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**Get a taste of the East Cairngorms – Scotland's emerging foodie destination**

The eastern side of the Cairngorms National Park— home to Ballater, Braemar and Royal Deeside — is attracting a wave of creative chefs, chocolatiers, and micro-brewers whose fresh and landscape-inspired ideas have transformed this historic area into a dynamic dining destination.

Covering a vast area featuring mountains, the Caledonian forest, country pastures and the River Dee, the East Cairngorms geology is so diverse that many local food and drink businesses are taking a keen interest in seasonal ingredients that can be sustainably harvested and championed in their products.

Tree-changers Dave Williams and Cathy Anderson set up the Braemar Chocolate Shop in 2019 after re-locating from Shetland and finding a home among fellow artisan makers in the East Cairngorms.

“We’d read about the Fife Arms in Braemar and decided to take a trip to experience the area. We parked up outside what is now our shop, saw the ‘for sale’ sign and the wheels started turning. We opened a business, bought a house, got married and did everything you shouldn’t in a global pandemic,” says Cathy.

Dave, Cathy and their team handmake all the chocolates in the shop, with unique flavours inspired by the landscape around them, offering a taste of the East Cairngorms, and Scotland, in chocolate.

“All our chocolates have a connection to a Scottish flavour and, more locally, we use herbs and plants such a juniper to give a unique taste,” says Dave.

“What makes the East Cairngorms different is that there is collaboration between a lot of the artisan makers. We want to make the most of the surrounding area and each other’s skills. There are people making rum, gin, honey, bakers and butchers as well as brewers, and some of these business support us using chocolate for their products creating a hyper local supply chain.”

Braemar Brewing Co. founder Dave Evans says that utilising other local makers is important to the area’s brand.

“What I really like about this area is that with so many small and independent shops, we’re able to source local and seasonality plays a big part.”

Braemar Brewing Co’s premises are shared with a Hazelnut Patisserie run by Dave’s wife, Ros, and her business partner Mathilde who is a classically trained French pastry chef.

“We use unique, local ingredients to pay homage to the area. During autumn last year, we brewed a beer using Rowan berries to flavour and bitter the beer. Provenance is really important not only to us, but many of the local food and drink businesses in the area.”

To promote the diverse range of food and drink businesses in the area, Federica Bertolini and Jasmine Bowles set up The Ghillie’s Larder, a local farmers market to give outside visitors a true taste of the East Cairngorms.

“We held the markets throughout summer and early autumn in 2021 and it was a window to showcase farmers and artisan makers in the area. This area is already a well-known tourism destination, but the market allows us to showcase to visitors the hidden gems in the East Cairngorms that they might not be aware of, and we’ve been blown away by the response,” says Federica.

The Ghillie’s Larder Farmer’s Market will continue in 2022 with dates to be announced soon via their social media channels. To capitalise on this emerging foodie destination, a new campaign, Imagine More, to promote food and drink in the East Cairngorms was launched recently by Ballater Business Association (BBA) and Braemar Tourism Group (BTG).

The campaign, which includes a website, promotional video, and trip planner is the first in a series of five which aim to inspire visitors to explore the East Cairngorms as a year-round destination for outdoor activity.

For more information on food and drink in the East Cairngorms, head to: <https://www.visitballater.com/east-cairngorms-food-and-drink-trail/>

**ENDS**

**Our top five places to get a taste of the East Cairngorms**

**Courie Courie Bakery**

Searching for a sourdough fix? This artisan bakery and friendly whole-food café hits the sweet spot with real food and baking from responsibly sourced, local ingredients.

**Cambus O Mey Cheese**

Chasing cheese in Royal Deeside? Look no further than this family-owned creamery delivering pure, unadulterated, unpasteurised goodness**.**

**Sheriden’s**

Sourcing all its meat from local pastures, this specialist butchers serves top-quality produce with friendly service, ensuring you get the cut you crave.

**Rocksalt and Snails**

You won’t find any *escargot* at this establishment, just fine food and wine in a cosy and inviting setting.

**Balmoral Bar**

Whether it’s quenching a thirst with a craft beer or feeding a hungry appetite, there’s a reason this local pub lives at the heart of the community.

Notes to editor:

Issued by Jane Craigie Marketing on behalf of Ballater Business Association and Braemar Tourism Group. For additional press information, please contact Alana Black on 07596 122184 or alana@janecraigie.com.

**Information about Ballater Business Association**

Ballater Business Association represents businesses who trade within the Dinnet to Crathie area, who have a common interest in sustaining a thriving community through the local economy.  The BBA work in partnership with the Cairngorm Business Partnership and Visit Cairngorms to support our businesses.  In April 2021 the BBA began a collaboration with Braemar Tourism Group to work together on projects of mutual benefit and the promotion of the ‘East Cairngorms’ is the first of these initiatives, funded through a Visit Scotland Grant.  For more information contact Susan Stewart on the email secretary@visitballater.com

**Information about Braemar Tourism Group**

Braemar Tourism Group is a thriving association, promoting Braemar and Crathie to visitors and locals alike. Membership has increased recently to 55 members, all working together to encourage people to visit, stay longer and return. Braemar is in the very heart of the Cairngorms National Park (we have a close bond with the Cairngorms Business Partnership/VisitCairngorms) but we are also in Royal Deeside. Forming a collaboration with Ballater seemed the perfect opportunity to work together for mutual benefit, in promoting the Eastern Cairngorms as a year-round destination. Please contact Sarah, Chair of the BTG for more information sarahhubbard21@gmail.com