

## **PRESS RELEASE - April 2021**

### **Food Innovation Centre in North Somerset Celebrates First Year of Success**

On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April, food and drink innovation centre, The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> marked its first anniversary. The hub, near J21 of the M5 at Weston-super-Mare, has received over 250 site visitors, rented food-grade production units to 10 businesses, and has held 60 food and drink business events and webinars attended by 700 businesses.

Rachel Goff, Senior Technical and Site Manager, said, “We’re thrilled with our impact despite a tough year. We’ve given technical support to over 150 businesses, and our commercial, trial and bakery facilities for hire and rental units have attracted firms from the South West and from Devon, Hampshire, London and international markets.

“Food Works’ expert on-site advice has benefited businesses from startups to branches of multinationals. We’re now a production and R&D hub for brands making Caribbean soft drinks; flash-frozen healthy meals; fermented drinks; vegan cheese, cookies, salad boxes; gelato; gluten-free baked goods and more.”

Zoe Plant is a trained chef and The Food Works<sup>SW</sup>’s New Product Development and Innovation Manager. Zoe explained, “We have food-grade units for rent and impressively equipped trial kitchens for hire by the half-day, day or for longer periods. Our industry-leading pilot bakery facility and demo kitchens welcome companies to trial, develop and produce their products on an as-needed, no-contract basis.”

Daniel Kollar is a tenant and partner at Gluten Escape. Daniel said, “We enjoyed carrying out research and development in The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> brand new bakery as its first users. We finessed our products thanks to its state-of-the-art equipment including a bun divider, combination steam oven and proving oven. We trialled ingredients, ratios, cooking methods and temperatures and carried out in-depth nutritional analysis of our products. We now rent our own unit which we’ve set up as a gluten-free certified bakery.”

Martin Dewey is a tenant and co-founder of healthy flash-frozen food brand, The Field Doctor. Martin said, “I heard about Food Works from a business contact in Bath. Our visit to the food-grade production spaces were great. I’m experienced in finding and kitting out my own kitchens so appreciated not having to do that. The BRC-compliant build quality is excellent, so we simply moved in and got on with business.”

Micro-business Soul Food Salads rents kitchen space at The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> on an as-needed basis. Director, Joe Pike, said, “The great thing is, there are no contracts. You don’t need thousands of pounds to get started. We have access to the team’s expertise and it’s

encouraging to visualise how our brand could progress – into bigger test kitchens and ultimately our own unit at Food Works”.

Alongside the demo kitchens and bakery, The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> pilot dairy will open in July and its drinks bottling facility will open in May. These commercial-grade kitchens allow small companies the room they need to grow, and larger companies the space to trial new products without the cost of interrupting existing production lines.

Zoe concluded, “There is nothing else like Food Works in the South West, as the diversity of our visitors, business members and users shows. People come to us for advice on everything from setting up a food business to product R&D and pricing, diversifying product ranges, packaging, labelling, food safety and nutritional analysis. We look forward to an even busier second year!”

The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> has an excellent location near J21 of the M5. With its bright, fresh and multimedia-ready meeting and conference rooms, and stylish business lounge and cafe, it’s the ultimate one-stop-shop for professional food and drink development and networking in the region.

From spring 2021, The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> team will focus on renting out its remaining units, while running a full programme of food and drink training, seminars and workshops. Kitchens are available for hire from the half-day, day or weekly, from 08:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday. To register interest, visit <https://www.foodworks-sw.co.uk/development-kitchens/> and complete the booking enquiry form.

## **Notes for editors**

### **The Food Works<sup>SW</sup>**

The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> is a vibrant centre of excellence for nurturing local food and drink businesses. It offers state-of-the-art facilities, specialist technical and business support, and expert advice. It makes connections with and between local producers to collaborate, innovate, identify new markets and create jobs within the sector.

The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> was commissioned by North Somerset Council and opened in April 2020. This dynamic food and drink innovation centre offers food-grade business units, product development kitchens and a business engagement centre with meeting and conference facilities.

The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> site is funded by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership through the Local Growth Fund, administered by the West of England Combined Authority. See website: [www.foodworks-sw.co.uk](http://www.foodworks-sw.co.uk)

## **The Food and Drink Forum**

The Food Works<sup>SW</sup> is operated by The Food and Drink Forum. Based at Southglade Food Park, Nottingham, and Leicester Food Park, The Food and Drink Forum has members across the UK including manufacturers, food service operators, consultants and businesses providing services to the food and drink sector.

Its aims include championing the food and drink sector in the UK, developing strategic influencing partnerships, and acting as a centre for information and knowledge on all subjects relating to the food and drink sector.

[www.foodanddrinkforum.co.uk](http://www.foodanddrinkforum.co.uk)

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