Food Fortnight aims to boost British food pre-Brexit

Hundreds of shops, pubs and restaurants are trying to build British food brand ahead of Brexit by showcasing UK produce

Consumers will be urged to buy British at this year’s British Food Fortnight in a bid to bolster domestic food production and ensure the UK’s food security following June’s referendum result.

The event, which runs from 17 September to 2 October and celebrates the diversity and quality of British produce, will focus on building the British food brand and instilling confidence in the UK’s food industry. It is likely to be one of the sectors most affected by Brexit.

Hundreds of shops, pubs, restaurants, care homes, markets and visitor attractions are gearing up to go British for two weeks and in some parts of the country, entire towns are taking part.

There will be a special focus on showcasing the benefits and opportunities of serving British food in schools and hospitals; a national competition led by Raymond Blanc to find the most imaginative celebration; a school competition to make a 90th birthday cake for the Queen and win a visit to Buckingham Palace; and the continuing campaign to keep Harvest Festival on the national calendar.

Alexia Robinson, founder of British Food Fortnight, said: “This is a watershed moment for British food. Subsidised and regulated for 40 years by Europe, our farmers will now be competing in a global market place.

‘British food is produced to the highest standards; it really is some of the very best in the world, and the opportunities to trade on this in the global market are immense. But building the brand ‘British food’ starts at home and it is more important than ever that we excite the British public to buy it.’

She added: “We need to give farmers the confidence to continue to invest in innovation and quality thus ensuring our food security and a robust supply of quality domestic food.”

British food menus are being run in school canteens and hospital restaurants during the national food promotion. These are flagship pilots that the organisers of British Food Fortnight hope will encourage the Government to make a commitment to sourcing British food across the public sector post-Brexit; something that has not been possible within the EU.

British Food Fortnight Partner, Cucina Restaurants, is promoting British food in 44 secondary schools in the South East and one in Manchester. Pupils are being asked to submit their own British recipes for the school menu; an after-school programme is planned to educate pupils and parents about seasonal British ingredients; and ‘Great British Classics’ will be on the menu throughout September.

In hospitals, British Food Fortnight has teamed up with the Hospital Caterers Association to create exciting examples of how British food can be served on
hospital menus and then to use these to encourage more hospitals to source British produce.

This year, the celebration, now in its fifteenth year, is being sponsored by the Co-op, which is organising a Love British Food Fortnight roadshow to highlight the retailer’s sourcing credentials. Customers will have the chance to meet producers, sample food and receive information on their food.

The supermarket will also be doing research on traditional British food recipes and local specialities alongside a range of other activities.

Cathryn Higgs, food policy manager at the Co-op, said: Co-op are very proud of our British credentials from product and ingredient sourcing to our support of British farmers through the Co-op dedicated farming groups, the levels of investment we make into British sourcing and the increasing amount of locally sourced products in our stores.”