



With a revival of artisan British cheesemaking going largely unnoticed, The Grocer challenged creative agency Haygarth to come up with a campaign to celebrate our best grands fromages

Carina Perkins

Ready your rennets and gear up your graters. There is a quiet revolution going on in British cheese. In villages, towns and cities across the UK, an enthusiastic new generation of artisan producers is breathing fresh life into a world long perceived as old-fashioned and a little bit boring. From Cornish Yarg to Yorkshire Blue, the UK now produces more than 700 different named cheeses, with craftsmanship that could rival the finest the Continent has to offer.

While British cheesemaking is in the throes of a revival as exciting as the craft beer uprising, most consumers remain blissfully unaware of the breadth of home-produced cheeses available. Bored of cheddar, wensleydale and stilton, they are piling their plates high with manchego, mozzarella and feta as they look to Europe for a little bit of adventure.

So for this year's Dairymen, The Grocer decided to challenge creative agency Haygarth to come up with a campaign to celebrate British cheese and remind shoppers around the country there is plenty to be patriotic about when it comes to our grand fromage.

One of the driving forces behind the shift towards



Seize the Cheese Facebook Messenger chatbot Brie would send out instant recipe suggestions, followed by the option to buy using the campaign's delivery service

Continental cheese consumption in the UK has been the coming of age of 'millennial' consumers, who are "explorative eaters" looking for adventure and excitement from their food, says Julia Riddle, PR account director at Haygarth.

"We dub them inspiration generation. They are constantly looking for inspiration for new things to try and they like to see themselves at the vanguard of trying out new products," she adds.

"It came across to us that, because they are always looking for something new, they are getting bored of the British cheese offer, because they aren't necessarily aware of the wonderful breadth of products we have in this country.

"So we wanted to create a campaign that would inspire them to discover the breadth and versatility of British cheese, and make people aware it is as cutting edge and artisan as any other nation's cheese offerings."

Our campaign – Seize the Cheese – therefore aims to celebrate and amplify Britain's quiet

cheese revolution by inspiring young Brits to get out there and discover the incredible range of cheeses this country has to offer.

"Seize the Cheese is also urban slang for 'doing something proper'," adds Olly Cooper, a copywriter for Haygarth. "And that is what we want people to do with cheese. We want people to go into it and be adventurous. It is a bit of a rally cry to our target audience to get involved."

Straight to the doorstep

When it comes to inspiring younger generations to experiment with British cheeses, there are two big hurdles. The first is that most supermarkets still have fairly limited selections of territorial and regional British cheeses, making it a challenge for producers to get their products in front of people in the first place. The second is that when younger generations come across British cheese, they often have no idea what to do with it.

"Everybody is time-pressed these days and cheddar gets such a large proportion of shelf space within the multiples, and is usually on offer," says Alison Taylor, marketing manager at Belton Cheese. "Younger generations feel comfortable buying it because they know what to do with it. And as people travel more and have cheese on holiday, they are bringing Continental varieties back and using them in their kitchen at home. But while Cheshire cheese is just as good as feta, and you can do the same things with it, we just don't shout about it enough."

So at the core of the Seize the Cheese campaign is a cheese delivery box service to bring Britain's best cheeses right to the doorsteps of consumers. The once-a-month package would contain five different British cheeses, with an information card for each telling them about its origin, its makers and the associated flavours, as well as some recipe suggestions.

"The problem that hits you very quickly is that we have all these amazing cheeses being made and sold around the country, but how do we get our audience to them? We realised that you have to flip it and think about how we can get the cheeses to them," says Cooper. "We then have a direct conversational link at least 12 times a year, where we can educate our audience about these cheeses and they can experiment with them to find what they really like."

Not only would a delivery box service overcome barriers around availability and inspiration, but it would create a personal connection between British producers and consumers, "helping them to understand the high levels of craftsmanship and skill going into this country's 700 varieties of cheese" says Riddle.

Chatbot and games

Social media is of huge importance to younger generations, who rely on channels like Instagram and Facebook to find food inspiration and excitement. So the Seize



A once-a-month delivery box service would contain five different British cheeses, with an information card about each one's origin and makers, along with recipe suggestions, while a special Cheese Rolling game app inspired by the annual competition in Gloucestershire would tie in with chatbot Brie

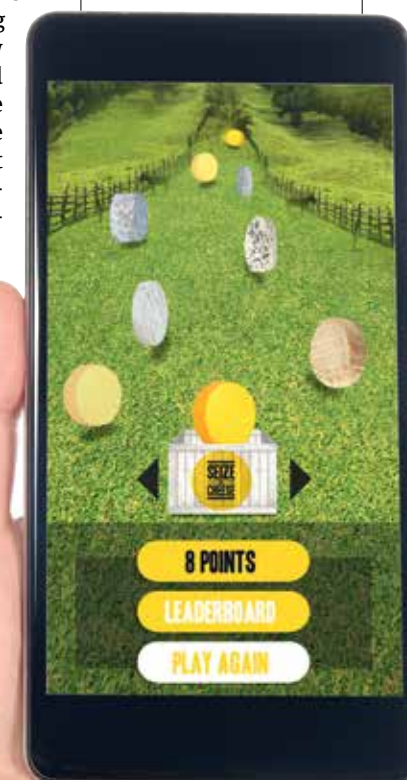
the Cheese campaign would also have its very own Facebook Messenger chatbot – the aptly named Brie. "Chatbots have become quite a big trend for the next stage of social interaction between brands and consumers. They essentially use a basic level of AI to create almost real conversations between a brand and a consumer," says Cooper. "We are all so used to instant messaging as a way of communication, so why not use that platform to talk to our audience?"

Consumers would simply have to name a dish they want to put a cheesy twist on, and Brie would send them instant recipe recommendations using different UK cheeses, followed by the option to purchase that cheese using the Seize the Cheese delivery service.

"If you want to get a recipe for a pasta, all you have to type into the message is 'pasta' and using the algorithms in the chatbot it will come up with a recipe for you," Cooper adds.

Not only would a Seize the Cheese chatbot speak to the growing shopper occasion of 'meals tonight', with people getting to 4pm before wondering what to cook for dinner, it would also provide shoppers with real-time inspiration that feels personalised, something they are shouting out for at the moment, according to Riddle.

It would also give the British cheesemakers a direct line of conversation with shoppers. "It could be linked to the delivery service, so if people cancel we could send them a message saying we miss them, and offer 20% off to sign up again," says Cooper. "And rather than getting an email in their inbox that they might not ever open, they



creative challenge

➤ would get a notification delivered straight to their mobile phone.”

To keep young shoppers engaged with the campaign while they are bored on the Tube or the bus, there would also be a special Seize the Cheese Rolling Facebook Messenger game inspired by the annual competition in Gloucestershire.

“Our game app would be tied into Brie through the Facebook Messenger app. It would be based on cheese rolling, so the more cheeses you catch, the higher your score. Everyone’s scores would go on to a leaderboard, which would give us the opportunity to offer the highest scorers each month a free delivery box,” says Cooper. “It’s a way to immerse our audience in the campaign using something we know they are using while they are on the Tube.”

Ads and influencers

Seize the Cheese is all about celebrating the craftsmanship of the people behind Britain’s cheese revolution. So the campaign would run print ads and posters featuring some of the country’s best cheesemakers.

Key influencers and celebrities would be invited to pair up with the campaign’s resident chef to make cheesy meals in a series of videos that would then be uploaded to YouTube, and a series of print ads and posters would put the spotlight on some of the country’s best cheesemakers



“There are real people behind these cheeses that care about what they are making, and that is something that really resonates with our audience,” says Cooper. “We wanted to build a sense of community, and invite our audience to come and join us to discover what we have to offer.”

Millennials don’t rely on magazines, newspapers and TV to tell them what the next big food trend is, but they do use Facebook and Instagram as sources of inspiration. Seize the Cheese would therefore seek to harness the power of social media ‘influencers’ on these channels to help it spread the word about great British cheeses.

“A recent study showed marketing consumer to consumer word-of-mouth generates almost twice the sales of paid advertising,” says Riddle. “What’s more, it found people acquired through word-of-mouth campaigns have a 37% higher retention rate, and 40% of consumers have bought things online after seeing them being used as an influencer.”

The campaign would send out Seize the Cheese delivery boxes to ‘micro influencers’, who typically have a high engagement rate with around 50,000 followers on social media channels, and would hopefully be inspired to shout about the campaign and British cheese to their communities.

It would also form more in-depth partnerships with a group of ‘macro influencers’, who have several hundred thousand to a million followers on social media. “This would include foodies and chefs who could get involved with creating recipes for the Seize the Cheese delivery campaign, and help feed those recipes out to more traditional influencers like the journalists on newspapers and food magazines,” says Riddle.

Video series

Seize the Cheese would also invite key influencers and celebrities to take part in a social series of videos that could be shared over YouTube. Each short episode would see an influencer paired up with our resident chef, and challenged to make a huge meal out of an unusual British cheese. The recipes could then be posted on the Seize the Cheese website, with a link to purchase the cheese.

“The short video format is very engaging, it is something millennials really connect with and they use them all the time to find recipe inspiration,” says Riddle. “We could work in a partnership with something like the BuzzFeed food channel or another established platform to push the videos out, and it would also give us content to use on our own ➤

STEVE FILMORE - DOVEDALE CHEESE

GARY SMITH - ASHDOWN FORESTERS

LUKE BARRY - COQUEDALE

DAVID WHITE - BONCHESTER

TERRY VINE - DUDDLESWELL

MARY BROWN - STICHELTON

OLIVER BURROW - SWALEDALE

SARAH RIDDLE - BARKHAM BLUE

DAVID BELL - TEVIOTDALE

SPINISH YARG

TOM GREEN - LINCOLNSHIRE POACHER

SEIZE THE CHEESE

With over 700 varieties of cheese, the UK knows how to do cheese proper. So be bold. Be adventurous. Go forth and discover the incredible cheeses Britain has to offer.

#SEIZETHECHEESE

creative challenge

➤ social media – because we know video content gets pushed up our Facebook and Instagram feeds far more than static content.”

Eventually, the series of films could even be developed into a dedicated Seize the Cheese app, which could be tied in with the delivery box service to give consumers recipe videos to accompany their cheese deliveries.

Cheesy chips

Sometimes to encourage people to try new things you have to give them a taste of what they are missing out on. Rather than relying on traditional supermarket sampling initiatives, Seize the Cheese would embrace Britain’s growing street food culture by hitting the road with its Cheesy Chips van.

Giving consumers the freedom to have their pick of Britain’s best home-produced cheeses slathered all over their chips, the van would tour different cities, events and festivals around the UK, taking cheesy chips to a whole new level.

“Street food pop-ups have become so popular, and the food is often so simple,” says Cooper. “Chips are a great neutral platform for consumers to experience some of the cheeses they have never tried before for the first time.”

“Everything about it is British and it’s not pretentious, everyone can get involved,” adds Riddle. “It could be just as happy in east London in a street food setup as it would be in a field or up in Edinburgh at a festival. It could go anywhere and appeal to our audience in different settings.”

Seize the Cheese would also raise the profile of British cheeses by becoming an official sponsor of the prestigious Cheese Rolling event at Cooper’s Hill in Gloucestershire. The event would be a great way to create new social content for the campaign, and an opportunity to sell merchandise and bring the Cheesy Chips van to an enthusiastic audience.



A Seize the Cheese takeover of 700 street signs up and down the country would highlight just how many different British cheeses are available, and a Cheesy Chips van would hit the road offering festival and other event-goers the opportunity to have the pick of their favourite home-produced cheeses slathered over their chips



“Cheese rolling is totally barmy. There was a period when they tried to shut it down and there was a huge uproar about it because it has become an unofficial British tradition,” says Cooper. “We are celebrating cheese in all forms, and if that means throwing it down a hill and 200 people running after it, we want to be there.”

As lead sponsor, the campaign would even produce a branded yellow jersey – in a nod to the Tour de France – for the overall winner of the event. “It epitomises the fact we are not treating these cheeses too reverently,” adds Riddle. “We are showing them lots of respect, but we are saying this is something everyone should be trying and having fun with.”

The final element of the campaign is the Seize the Cheese street sign takeover. “We started thinking that taking over 700 streets would be a really good way of highlighting just how many different British cheeses are available,” says Cooper.

“Lots of the names of cheeses lend themselves to street names up and down the country, and we could have a bit of fun by slapping our mark on them to show everyone that the cheese revolution is taking over the UK.”

Just like the gold post boxes that sprung up across UK towns that were home to Olympic gold medal winners, the Seize the Cheese street takeovers would be a great way to get people to engage with the campaign by challenging them to go out and find the street signs and send in pictures.

“It would make a great picture story, which would work well in terms of mass PR coverage and have good legs with national newspapers,” says Riddle.

By championing British cheeses in a fun and engaging way, Seize the Cheese should appeal to the young millennials looking for the next big thing on their cheeseboard, as well as raising the profile of the fantastic British producers creating artisan delights up and down the country.

“We have this brilliant push where we are creating incredible cheeses but no one is championing it or really pushing it,” says Cooper. “Seize the Cheese is our way of saying we have this amazing thing we are doing and we should celebrate it.”

In the words of our Continental cheese rivals from over the Channel, ‘Vive la révolution’.

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