



This time last year Sandyknowe approached a food development company – Charis Innovative Food Services Limited in Ayr – “to get the recipe right.”

“They have tasting panels on Mondays and Tuesdays sampling a variety of foods. Last year they tested 150 varieties of tatties! Initially every time I made a batch, I put it through them,” said Alistair. He now processes his wares at the primary school at SAC, Auchincruive. “Originally we planned to put a tent in on farm, but I didn’t have the expertise and it saves us £150,000. We will probably invest in our own tent when we are selling a few thousand bottles a week.”

Alistair started practising producing his natural yogurt drinks, which have no additives, in April using strawberries and raspberries from Ewan Pate, Agricultural editor for the Courier.

As with any new venture, Alistair has come up against the odd teething problem. “I spent days searching for 250ml bottles, which proved very difficult as most drinks companies have their own made to order in vast quantities. I also had trouble with the fruit initially as it is sold in batches of 20kg, frozen. It is now sawn off in 5kg lots!”

“As the product is totally natural, there are no additives or stabilisers so I had some problems with separation

so now use clear, flavourless, German apples which are high in Pectin to alleviate this setback.”

Alistair contacted Great Circle PR from an advert he spotted in *farmingScotland* magazine – no less! “With degrees in Agriculture, the staff at Great Circle were very helpful and also put me in touch with a design house for the label – Lucy Richards at Studio LR.”

During his market research, Alistair collected umpteen yogurt bottles from outlets across the country. With the help of a photographer and designer he came up with a hip and trendy label featuring the ‘Curious Cows of Sandyknowe,’ which is aimed at upmarket delis and sandwich shops in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The aim is to sell to young professionals aged 25+ with high disposable incomes.

“In terms of research, National yogurt sales are increasing 20% a year and yogurt drinks sales, including probiotics, are up 25% a year. Figures are a year to 18 months behind actual sales,” stated Alistair.

The Stewarts gave away 2000 free samples at the official launch at Kelso Show. After the show, Alistair was involved in the harvest but has since gone full time on the diversification.

The Farmers’ Market in Edinburgh



has proved a valuable venue, as 250 bottles of the Sandyknowe solution have been sold on each outing.

Outlets on Alistair’s distribution list include; local shops in the Borders, farm shops, Dobbies Garden Centres in Dalkeith and Stirling and Hendersons Salad Bar in Edinburgh.

“I would like to get into Peckhams and Marigotta and am aiming to be in 100 outlets by this time next year,” said Alistair, who is presently only using 1% of the milk output off farm.

There is plenty room for expansion of the business – 16,000 bottles a day would need to be sold to keep up with the Curious Cows of Sandyknowe, who happily graze the slopes round Smailholm Tower!

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