2.5 billion by 2030. The strategy highlighted collaboration, localised supply chains and food tourism as key opportunities for the region.

Lorna Young, who previously ran DG Food and Drink and wrote the strategy on behalf of Dumfries & Galloway Council, believes the strategic priorities identified in 2018 remain relevant to the recovery of the industry from the current economic crisis. She said:

“Behind every business is a person who dreamt of creating a product, experience or service that others would value and enjoy. This is an industry that nourishes and connects our communities, creates value from our soils and waters, delivers flavour and warm welcomes to our friends, families and visitors, and which employs thousands of local people. It's an industry that will survive this crisis, but we all need to work together to figure out the best ways of getting through this.

“The strength of Dumfries & Galloway's food and drink industry is the passion and creativity of its people, and the way we support each other. With the route map for moving out of lockdown now published by the Scottish Government, it is time to start planning how businesses can restart. Some sectors will be able to restart faster than others, but almost every business in our region will be changed in some way.

“Every business matters and I believe that sharing experience and knowledge can only strengthen our industry, while protecting as many jobs as possible. Prioritising collaboration and supply chain resilience, while preparing for a food tourism recovery, is very much in line with what was already planned. Focusing on what’s already strong in our rural economy will hopefully create the resilience needed for businesses to survive and, in the longer term, to thrive.”

The first Savour the Flavours zoom event will take place on Tuesday 26th May at 7pm with the theme of ‘How are you doing?’ Businesses who want to take part should visit www.savourtheflavours.co.uk and register their details. The first meeting will encompass the full span of the region’s food and drink sector, from primary producers to chefs to festivals.

Romano Petrucci, Chair of Stranraer Development Trust, who organise Stranraer Oyster Festival, the largest food event in the region, commented:

“Never has there been a better time for everyone with an involvement in food to come together. As we all react to what seems like the world pressing the biggest reset button, we now have a choice - be ready or be left behind. As my Father always said, everyone needs to eat. He would have embraced this moment, knowing full well the amazing variety of delicious and fresh produce on our doorstep.

“The pressing of the reset button will bring a change and an expectation that will see more and more people falling in love with our region, I am absolutely sure of that. We have so much quality to share but it is only in a common pride in it all that we can get that message across and out there with the confidence it deserves. In 2017 Stranraer introduced the world to the Loch Ryan Oyster- the last remaining wild and native oyster in Scotland. Within two years, nearly double the population of the town came to share our weekend. The best people to map the way ahead are the owners and producers and organisers in the area. The return of Savour the Flavours is the building block we need.”

Voices from the industry:

Wilma Finlay of Cream o’ Galloway, Gatehouse of Fleet

“This is great news. Savour the Flavours of Dumfries & Galloway had a huge influence on the success of so many food businesses in the region. This experienced and trusted team are best placed to help us regenerate our businesses.”

Chris Walker of The Selkirk Arms Hotel, Kirkcudbright

“I’m really excited that Savour the Flavours will be returning to help promote the wealth of local quality food manufactured and served in our area. Previously the scheme had worked hand in hand with local businesses to help raise awareness to both the local and national market, this can only be good news for the region.”

Nick Morris of Station House Cookery School, Kirkcudbright

“Before setting up Station House Cookery School in 2016 I had searched all over Britain for the ideal location. I chose to invest in Dumfries and Galloway largely because I recognised the immense strength of its local and regional food and drink scene.

“Discovering the legacy left by Savour the Flavours cemented my decision as it was obvious that the region benefited from valuable sector support. I am extremely happy to hear that it is to be reignited and look forward to contributing to this valuable organisation.”

Allen Henderson of Sulwath Brewers, Castle Douglas

"This is an extremely welcome initiative. Through our previous partnerships with Savour the Flavours, we know this can only be a good thing for our local economy."

Paul O'Keeffe, partner at Thomas Tosh , Thornhill

"Savour the Flavours' return is great news. It had been a good way for food businesses to keep in touch, help each other, and promote the region. Savour the Flavours will also help make sure that small businesses' voices are heard as we come out of lockdown."

Sarah and John Finch of Saucy Desserts, near Lockerbie

"For us the relaunch of Savour the Flavours is long overdue. It was a fantastic source of information and inspiration to us when we were starting up and we are excited that the relaunch will give the food and drink industry in Dumfries and Galloway a much needed boost and a point of focus where we can share ideas and collaborate. Flavour Fortnight is well remembered as a pivotal point for many producers to enhance their own market position and to showcase the quality of what D&G had to offer, and it would be great to think that in the longer term something similar could be recreated."

* Source: [Dumfries and Galloway Food and Drink Strategy and Action Plan](#)