



TASTE Council



Ireland's Speciality Food Sector

FOOD MARKETING TERMS -
UNDERSTANDING
THE OPPORTUNITY

*Artisan; Farmhouse;
Traditional; Natural*





Kevin Sheridan

Introduction

By Kevin Sheridan, Chairman,
TASTE Council of Ireland

The **TASTE Council** is a voluntary representative group of the smaller food business sector made up largely of local, artisan and speciality food producers.

Our mission is to empower and enable the Irish speciality food sector at a strategic level to maximise its current and potential contribution to Ireland's food and agri economy, society, culture and environment.

Since we were formally established in 2003, we have been concerned about the way in which many food companies were misleading consumers through the use of inaccurate marketing terms such as **Artisan, Farmhouse, Traditional, Natural** etc. to describe their products.

Over the last number of years we have worked closely with the **Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)** to promote the responsible use of food marketing terms in an attempt to safeguard the competitive advantage of the thriving small food business sector in Ireland.

This project resulted in the publication of an FSAI guidance note on "**The Use of Food Marketing Terms**" which outlines best practice in describing food products for sale in Ireland to ensure consumers are not misled.

This is an important step in encouraging Irish food companies to incorporate **honesty, integrity and authenticity** into their marketing practices, while providing some **protection** for smaller food producers, allowing them to challenge those who inaccurately use terms such as 'artisan' when promoting their products.

The TASTE Council will be briefing **retail and foodservice trade buyers** on this guidance, highlighting to them the important role they can play in encouraging best practice among Irish food and drink producers.

This document has been designed to assist small food producers in identifying their **unique selling point** and harnessing the opportunity presented by an industry-wide insistence on the legitimate use of speciality food marketing terms.



Artisan

Ireland's Speciality Food Sector

Ireland has a thriving speciality food sector which is worth approximately €400 million* to the economy each year, and which also offers huge cultural, social and ecological benefits to the country.

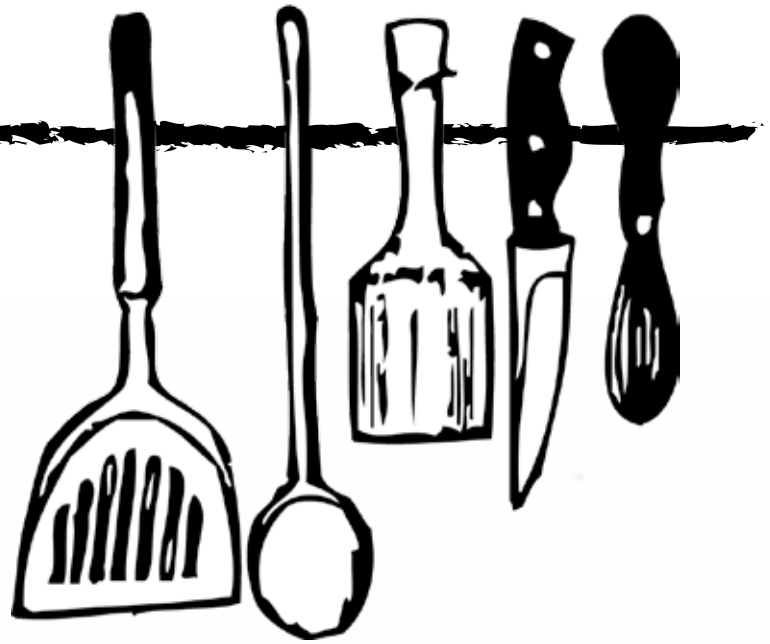
We have developed a reputation as a strong food-producing nation with an international image based on qualities such as local sourcing, traditional food production methods, skilled craftspeople and authentic recipes.

There are now more than 750* artisan and specialty food producers who are contributing to the success of the broader food and hospitality sector with tourists travelling from around the world to immerse themselves in Ireland's unique food story.

It is important that the Irish food industry carefully protects this image and values the producers who are central to ensuring its authenticity and longevity.



*Estimates based on Bord Bia client companies



The Opportunity

When we meet a new person, one of the first things we tend to find out is where they are from and what their background story is. The same is generally true when it comes to a food brand.



What is your story?

Consumers are not just buying the product, they are buying your story.

Food businesses are all too aware that successfully communicating a background story for a product to the consumer can provide a strong source of differentiation and, ultimately, competitive advantage.

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in small scale, speciality, locally produced foods and, recognising this, many food companies have been tempted to incorporate marketing terms such as "Artisan," "Farmhouse", "Traditional" etc. into their marketing communications.

The result has been confusion among consumers about what these words actually mean, and genuine small speciality food businesses have in some cases been forced to compete with much larger companies, with bigger marketing budgets for the same space.

The introduction of guidance from the FSAI provides an opportunity for authentic small food businesses to reclaim this space.



Importance of Authenticity

Consumers expect truth, honesty and integrity when purchasing food.

Food producers need to ensure that all claims made, or inferred, regarding the provenance of food products are authentic. Should your marketing not be genuine and stand up to scrutiny, you run the risk of consumers losing all confidence in your brand.

Irish food producers must lead by example, helping to ingrain an ethos of honest, responsible food marketing, ensuring that consumers can trust the brands that they engage with.



FSAI Guidelines

The following outlines a summary of the FSAI guidelines for the use of four key marketing terms relating to all foods placed on the Irish market.

1. ARTISAN/ARTISANAL

The terms 'artisan' or 'artisanal' should only be used on foods or in advertising of foods that can legitimately claim to meet all of the following criteria:

1. The food is made in **limited quantities** by skilled **craftspeople**
2. The processing method is **not fully mechanised** and follows a **traditional method**
3. The food is made in a **micro-enterprise** at a **single location**
4. The characteristic ingredient(s) used in the food are **grown or produced locally**, where seasonally available and practical

2. TRADITIONAL

The term 'traditional' conveys a sense of continuity and an impression that a food is made in a time-honoured way or to a time-honoured recipe. The term 'traditional' or similar descriptions using this term should only be used on foods that can legitimately claim to meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The food is made to **an authentic recipe** which can be proved to have existed without significant modification for at least 30 years and/or
2. The food has been made using a method of preparation that has **existed for more than 30 years** (although automation and mechanisation of these methods is acceptable) and **does not deviate substantially from the traditional food processing method** associated with a certain type of food

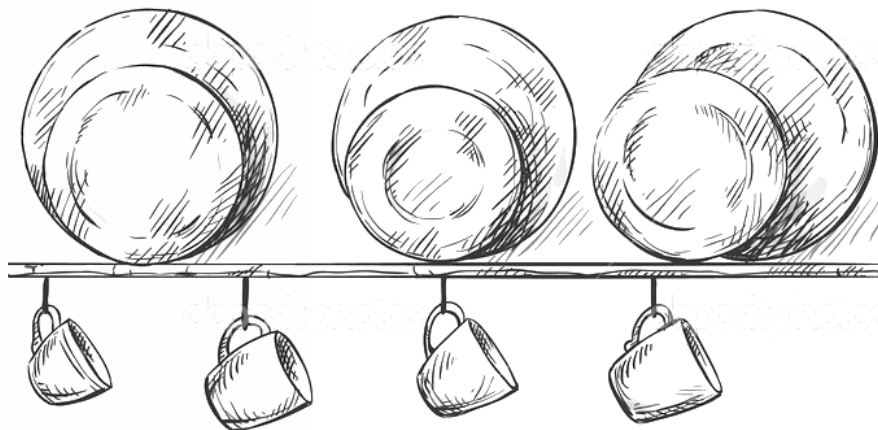
3. FARMHOUSE

The term 'farmhouse' or similar terms that create an impression that a food originates on a farm should only be used on foods that can legitimately claim to meet all of the following criteria:

1. The food is made in a **single location on a farm**
2. The food is made by a **micro-enterprise**
3. The characteristic ingredient(s) used in the food are **grown or produced locally**

Some exceptions are included for foods that have used the term 'farmhouse' and 'farm fresh' for many years and this use is well understood by consumers.





4. NATURAL

The use of the marketing term 'natural' or variations on this term, e.g. naturally better, natural goodness, gives the impression that a food exists in, or is formed by, nature.

Food business operators are specifically reminded that such a term cannot be applied to a food when in fact all other similar foods are natural. The two circumstances under which a food product can use this term are as follows:

1. The ingredients **are formed by nature** and are not **significantly interfered with** by man e.g. a bag of peeled and cut carrots which are only washed, peeled and chopped could use the marketing term 'natural' because it meets criterion 1 above, but only if it differed in its characteristic from other similar product, i.e. other similar products would then have to contain additives or be processed in such a way that it would be considered to have been significantly interfered with by man
2. The ingredients and the final food are: a. **Additive-free** or b. **Contain flavourings that are natural** as defined in European law or c. **Contain other food additives that are obtained from natural sources**, e.g. plants, by appropriate physical processing (including distillation and solvent extraction) or traditional preparation processes e.g. a cooked ham produced without the preservative nitrite would have to be made of ingredients that are formed by nature, e.g. pork, water, salt, etc. (each ingredient meets criterion 1) and also do not contain any 'artificial' additives (each ingredient meets criterion 2; e.g. salt without anti-caking additive) and in addition, the final product cannot contain 'artificial' additives itself (final product meets criterion 2; e.g. no nitrite additive present). Such a product could be described as 'natural ingredient ham'.

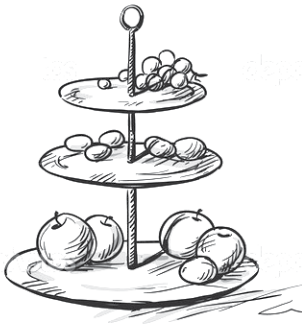
The use of the term 'natural' has sometimes been restricted by law and in other cases has become synonymous with a certain type of product. In these specific cases, the term 'natural' may continue to be used on products which may not meet the two characteristics listed above. See full note for foods which fall into this restricted category.

QUALIFIERS

It is recognised that for some foods, the qualifier "style", e.g. "farmhouse style" or "traditional style" are used. The use of qualifiers such as these are not considered helpful to consumers. Additional qualifiers should be used to clarify the level of authenticity or link to the original product.

1. Companies must first ensure that the information they provide to consumers is compliant with current legislation in the country in which they are selling.
For more information view: www.fsai.ie/legislation/food_legislation.html
There are a number of minor exceptions to the guidelines outlined here.
View full document: Guidance Note on the Use of Food Marketing Terms www.fsai.ie/publications_food_marketing_terms/

What if none of these categories apply?



So, what if you are a genuine small food producer but you cannot legitimately lay claim to one of the terms above?

This does not mean that you no longer have an opportunity to communicate your point of difference; you just need to expand your thinking.

The core of your brand model should highlight your competitive advantage. It can be tested against a number of criteria:

1. **Unique:** The core of a brand is how it is different from competitors in the same category. Therefore, avoid words such as “Irish”, “quality”, “family-owned”.
2. **Focused:** One word is ideal, maximum of two or three.
3. **Relevant to consumers:** It needs to connect with consumers’ needs and wants.
4. **Representative:** Of what the brand stands for, not what it does.
5. **Stretchable/scalable:** Across all product lines.
6. **Consistently delivered:** If it can not be consistently experienced, it is not your core.
7. **Believable:** The core must be credible or the brand will be rejected – your customers must believe you can deliver on the promise.
8. **Consistent:** The core must not change from year to year.





What if you witness misuse of the terms by another food company?

If you come across a product, or business, which you believe to be misleading consumers with inaccurate usage of one of the terms outlined above, you may complain to the FSAI using the online complaint form available on www.fsai.ie/makeitbetter

You should also alert the TASTE Council of Ireland using the following online form: www.tastecouncilofireland.com/contact-us.html



What if none of these categories apply?

If you are unsure if one of the categories can be legitimately used on your product or when describing your business, you can contact the Food Safety Authority of Ireland to seek clarification:

Email: info@fsai.ie
FSAI advice line: 1890 33 66 77
FSAI telephone: + 353 1 817 1300





Brand Development – need more help?

Your brand is your promise to your consumer.
It tells them what to expect from your product.

Bord Bia have developed a 'Branding Workbook' which is an interactive resource containing useful templates and a practical guide for completing a brand model for your business.

If you need more help in identifying your brand DNA and point of difference, you can access this resource here:

www.bordbia.ie/Documents/Workbooks/BordBia-BrandingWorkbook.pdf





tisan

Artisan

Marketing Channels

In order to ensure that your competitive advantage is properly communicated to your target audience, it is important that it is reflected across all possible consumer touch points.

The following pages illustrate the wide range of marketing channels (excluding advertising) available for a small food business. The individual channels that your business chooses to use will ultimately be decided based on budget and resources available.



Tradition

POINT OF PURCHASE

There are many ways in which you can connect with and communicate your story with potential consumers at point of purchase.



Label

⇒ What words can you use to grab attention and instantly tell your story?



Packaging

⇒ How can the look and feel of the pack communicate the ethos of the business?



In-store

⇒ What kind of signage or point of sale best reflects your business?



Farmers market

⇒ How should your stall look to best convey the authenticity of your business?



FACE TO FACE

Food companies should ensure that any opportunity for face-to-face engagement with potential customers leaves the right impression.



Trade Show/Foodie Event

⇒ Who is representing your brand, do they understand your USP and can they communicate it?



Ambassadors

⇒ What high profile person could you approach to promote your brand? Are they a good fit with your company ethos and can they reach your audience?



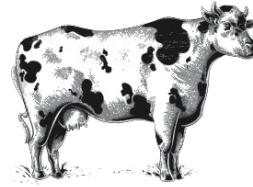
Visitors Centre

⇒ Is there a way you could invite your consumers in to experience your company or brand directly e.g. visitors centre or visitors experience on site?



market

PUBLIC RELATIONS



Public Relations can be carried out directly in-house, or if budget allows, a PR consultant could be engaged on a project or on-going basis.

3



Press Releases

- ⇒ What milestones can you announce to media using press releases and who are your key media targets?



Written Articles

- ⇒ Could your spokesperson draft an opinion article on a topical theme in order to position them as an authentic industry expert?



Ambassadors

- ⇒ What high profile person would be a good fit to promote your brand in media interviews?



Photography

- ⇒ How can you best visually represent the story of your brand through product shots, the clothes you wear and backdrops for photography?



Videography

- ⇒ Should you consider a corporate video tracing the story of your product from farm to fork?



Infographics

- ⇒ Can you tell your story in visually appealing facts and figures, much sought after in print and online media?



How to guides/tips

- ⇒ Can you provide consumers with helpful tips and advice on related topics e.g. health, fitness, cooking etc.?



ONLINE

4



Website

⇒ Does it communicate the brand story and lend authenticity to your products?



Blogs

⇒ Could you create a useful “ask the expert” section or blog series with tips and advice?



Social Media

⇒ What is your brand’s tone of voice and is it reflected adequately across all social media platforms?



Photographs

⇒ How can you best visually represent the story of your brand through product shots, the clothes you wear and backdrops for photography?



Video

⇒ Could you generate video content such as recipe demos, tips and advice to create highly shareable and engaging content online?



Recipes

⇒ Does your product lend itself to the development of a suite of recipes which can be distributed through online channels?



Email Marketing

⇒ Can you generate a database of consumers who you could engage with via email newsletter or competitions?



WORD OF MOUTH



Restaurant Menu

⇒ If a restaurant is using your product, can they communicate your brand story on the menu?



Industry engagement

⇒ Are you networking with key industry stakeholders and do they understand the story of your brand?



Endorsements

⇒ Can you gather testimonials or endorsements from people using your products which can be used to verify its authenticity?



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