

SALSA BITES

Seasonal Newsletter | Summer 2023



Edition 07

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Welcome to the Summer SALSA Bites! This edition celebrates our members who have gained industry recognition in the past few months. We also talk to a long-standing SALSA member whose many years of certification have helped them transition to BRCGS. PLUS and there are lots of free resources for you to access.

We hope you enjoy it!

Congratulations Montgomery's!

Montgomery's Cheddar, from the lush countryside of Somerset, is an iconic British cheese. Known for its distinctive taste, the cheese's history dates back over a century.

In 2012 Montgomery's had their first SALSA plus Cheese audit and since then have had successful audits every year.

"We have been a big supporter of SALSA and how it ties in with the Specialist Cheesemakers Association's assured code of practice and the Primary Authority. While SALSA can keep itself an achievable standard for small-scale cheesemakers it will be a valuable part of our business."

Jamie Montgomery

Earlier this year, Montgomery's won the 'Best SALSA plus Cheese' trophy for their Mature Traditional Cheddar at the Virtual Cheese Awards. This award recognised the highest-scoring cheese in the competition with SALSA plus Cheese Approval.

"This year's VCAs showcased British cheesemaking's amazing innovation and quality. We are thrilled that long-time SALSA member and heritage cheesemaker J. A & E Montgomery has been recognised as an industry leader in safe cheesemaking, winning the first 'Best SALSA plus Cheese' trophy." **Chris Grimes, SALSA Scheme Director**

Read the full article [here](#)



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Growing with SALSA



As businesses grow SALSA certification can provide a stepping stone to further food safety quality certification schemes, such as BRCGS and there are many examples of SALSA members who have taken this big step. We talked to Operations Director, Philip Johnston from W G Buchanan & Son Ltd who have recently moved from SALSA to BRCGS.

"We joined SALSA in 2009 as we were looking for an independently audited system that was not only accepted by both retail and wholesale groups but was also resource effective (in terms of cost and personnel) for an organisation of our size.

Having SALSA enabled us to confidently grow our business and seek new customers. It provided us with enhanced credibility in having a fully audited and independent verification of our food safety and quality system which is widely recognised and accepted by retailers and food service companies.

Business developments, especially those driven by Brexit, meant we had to target different geographical markets. As SALSA is a UK Standard, we needed to progress to a fully recognised GFSI benchmarked standard to access broader markets and export opportunities.

The SALSA standard has provided us with an exceptionally strong foundation to transition to BRCGS, (although this transition will involve several additional steps and more specific requirements). As an SME, SALSA provided invaluable food safety culture experience for both the company and its QA team and provided us with the confidence to take the "next step" in going for BRCGS which is much more resource intensive and requires a higher level of control and monitoring.

Read the full interview with Buchanan's and find out more information about moving towards BRCGS [here](#)

Action Planning

We have made it easier to upload corrective actions. If you have an action plan raised after your audit, you will receive an email from info@salsafood.co.uk that contains a unique, encrypted link to your action plan. This link will enable you to:

- Load evidence, including Word and Excel documents and photos
- List the steps you have taken to comply with the corrective action
- Submit to SALSA.

We have created this [short video](#) to demonstrate the process.



SALSA Star - Ayesha Foods

Why did you choose SALSA Certification?

At [Ayesha Foods](#), safety and quality is our number one priority. With this in mind and wanting to grow our network of customers we began our journey with Salsa in 2013. Since then, there has been no looking back, safety and integrity in Ayesha Food products is very important to us. SALSA was a reputable standard giving us food safety and quality for our customers, as a small business we felt it was one we could achieve and maintain.

How did you find implementing the Standard?

We have implemented SALSA in-house with no mentoring support. During the first audit, we relied on the tools & tips resource which has always been useful, providing in-depth information and templates to get you started. Having exceptional auditors has given us the knowledge and training to provide quality and safe products.

How has SALSA helped your business grow?

SALSA has given us a benchmark against our competitors, one we look forward to achieving year after year. With the SALSA standard working with the Ayesha Foods brand, we have grown from strength to strength, mainly due to our stringent safety procedures and the quality we maintain. Our senior managers are committed to implementing and continually improving the Ayesha Foods product range. We began as a small business supplying restaurants, we now service several sectors. These range from the education sector, food service, stadiums and hotels. SALSA has allowed us to do business with those retailers, manufacturers, ingredients companies and food service organisations who specify certification as part of their approval process.

How has the Standard changed in the past 11 years?

The Standard continues to change, enabling us to continuously exceed our customer expectations. The changes allow us to demonstrate that we are properly managing allergens, HACCP, product testing, promoting best practice for training, and continually improving quality and safety.



Free Training

Following the success of our Food Safety Culture webinar, we are excited to invite you to a series of free webinars to enhance your knowledge of the SALSA Scheme and its implementation.

The sessions will deliver valuable insights and practical tips from SALSA Auditors with first-hand experience of the Scheme. At the end of each webinar, you can ask questions and connect with fellow attendees to share experiences and exchange ideas.

Spaces for these webinars are limited, so we encourage you to secure your spot as soon as possible. **'Intro to SALSA'** is open for booking now; click [here](#) to reserve your place.

We will announce the booking details for the remaining webinars throughout the summer, so please keep an eye on our website and socials.

SALSA Webinars

- 1st Aug - Intro to SALSA
- 7th Sept - Effective Traceability
- 21st Sept - Food Defence Plans
- 12th Oct - Preparing Your Brewery
- Date TBC - Effective Pest Control

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Welsh Winners

At the recent Wales Food & Drink Awards, we were delighted to see so many SALSA Approved members winning their categories. The Awards celebrate the best food & drink businesses in Wales.

Congratulations to all the winners, especially our SALSA members [In the Welsh Wind Distillery](#), [Tiny Rebel Brewery](#), [The Gower Gin Company](#), [Bluestone Brewing Company](#), and [Conwy Kombucha](#).



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Food Safety Culture in your Business

World Food Safety Day 2023 highlighted the importance of food standards and how they impact the food we consume. Implementing a recognised standard is a powerful tool to improve your business, manage consistency and produce SAFE food.

Experienced food safety experts have written the SALSA Standard to reflect the legal requirements of UK food producers and the enhanced expectations of 'best practice' of food buyers. However, success with SALSA is not just about meeting the requirements of a single clause; it is about implementing the guiding principles that support an effective food safety culture.

To support World Safety Day, we encourage food producers to watch our short webinar, ['How to Develop Food Safety Culture in a Small Food and Drink Business'](#)



The webinar explores food safety culture and how it can be implemented in small food businesses, including:

- Practical tips for building a strong food safety culture.
- Sets clear expectations for food safety.
- Encourages employee engagement.
- Advises on encouraging open communication.
- Discusses ideas around holding employees accountable for following food safety protocols.
- Describes the role of leadership in building and maintaining a strong food safety culture.



"Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching."

C.S. Lewis



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Interview With an Auditor

We caught up with the Virtual Cheese Awards Founder and SALSIA Auditor & Mentor Sarah de Wit

How long have you worked in the food industry?

To be honest I try not to think about it! I have worked in the Foods industry for 29 years, taking into account that I took time out to travel & work in Australasia & Asia following my initial graduate jobs. Little did I know that I would end up working in cheese & dairy.

What was your first food job?

I was a Northern Foods Graduate working at sites manufacturing for M&S only. My first job was at Pennine Foods in Sheffield. I received training in the best technical, quality & new product development systems in the industry. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity at the start of my career.

How long have you worked for SALSIA?

I have been working as a SALSIA auditor for over 2 years now.

I was approached to join the SALSIA plus cheese team in 2019 to work with the cheesemakers in the North however, due to the pandemic it took a while longer to make this happen.

What is the most important advice you can give a Supplier preparing for an audit?

My advice is to give yourself enough time to work through the preparation process for your audit, it may take longer than you realise.

Use resources & mentors to make the journey easier for yourself. There are valuable resources in the Tools & Tips section on the SALSIA website. In addition, you may choose to use the help & support of an experienced SALSIA mentor. Details of mentors may be found on the SALSIA website too.

What do you enjoy most about SALSIA auditing and mentoring?

I find it rewarding to share my expert knowledge to help & support small & medium sized businesses build confidence, improve food safety / quality systems & grow. Gaining certification can be the difference of being accepted to supply new customers & being able to maintain a supply to customers or not.

What is a key issue facing British Cheesemakers in 2023?

2022 & 2023 have been particularly challenging years to make the books balance & make profit. High milk prices have been hard, especially for those makers buying in milk for cheese making. For cheese makers with their own animal herds, feed & fertiliser costs have also been high. As we have all experienced, energy costs rose fast too, which is significant when using heat treatments such as pasteurisation.

Routes to Retail

Our 'Routes to Retail' guide is a valuable resource for small food and drink UK producers looking to grow their businesses and get their products into larger retailers.

[Download](#) your free copy today!



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Make It!



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Free Video Toolkit

- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Food Safety
- ✓ Pitching



We have worked with The Supply Chain Network and York & North Yorkshire Growth Hub to create a video toolkit for micro and SME food & drink producers, helping them prepare for and identify new retail channels and customers.

The toolkit includes four videos covering everything you need to know about setting up and growing a food & drink business in the UK. They cover food safety, identification of customers, brand development/marketing and how to pitch perfectly!

Thank you to SALSA Auditor & Mentor Catherine Riley and SALSA members Choc-Affair, The Fruit Kitchen and Yorkshire Rapeseed Oil for participating. Their experience setting up successful food businesses means their advice is beneficial.

If you want to develop and grow your food business but are unsure where to start, this five-part video toolkit is essential.

[Make it! With cut-through innovation](#)

[Make it! With standout brand and marketing](#)

[Make it! With food safety and compliance](#)

[Make it! With winning pitches](#)

SALSA Training

Our packed series of training courses are offered to our members at a discounted rate of only £165 pp + vat.



10th Aug - **HACCP Level 2 Distillery**

12th Sept - **Food Labelling Workshop**

14th Sept - **HACCP Level 2 Dairy**

14th Sept **HACCP Level 2 Ready to Eat**

19th Sept - **Food Microbiology - The Essentials**

25th Sept - **Food Microbiology - The Cheesemaker Essentials**

24th Oct HACCP - **Level 2 General**

Save the Date!

Ask us about the plus Cheese standard. We will be located on the Virtual Cheese Awards Stand at the Speciality Fine Foods Show on the 11th of September.

Please email us at info@salsafood.co.uk to book a meeting.



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