

Customers are excited by Tuscan foods but baffled by PDO logos

Partridges boss says PDO logo is still a mystery to shoppers

By MICK WHITWORTH

As labelling of EU protected food name (PFN) products became compulsory last month, one top deli operator has warned that consumer understanding of the scheme is virtually non-existent.

Since May, any products registered as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) or Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) must either feature that wording on their packs or carry the appropriate logo. However, the EU provides no direct funding for advertising the scheme to consumers.

The new labelling rule applies to the 37 British PFNs, from Stilton to Arbroath Smokies, and hundreds more registered across Europe.

But when John Shepherd, managing director of Kensington-based Partridges, carried out a straw poll among shoppers at the start of an in-store promotion for Tuscan PDO/PGI foods he said "not a single customer" had been able to recognise the PDO logo. Some had guessed it might mean 'organic' or 'pesticide-free'.

"I also phoned round some colleagues in the trade," said Shepherd, "and they all felt the scheme had little impact."

Shepherd was speaking at the trade launch of a UK promotion for seven Tuscan specialities: Pecorino Toscano, Prosciutto Toscano, Fagiolo



Seven Tuscan PDO/PGI foods were featured in two weeks of tastings at Partridges



Compulsory labelling may lift the consumer profile of the scheme's logos

de Sorana (beans), Miele della Lunigiana (honey), Lardo di Colonnata (lard), extra virgin olive oil and Castagna del Monte Amiata (chestnuts).

The project – jointly funded by the EU, the Italian food ministry and Italian producer groups – included special menus in six top restaurants, a cookery class for consumer journalists at La Cucina Caldesi and two weeks of tastings in Partridge's outlets.

Shepherd said the image of Italian food was "compelling" for Partridges' customers, adding: "There's a feeling that Tuscany is Italy."

UK PFN scheme manager Irene Bocchetta said the PDO/PGI labels had not been sufficiently visible

in the past, but the law change would help to push them in front of more shoppers.

Ros Windsor, managing director of cheese retailer and wholesaler Paxton & Whitfield, told *FFD* PDO status was "not a key factor" for her shoppers, who were looking for the best-tasting cheeses of each kind. "It's the quality and stories behind these products – which might include PDO – that they like to hear about."

She added. "The PDO label is not by itself a sign of quality – it's a label outlining that a product has been made in a specific geographical area to a recognised method."

Real Food hosts Great Taste judging

Last month's Real Food Festival at London's Earls Court saw judging sessions for the Great Taste Awards (GTAs) held in public for the first time.

Part of a campaign to strengthen awareness of the GTAs among consumers, visitors to the show watched judges at work tasting products such as chocolates, bottled beers and cake, before trying gold-award winning food for themselves. Nigel Barden, BBC Radio 2's food correspondent and chair of the judges, was on hand to pass out tasters and explain more about the awards.

"We know that consumers recognise the Great Taste logo," said John Farrand, director of the Guild of Fine Food, which runs the awards. "But we wanted to reinforce what it actually means by distributing flyers and the *Taste Gold* book and letting the man-in-the-street see the integrity of the process."

Thousands of visitors attended the



Great Taste Awards sessions took place at Earls Court during Real Food Festival

three-day festival, which featured over 400 food and drink companies and regular cookery demonstrations.

The Conservative Party used the event to promote their Honest Food campaign for clearer food

labelling. The campaign is demanding compulsory 'country of origin' labelling so that meat products that are labelled British can only come from animals born and bred in Britain.

ProKill takes over as Guild-approved pest control service

Pest prevention specialist ProKill, whose clients include Olives Et Al, has taken over from Rentokil as the Guild of Fine Foods' approved pest control supplier.

Guild members are entitled to a free initial survey of their premises and can benefit from a 20% discount on all services recommended by ProKill.

Tortie Farrand, manager of Guild retail and associate membership, said: "ProKill's directors are all ex-Rentokil, and they're proactive, keen and willing to do a good job. Olives Et Al have confirmed that ProKill are always knowledgeable, courteous and professional."

Guild members should call Ashley Platen-Mills at ProKill to organise a free quote.

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