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Knowledge Network

THE FOOD CHAIN

THE *safefood* KNOWLEDGE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Declan Ferguson on his role as Technical Director of Co Down's Finnebrogue Artisan Foods



Declan Ferguson

Tyronne man Declan Ferguson has been in the food industry for over twenty years, having started early with a part-time job packing chickens in Moy Park while studying for his A-Levels. A food science degree at Queens University Belfast followed before he headed to London and took up a role as a technologist for Marks & Spencer, working across product categories including confectionery, produce and meat and poultry.

After 10 years in the role, Declan embarked on a new challenge with Tesco Ireland & Northern Ireland in 2010. "I was the lead technical manager for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland," Declan explains, "managing the technical and quality teams and developing 'homegrown' own label product ranges of Irish and Northern Irish category products such as meat, deli meats, baked goods, salads and poultry, as well as developing and promoting local SME supplier listings in Tesco." Two years later he moved to Genesis Crafty to take up the role of technical director there. Based in Magherafelt in Co Derry, Genesis Crafty is a company steeped in family heritage and has grown rapidly in recent years. "The company was going through a fantastic and challenging period of growth," Declan says, "and while I was there we developed a very strong Genesis Crafty brand while also creating a strong own-label supplier proposition in morning goods, Irish breads, in-store bakery and seasonal products such as handcrafted mince pies."

Since December 2014, Declan has been technical director at Finnebrogue Artisan in Co Down where he is responsible for the delivery of food safety and quality. He also ensures



“WE INTERACT REGULARLY WITH OUR RETAIL CUSTOMER TO ENSURE WE ARE DELIVERING”

that Finnebrogue is industry-leading in its approach to food safety, quality, innovation and customer satisfaction. “I lead the technical and quality teams and we interact regularly with our retail customers to ensure we are delivering on all aspects, from launching innovative products on time to ensuring that we have a pipeline of technical, product, health and sustainability innovation,” Declan explains.

The company has grown substantially in the last four years and has opened three state-of-the-art factories. Finnebrogue produces a wide range of meat and plant-based products and Declan has been at the heart of developing its Naked Bacon and Naked Ham, both made without nitrites, as well as various plant-based ranges. Both of these new developments are helping to meet consumer demand for healthier and more sustainable foods.

Declan’s role is varied and no two days are the same, however there are some key projects that he and the team work on continuously. They include the development of new ranges of plant-based products delivered through the planning and construction of a brand new production facility that will open ahead of Veganuary 2021. Equipping consumers with the knowledge to make more educated buying choices is also a big focus. “We have been working on the development and implementation of product life cycle analyses on foods so consumers can be provided with clear and credible information about the environmental impact of any particular foodstuff,” Declan explains. As part of this Finnebrogue has helped set up an independent charitable organisation called Foundation Earth which will help develop and implement these sustainability or environmental scores. “The sustainability scores go further than just carbon impacts and also include areas such as water usage, soil health and biodiversity impacts. Adding them to the front of packs means consumers can choose foods based on the environment in the same way that they can buy washing machines or refrigerators based on their energy usage.”

As with most businesses across many aspects of life, the sudden appearance of COVID-19 earlier this year has made it one of the main issues that the food manufacturing industry has to deal with. “Within our own company we have had to deal with these challenges head on to ensure that our staff feel safe enough to come to work. We have implemented new procedures and protocols related to personal protective equipment (PPE)

and social distancing, changing manufacturing practices and staff training to ensure we continue to supply products to our retail partners and at increased volumes,” Declan says. “The economic consequences of COVID-19 on global supply chains will, unfortunately, mean that food fraud and food adulteration will once again become a major issue across the global food industry, as criminal elements try to make money amidst the fall out of the pandemic.”

Outside his role at Finnebrogue, Declan is also a member of the **safefood** Knowledge Network expert group, which aims to help **safefood** target its research through assessment of food safety concerns and horizon-scanning for future risks, as well as educating small to medium size food businesses on food safety and industry challenges.

In this role, Declan tries to identify the challenges that SME food manufacturers have to deal with in an ever-changing supply chain landscape. He also looks at risk areas where those new to the industry may not understand the elements within a food product or its packaging format that ensure it is safe for the consumer at the point of sale or in the home. His work with the Knowledge Network is something Declan greatly enjoys as it gives him the opportunity to think about the bigger food industry picture. “I love the fact that when dealing with the group I can park the ongoing challenges of the day job and think more globally about the food safety challenges that are on the horizon and may potentially affect both consumers on the island of Ireland and those SMEs who wish to thrive in the food manufacturing industry.”



ABOUT DECLAN

Where are you from? I’m from Coalisland in County Tyrone but since leaving university I’ve lived in London, Dublin, Derry and now County Down.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? My wife, our two boys (ages 7 and 8) and I love to get out and about and enjoy the beautiful scenery that we have close to Downpatrick.

Is there a book you’ve read that influences you? One book that has helped me during my career would have to be Stephen Covey’s *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. It discusses seven habits that people and managers can consider using in life and in work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

Bertrand Emond, Head of Membership and Training at Campden BRI in Gloucestershire, England explains why food safety is good business.



“Culture matters... Failure to understand culture and take it seriously can have disastrous consequences for an organisation.”
Edgar H. Schein, 1999.

“You can have the best documented food safety processes and standards in the world, but if they’re not consistently put into practice by people, they’re useless.”
Frank Yiannas, 2009.



Bertrand Emond

- To be audit-ready at all times to cope with the rising number of unannounced audits
- As part of their continuous improvement
- To gain trust and support earned recognition and earned autonomy with/by their clients or authorities
- To meet new requirements from various standards (e.g. ISO22000, BRCGS Food Safety Standard Issue 8)
- To get better deals with investors and insurance brokers

Ensuring food safety at all times is the number one priority for any food business. It is non-negotiable. Getting things wrong can have devastating effects not only on the business (e.g. cost of rework, recalls, handling consumer complaints, fines, reputation loss...) but also on consumers (e.g. illness, death) and society (e.g. cost to health service, cost of people being off work).

The importance of food safety culture has become increasingly recognised in the past few years, as has the role of psychology and the importance of behaviour-based approaches to effective food safety management. Companies have been interested in understanding how they can improve their food safety culture for a number of reasons:

There is a growing body of evidence highlighting the many benefits of having a strong food safety culture, including:

- Increased staff motivation and performance
- Increased job satisfaction and pride
- More desirable company image
- Increased ability to attract and retain talent
- Fewer mistakes and more right first time
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increased revenue gains and growth

Food safety culture can be described as the “shared values, beliefs and norms that affect mindset and behaviour toward food safety in, across and throughout an organisation”. (GFSI Food



Safety Culture Position Paper, 2018). Some of these are easy to observe, such as the facilities and equipment, posters and paperwork, and the visible behaviours of staff. However, some are harder to see, such as underlying values and priorities, unspoken rules, and the way things are done when no-one is watching. This makes the clear identification and evaluation of food safety culture very challenging.

What is certain is that food safety is a shared responsibility and all employees have a role to play. Employees, irrespective of their position within a company, need to understand how their actions can have an impact (positive or negative) on food safety. A business has to ensure that all staff are doing the right thing right at all times even when under pressure or when no-one is watching! The only way to achieve this is to have and maintain a strong and mature food safety culture.

You can only improve things effectively if you can measure them. When it comes to a seemingly “fluffy” concept like culture,

it can be quite challenging. The Culture Excellence model developed over the last 20 years by Taylor Shannon International (TSI) – based on psychology, organisational behaviour and safety and quality management – provides a useful and effective framework to help companies to characterise their food safety culture. It helps companies to understand all the key dimensions that they need to consider and work on to ensure that they have and maintain a strong culture; businesses can assess their level of maturity across these 20 dimensions.

There are four categories in the Culture Excellence Model: People, Process, Purpose and Proactivity. (see chart) These make up the four broad areas of safety and quality within an organisation:

The People category focuses on employees at all levels and their experience at the organisation with relevance to safety and quality. It includes the frequency and impact of training and communication, the perceived level of empowerment, the effectiveness of teamwork and the perceived rewards and incentives that promote positive safety and quality behaviours.

The Process category focuses on the internal mechanisms by which the organisation manages safety and quality on a routine basis. It includes availability and satisfaction with safety and quality management systems, co-ordination of safety and quality across the organisation, consistency of practices and standards over time, and the perceptions of management control.

The Purpose category focuses on the importance and clarity given to safety and quality in the overall mission of the organisation and its translation into daily operations. It includes employee awareness and agreement with the long-term vision of the organisation, the strategic plans to achieve the vision, the dominant core values of the organisation and the impact of these in short term goals and targets.

The Proactivity category focuses on the organisation’s awareness and response to external events and stakeholders that could impact safety and quality. It includes employee perceptions of risks and priorities, awareness of external stakeholders such as suppliers and consumers, the level of change and innovation in the premises, and the effectiveness of organisational learning and continual improvement



Food Standards Australia New Zealand has produced a useful poster on "What does a strong food safety culture look like?" which provides some practical examples. It can be viewed at <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodsafety/culture/Documents/food-safety-culture-poster.pdf>

Based on data from the Culture Excellence Programme, the following are the three most common areas that require improvement in companies.

1. Reinforcement: While most companies have established reward and incentive schemes, not all are specifically linked to food safety or sufficiently transparent to be perceived as attainable by all employees. Reinforcement of positive food safety attitudes and behaviours must be consistent, clear, timely, fair and well communicated in order to be most effective.

2. Training: While most companies provide food safety training for their employees, not all has a direct impact on behaviour or is perceived as enjoyable and worthwhile. It is important that training programmes are carefully designed to incorporate clear and measurable objectives, and that training methods are sufficiently dynamic, varied and practical to make a lasting impact on food safety knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

3. Risk foresight: Over the past 15 years the general level of risk awareness has been seen to increase in the food industry, but the challenge of understanding how to prioritise and focus based on

“MAINTAINING A STRONG FOOD SAFETY CULTURE IS CRITICAL”



the significance of particular hazards still remains. In some companies, there is also a gap between the priorities of the individual and those of the company. It is important for companies to both develop, and also communicate, risk-based approaches in order to reduce the likelihood of mistakes with serious consequences. It is also beneficial to assess individual and organisational risk perception to identify potential gaps and inconsistencies.

To keep food safety top of mind and engage employees fully, senior leaders as well as food safety and technical people need to leverage the functional expertise of colleagues in other functions, including:

- Health & Safety, to pick up on tips and techniques, as they have a lot of experience in behaviour-based approaches to drive compliance.
- Marketing, to help to segment the workforce and develop targeted food safety messaging, taking into account deep culture, generations, job type, etc.
- Human Resources (HR), to help with developing and managing the continuing professional development of each employee, the competency framework and the various training and learning activities required. HR usually has access to dedicated software packages and tools. HR support is also valuable when designing effective reward system to reinforce desired food safety behaviours.

Having and maintaining a strong food safety culture is critical to ensure food safety at all times and to drive positive behaviours. It is relentless and should be fully integrated in the overall continuous improvement activities. It is not just good for business, it is good business!

ABOUT BETRAND

Bertrand Emond is Head of Membership & Training and Culture Excellence Lead at Campden BRI, the world's largest independent provider of practical training and information support to the food, drink and allied industries. He holds a Master of Food Science & Technology and a Master of Business Administration.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Killowen Farm's Nicholas Dunne, a member of the *safefood* Knowledge Network, reveals what running a dairy farm and successful business entails.



County Wexford's Killowen Farm is located in Courtnacuddy, a small village outside the town of Enniscorthy just under the Blackstairs mountain. It is run by three generations of the Dunne family. Nicholas and his wife Judith, along with sister Pauline help to produce the award-winning Killowen Farm range of natural yoghurts. Grandparents Tom and Mary still play an active role on the farm, keeping the machines running, while the youngest Dunes, Charlie, Martha and Anna help out too.

Nicholas was a full-time dairy farmer until 2003 but his knowledge of the dairy industry prompted the family to branch out. "I was a full-time dairy farmer but I was also involved with our local milk co-op and was on the board of Wexford creamery which gave me a great insight into the dairy industry," he explains.

They started Killowen in 2003 and have been building the business in retail and food service since then. "Both my wife Judith and I wanted to take our milk to market and Killowen Yoghurt came from that need." The award-winning range is, says Nicholas, as natural as you can get. "As a family, we want to make natural products that we're happy to feed to our children and eat ourselves, so we never use preservatives or additives. Our natural yoghurt is made with only milk and live cultures – good bacteria that help keep your digestive system working well."



Nicholas Dunne

When they decided to expand into the product market, Nicholas and Judith signed up to courses and workshops set up by Bord Bia, Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and Enterprise Ireland to educate themselves on the skills needed to run the business. *safefood's* Knowledge Network has also proven to be a great resource of information and inspiration. As a member of the Knowledge Network, Nicholas has been invited to speak at a number of

the organisation's events in the southeast. "It's about sharing our story and experience with others," he explains, "and in turn hearing others speaking about their experiences. We are always learning from their stories." If someone is considering joining the Knowledge Network, Nicholas recommends it wholeheartedly. "All our food business depend on producing safe food and *safefood* has in-depth knowledge and so much experience in this area. Getting involved in the Knowledge Network is a great way to learn new skills and keep up-to-date with the whole industry."

As for the day job, life on the farm is, unsurprisingly, busy for Nicholas, with an early start every day. "An average day for me at around 6am," he reveals. "The first thing we do is check the farm to make sure that everything is okay and the cows are starting to be milked and that a plan is in place for the rest of the day. Then I head to the factory where yoghurt is already made and packing is about to start. I find it helpful if I am able to sort out problems



early in the day – knowing all production is up and running leaves me with the rest of the day free to concentrate on the business.”

The wellbeing of the farm’s herd is a priority for Nicholas and his family. “The cows live out in the fields from February to November and eat about 70 kg of grass daily,” he says. “Their lifestyles involve lots of fresh grass, clean air and a gentle routine which they enjoy. In winter they move indoors and enjoy a varied diet of grass silage, maize silage, beet, straw and meal. They all have names which reflect their personalities: Bella, Sunbeam, Dew and Mitzi are just a few.”

Maintaining a successful business and safe work environment are Nicholas’ main priorities and both require hard work and dedication. “I think the single biggest challenge for us is to keep everyone here focused on food safety as a lot of what we do is repetitive, he says, adding, “The biggest job every day is to be better at what we do and to instil this into our business. But this is also what we enjoy most about the business too – the feedback from our customers telling us the product tastes great.”

ABOUT NICHOLAS

Where are you from? I am the 8th generation of Dunnes farming on this farm here in Courtnacuddy, Co Wexford.

Is there a book that influenced you? I only read when I’m on holidays but *Kane and Abel* by Jefferey Archer is a favourite.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? I love all kinds of sports and cycle a good bit. We’re very lucky that our family loves farming so we farm a lot over weekends too.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Given the ongoing circumstances around COVID-19 **safefood**, in conjunction with the Knowledge Network Expert Group, is working on various methods of delivery to including podcasts, webinars, and virtual training.

The latest food safety webinars are available at www.safefoodkn.net and include:



FOOD PACKAGING: MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOUR PRODUCT

Presented by Eddie O’Neill, Artisan Food Specialist at Teagasc Food Research Centre

While we might want to advance our food products by using recyclable and compostable packaging we must not forget the basic principles of packaging, namely protection and preservation, so we can deliver safe, quality products to consumers.

SARS-COV-2 AND FOODBORNE VIRUSES – CURRENT ISSUES

Presented by Martin D’Agostino, Virology Section Manager at Campden BRI

Martin discusses Covid-19 in the context of food safety and gives an update on foodborne viruses, in particular Norovirus and recently revised figures released by the UK FSA.

UPCOMING EVENTS

VIRTUAL FOOD SAFETY TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR SME’S

Effective Food Safety I

Virtual training workshop in partnership with Teagasc, to address practical aspects of food microbiology, hygiene and cleaning.

Effective Food Safety II

Virtual training workshop on record-keeping and HACCP.

Effective Food Allergen Management & Control

Virtual training workshop to increase awareness and training around food hypersensitivity and in particular, food allergen management.

Keep an eye out for dates, registration details and lots more virtual events coming soon at www.safefoodkn.net

QUIZ TIME

GIVE THIS ISSUE'S FOOD QUIZ A TRY AND YOU COULD BE IN WITH THE CHANCE OF WINNING A FANTASTIC PRIZE!

- Question 1:** What is tahini made of?
- Question 2:** Goulash is the national dish of which country?
- Question 3:** What fruit is kirsch made from?
- Question 4:** Aduki, borlotti and cannellini are types of what?
- Question 5:** What does *amuse bouche* mean?
- Question 6:** What are dried plums better known as?
- Question 7:** Which fish does caviar come from?
- Question 8:** What type of pastry is used for profiteroles?
- Question 9:** What type of milk is a basic ingredient of Thai cookery?
- Question 10:** Which cheese is traditionally grated and sprinkled on spaghetti?

safefood is delighted to offer one lucky quiz winner a fantastic food hamper (similar to pictured).



To enter:
Send your answers to knowledgenetwork@safefood.net before 6th November 2020. This competition is open to Knowledge Network members on the island of Ireland only.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DAMIEN LYNCH, SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICE, HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE WHO WAS THE WINNER OF ISSUE 17'S QUIZ.
ANSWERS: 1: ALMOND; 2: FOCACCIA; 3; IT IS SERVED COLD; 4: HARICOT BEANS; 5: CROCUS; 6: GARLIC; 7: SEMOLINA; 8: THE STOMACH, USUALLY OF A COW; 9: AUBERGINE; 10: YEAST

LISTEN UP: THE SAFEFood PODCASTS

safefood podcasts bring you insights and advice from leading experts on food safety. Through the series, we'll be looking at factors that shape the food industry on the island of Ireland. You can listen to the podcasts on www.safefood.net/professional/food-safety-podcasts, on Spotify, iTunes Podcasts or Google Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

If you'd like to participate or suggest topics please email us at info@safefood.net.



Get involved with THE FOOD CHAIN

We'd love to hear from you. Would you like us to feature your research or industry sector? What else would you like us to cover in the world of food safety? Send your article ideas, feedback and suggestions to knowledgenetwork@safefood.net.

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To obtain free membership of the **safefood** Knowledge Network, go to safefoodkn.net and click 'Sign Up'. Once your membership is quickly approved, you can follow the latest Knowledge Network news, learn about events and access Knowledge Network videos, conference presentations and lots of other useful resources.

In the current challenging times **safefood** hopes you and your families are keeping safe and healthy.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Have you got a personal announcement that you'd like to share in *The Food Chain*?
Get in touch via email: knowledgenetwork@safefood.net