

—COOK—

Purpose Progress Report 2024



Welcome!

Welcome to the **COOK Purpose Progress Report for 2023-24** – our big, number-crunching review of the highs and lows of the last financial year, charting our progress in everything that matters.

Rewind to the early days of COOK in the late 1990s, and numbers were not our strong point. A reminder hangs in our Sittingbourne office: our very first stocktake done by Dale, our co-founder and original chef. It's a small scrap of paper with four, suspiciously-round numbers. Yes, Dale had made it up. It confirmed what his fellow co-founder, Ed, suspected: Dale didn't really care about the numbers or the stocktake, he just cared about the food. And that was what got COOK through those challenging early years.

These days we have plenty of people who do care about the numbers. And round ones seemed to be a theme last year: we opened our **100th shop**, launched our **1,000th Concession partner**, celebrated **10 years as a B Corp**, donated our **4,000,000th school meal** via One Feeds Two ... It was, in so many ways, a landmark 12 months. But, goodness, there's a lot to do. Read on to see where we are on the journey to getting the most important stuff done.



Key Milestones

Every year, after input from all the team, we come with a one-page milestone plan. It's the big projects we need to deliver and the progress we aim to make, beyond our day jobs. Here's how we did last year...



Winning in Taste

Re-launch the Food & Commercial teams creating a commercial engine to drive even better quality meals, improved margin and an exciting food development calendar, aligned with a sustainability roadmap.

Our new Food & Commercial team and everyone in the four kitchens is smashing it. Complaints about our food were down and we delivered our most ambitious food development calendar for ages.

Filling the Map

Open six new shops on time and on budget; launch 550 new concessions freezers, reaching 150 new communities; pioneer vending; and scope an international trial in the EU.

Busy, busy. Six new shops, taking us to triple figures; 149 new communities reached working with other independent retailers (a.k.a. Concessions); and vending machines launched in hospitals and train stations.

Remarkable Retail

Deliver even better hosting, community connection, linked sales and stock as measured by new KPIs, while helping everybody feel Part Of Our Family through great get-togethers.

Our shop teams were incredible. We launched new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and saw better hosting, linked sales and stock management. As well as a cracking Best Companies result, we won *Retail Week's* Responsible Retailer of the Year award.

COOK Culture

Re-launch our New Starter programme to make sure everybody gets a warm welcome, understands the brand, has the skills to succeed and is crystal clear on what's expected within three months of joining.

The revamped programme for new team members in the kitchens launched successfully, helping reduce team turnover.

Growing Customer Community

Deliver a full marketing calendar of Make It A COOK Night weekly deals; mailings and doordrops performing to budget; and tailored email delivering higher incremental sales, so we grow our live customers to 350k while increasing their active future value.

We hit our target of 350,000 'live' customers, i.e. those who've shopped in the past four months. More great results from our full marketing calendar, too. Boom.

Running a Tight Ship

Reverse our declining margin trend, starting the march back down to 44% cost of sales, while continuing to manage costs carefully and focusing spending on what's going to help the ship go faster.

As the cost-of-living crisis continued to rage and ingredients prices remained unpredictable (understatement of the year), we managed costs carefully and succeeded in improving our margin from its lowest point.

Brand Pride

Become famous for making Life-Changing Meals and roll out bolder concessions POS, refreshed core packaging and a new community impact plan, measuring progress through an annual brand survey.

A clean, new look for our core packaging range, strong PR in the national and local media, and the launch of a new community impact plan. On the flip side, rolling out a bold new look for Concessions partners has taken longer than we thought.

Britain's Best Kitchen

Embed our Culture of Care so all our sites are safer places to work, with increased team engagement in our Sittingbourne kitchens, measured by Best Companies; a successful opening of COOK Pies & Pastry; and improved performance across all Kitchens.

We've embraced our Culture of Care, making our Kitchens safer places to work. After a tough end to '23, we're seeing improved performance across all Kitchens ... though not without challenges. The opening of the latest kitchen, Pastry & Pies, has been a bit bumpy but we're now making good progress.

Bricks & Clicks

Grow home delivery sales by >10% driven by 2.6k active sign-ups to our new subscription service; cost-effective search advertising; and maximising the opportunity at Christmas.

A bit behind where we wanted to be for home delivery and subscription sales. But plenty of learnings and good progress to take into the new financial year.

Sourcing & Sustainability

Reduce edible food waste and target at least 75% of our surplus ingredients and meals going to feed people rather than to anaerobic digestion; tackle broken packaging; stay on track with our 2025 carbon targets; and create a resource efficiency map for electricity, gas and water.

Not so good. We're not where we hoped to be in redistributing edible food surplus, despite some encouraging recent progress with new partners. Worst of all, serious gas leaks from fridges meant our carbon footprint has grown significantly. We'll be investing big sums to try and get back on track. Get the low down on p.15.



COOK
NOURISH
 PEOPLE & PLANET
ACTION PLAN

Our three-year Action Plan to Nourish People & Planet is where our vision for a better way of doing business meets the day-to-day realities of our work. The aim is to change our own little corner of the world for the better and, in the process, demonstrate how business can be a force for good in society.

The plan was signed off in 2022, with a deadline of the end of our 2025 financial year (the end of March, 2026). We're making great progress in many areas and struggling in a few. But if we were smashing every target, it would mean we hadn't set ourselves stretching enough goals.



Provenance Potatoes, Kent



Our vision is of vibrant, inclusive workplaces where we can all achieve our potential and caring and connected communities wherever we operate.



Amazing things happen when we eat together. Over Christmas we supported a community-eating campaign by the Long Table, an inspiring pay-as-you-can restaurant. We held some events ourselves, including a get-together of around 70 local shopkeepers in Sevenoaks; a Christmas lunch for socially isolated people in Leeds; and a meal for the Long Table team at their home in Gloucestershire (right).



By 2025: We will have provided 400,000 free meals to help connect people in our communities through our Kindness Fund, FoodCycle lunches and meals created from our leftovers.

Progress: In the last 24 months, we've contributed 291,044 meals to organisations connecting people and caring for communities. That includes 185,549 COOK meals given through the Kindness Fund; 84,195 meal equivalents of food surplus donated; and 15,800 meals served at Caring Hands. More on p.38.





By 2025: Our team will be sharing a higher percentage of our profits and we will remain a certified Living

Wage employer, with the salary gap between the highest and lowest paid being no more than 15x.

Progress: Last year's Profit Share was 6% of our profits before tax (EBITDA), distributed among 986 members of the team. At the end of last year, we were paying 10p/hour over the independently-certified Real Living Wage. And the highest to lowest paid ratio is currently under 11x.



By 2025: Our RAW Talent scheme will be providing an even greater proportion of our team thanks to 60% of people who start the scheme still being in work after 12 months (whether at COOK or elsewhere).

Progress: We welcomed 18 new RAW Talents to COOK last year, taking our total to 212. Together they make up 4.6% of our workforce, up from 3.9% in April 2022. Since we started the Get Ready Training four years ago, 52% of RAW Talents were still at COOK after 12 months (see p.24).



By 2025: We will be a demonstrably more inclusive workplace, with more female leaders and greater ethnic diversity.

Progress: We're now accredited as an Includability Employer, which means our policies ensure accessibility and promote inclusion in our recruiting process.

Our new menopause and neurodiversity affinity groups are running. And 56% of our leaders are female. Next up: collecting diversity and inclusion data from the COOK Hub, an online resource that we've launched for the team.



4.2 million school meals donated

By 2025: A further 1.5 million free school meals will have been provided in Malawi through our partnership with One Feeds Two.

Progress: With 615,480 more meals donated last year, we're at 1,137,156 since 2022. We're on track. Our overall total since we became the charity's first national partner is now over 4.2 million.





Our vision is of food grown, made and enjoyed without costing the earth.



By 2025: Our carbon footprint will be 29% lower (from a 2018 baseline) on our way to net zero by 2030.

Progress: There's no getting around the fact that last year was

very challenging. Due to old freezer equipment leaking up to 146% more than the year before, our carbon footprint of 4,028 tonnes of CO2e is 84% higher than our 2018 baseline. We were aiming for 29% lower. Our 2025 goal is looking very challenging ... but our ultimate goal of Net Zero by 2030 remains. For a deep dive into all this, see p.15.



By 2025: We will be cooking with 100% certified sustainable seafood and will have built on our five Compassion In World Farming awards to have demonstrably even better animal welfare.

Progress: We've hit the sustainable seafood goal already, and all being well we'll be using 100% higher-welfare bacon by the autumn of this year, which will mean an update to our existing Good Pig Award from CiWF.



By 2025: Our leftover ingredients will have been used to make 100,000 free meals for our communities, helping us halve the end-of-line food waste at our kitchens.

Progress: We're now up to 84,195 meal equivalents –

either reused as staff lunch, donated to the team, or redistributed through our partnership with the Felix Project and other charities. We should hit our target with 6-9 months to spare. At the COOK Kitchen, end-of-line surplus thrown away was 1.34% of total food handled, a third down on our baseline figure from 2017. The big win this year was at the COOK Classics Kitchen – details on p.30.



By 2025: Sales of meat-free meals will be 30% of our savoury total.

Progress: Last year, 18.4% of net sales (not including puddings or side dishes) were meat-free, a small increase of 0.9% from the year before. Realistically, we're not going to reach our goal of 30%. It also feels like the food conversation has moved on somewhat, becoming more sophisticated than just 'meat vs veggie'. We remain committed to supporting customers in making more sustainable choices, and are exploring eco-labelling, switching veggie and vegan meal placings in some shops, and working to integrate sustainability into our food and commercial decisions through Project Polaris (see p.19).



Dingley Dell, Suffolk





By 2025: All suppliers of our priority ingredients will be taking action to reduce carbon emissions and we will have initiatives to reduce biodiversity loss and improve soil health in our supply chains.

Progress: A great leap forward here, with 70% of our priority ingredient suppliers taking action to reduce their carbon footprint, up from just 18% in 2022-23. We're continuing our Sourced the Right Way conversations (the name of our nature-friendly farming plan) with all of them and are confident we'll hit this target.



Barber's Cheddar, Somerset

12,000km

air miles saved by moving the card in our packaging to a supplier in the Lake District.



By 2025: 100% of our packaging will be recyclable and made from at least 70% recycled content and we will have explored closed-loop recycling systems and alternatives to plastic.

Progress: We ended the financial year with 95% of our packaging, by weight, recyclable – up from 93% the year before. Although we're at 85% made from recycled content and sustainably-sourced materials, we're not at 70% from purely recycled content. That's going to be almost impossible unless the technology develops. There isn't a workable closed-loop system yet either, but we're still exploring plastic alternatives. Another packaging win this year was moving all our product sleeves to card made from UK pulp from sustainable forests in a mill powered by renewables in the Lake District.



Climate Action Plan

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the numbers do not make easy reading. **It's what being transparent is all about.**

Last year, this was most definitely the case in terms of our carbon footprint.

Leaks of gas from old refrigeration kit at the original COOK kitchen meant our footprint was the largest since we started annual measurement in 2018.

Tiny holes in aging pipework – nigh on impossible to detect – allowed the escape of gas with extremely high global warming potential.

We knew this gas posed such a risk. We'd taken action to reduce this risk by swapping in gas with a lower global warming potential (GWP) but replacing the blast freezers, the ultimate fix, is eye-wateringly expensive and we simply couldn't afford it last year.

We're working urgently on plans to install new freezers as part of a bigger redesign of the COOK Kitchen. In the meantime, we're redoubling our efforts in terms of monitoring leaks and improving maintenance.

While we made good progress with the rest of our Climate Action Plan, **we're highly unlikely to hit our initial Science Based Target** to reduce our carbon footprint by 29% at the end of this financial year, from our 2017-18 baseline.

Actions from last year and plans for this year



Last year: Added four electric vans to home delivery fleet (target five).

This year: More electric vans to be added (number tbc). Clearer plan for decarbonisation of COOK's fleet to be developed.



Last year: Verified Scope 3 greenhouse gas emission baseline set with reduction targets.

This year: Develop plans setting out our aspirations for improving the social and environmental impact of our priority ingredients and pathway for reducing Scope 3 carbon intensity.



Last year: Gathered more information on our priority suppliers' environmental performance.

This year: Support priority suppliers who are not currently taking action to take steps to improve their environmental performance.



Last year: Increased volume of Green Gas purchased in our savoury kitchens to 40%.

This year: Maintain 40% Green Gas. Undertake a trial of onsite Anaerobic Digestion at COOK Puddings to explore the potential of generating our own Green Gas.

Our goal of reaching Net Zero in our direct operations by 2030 remains although, given where we're at, we're doing a thorough review of our decarbonisation plans and investments. Our approach for the past few years has been to try and hold our carbon footprint steady during a period of rapid growth, when we opened two new kitchens which add considerably to our emissions.

Without the gas leaks, this plan would have been achieved.

But we must acknowledge it would still have left us a long way off our initial target.

We've learned a lot since we started measuring carbon in 2018, not least how difficult it is for a growing business to reduce absolute emissions.

Carbon accounting remains a **rapidly evolving and uncertain field** (for example, we get no credit for producing solar power because we already buy renewable electricity), which makes affordable decarbonisation plans even more challenging.

The two biggest questions we face, beyond refrigeration, are:

How to reduce our diesel usage, without lorries run on alternative fuels becoming more affordable?

How to reduce our natural gas usage, which would require a different approach to cooking?

While last year feels like a step backwards, **we remain committed to our longer-term goal:** to create a decarbonisation trajectory we are confident – rather than hopeful – of achieving, and which reflects our belief that urgent action is required to address the climate emergency.



Last year: Created resource efficiency map with targets for improving electricity and gas use efficiency.

This year: Install voltage optimisation at COOK Classics and COOK Pies and Pastry. Install solar panels on the roof of The COOK Kitchen.



Last year: Replaced all R404a gas in freezers at The COOK Kitchen.

This year: Commit to plans to install new freezers as part of a kitchen re-design while taking steps to improve freezer maintenance and monitoring of leaks.



Last year: Continuing to work on trials to support customers wanting to shift to healthier and more sustainable diets as part of Project Salient, working with Oxford University.

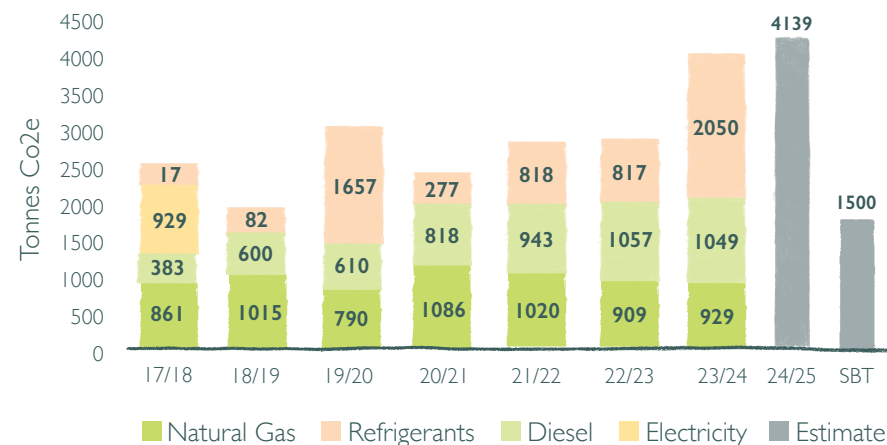
This year: Store trials of greater availability of veggie/vegan meals planned for this summer.

Actions not completed from last year's plan

We decided not to install a bundled fuel tank for bio diesel at COOK Logistics due to change of circumstances. Bio diesel remains part of future plans for our fleet.

There are no firm plans for solar panels on the roof of any of our shops at the moment.

Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Actions planned beyond 2024-25

- Replace all freezers at the COOK Kitchen with environmentally friendly alternatives.
- Continue the roll out of electric vans in our HD fleet.
- Continue to increase the % of energy use covered by onsite generation (e.g. solar and wind).
- Introduce biodiesel to our fuel mix and other lower emissions vehicles (e.g. electric HGVs).

Solar Power

Our solar panels at COOK Puddings and Classics generated 201,831KWH, equivalent to running four shops all year or boiling 1.7m kettles.

9.4%

of electricity use at COOK Puddings

4.6%

of electricity use at COOK Classics



Project Polaris

“Eating is an agricultural act,” wrote Wendell Berry, the American farmer, poet and activist. What we put into our bellies shapes our nation’s fields and farms and, inevitably, our health and the natural environment, too.

Last summer, we launched Project Polaris, named after the north star: a new initiative to ensure **COOK is at the forefront of changing the way we approach food, farming and nature in the UK.** Polaris covers everything from sourcing ingredients, to our recipes and range, and what and how we communicate.



Andy, Arta and Ashleigh at our Cheddar suppliers, Barber's, in Somerset

In May, we helped launch **The Hope Farm Statement.** It calls for a **radical change to the way the government approaches food and farming** and is signed by big food companies, farmers, non-profits and campaigners.

We've collectively realised our food system is causing big problems for society. In our country both nature and human health are suffering. **The food industry simply has to change.**

We're incredibly proud of our supply chain at COOK. We invest a lot in higher welfare animal husbandry and nature-friendly farming practices. But as we've learned more about the food system, we've come to see how deeply embedded the problems are. We cannot hope to solve these issues alone. The "market", in which we're a miniscule player, is simply unsustainable. And, despite our best intentions, it means therefore we will be unsustainable, too.

The Hope Farm Statement sets out the basis for an alternative food system in the UK. One which continues to provide plentiful, affordable food while also protecting and regenerating nature, health and our rural economies.

The support it has from across the food spectrum – Nestlé, Danone, the RSPB, the Food Foundation, the National Trust and so on – shows it's not about narrow interests. We all believe we can transform our food system to be regenerative and healthy for both people and planet. **But we can only do it if we work together.**

We are, indeed, hopeful.

Now we need the new government to get on board.

We have an opportunity – and in some cases a legal obligation – to ensure that everyone in the UK has enough healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food.

#HopeFarmStatement



Anthropy

At the Anthropy festival, held at the Eden Project in November, we asked other businesses to help us **create positive change in the food system**.

Our Co-chair, James Perry, set the scene alongside Anna Taylor from The Food Foundation and Stewart Dodd from River Cottage, before we put everybody to work. Together, we came up with five recommendations. In order to drive positive change in the food system, businesses must:

- 1 Collaborate and build community – all of us is smarter than any of us.
- 2 Be proactive in supporting the shift to a healthier diet – one that's better for us and for the planet.
- 3 Take responsibility, be open and honest – set meaningful targets and report transparently.
- 4 Get creative – seed new markets to drive positive change.
- 5 Raise our voices for policy change – help remove barriers to progress on the above.



The Big Food Redesign

We're taking part in a challenge being run by the Ellen McArthur Foundation to showcase ways in which food can be redesigned for nature to thrive. We'll be creating a concept product guided by their circular design for food framework (right).

Project Salient

Working with a team of researchers from top universities, we're running a trial in some of our shops to see the impact of increasing the proportion of meat-free options on offer. The hypothesis is that more availability in a retail setting will increase the rate of purchase.



Put Your Palms Together...

Good news: palm oil in anything we make or sell can now, with 100% certainty, be traced back to sustainable, segregated plantations certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

We don't cook with it directly but palm oil is a sub-ingredient in 17 ingredients we do use. The change was only possible with help from suppliers, changing some recipes, and dropping one of our bestselling snacks – a hit of almost £50,000 a year in sales.

Fighting Food Waste

Food waste is ultimately a failure of imagination. **Food surplus, however, is a challenge and an opportunity.** While frozen food can drive down waste at home, leftovers and surplus ingredients occur at various places in our kitchens and shops. We've noticed a real mind-shift recently with more and more people going the extra mile to ensure this food is **used not wasted.** It resulted in **52,237 meal equivalents going to feed people rather than being wasted** last year. This included our partnership with the **Felix Project** where leftovers are collected and then used in the meals they make for their charity network. When freezers broke down, food was collected by charities like **City Harvest** and **Gillingham Street Angels** to be redistributed.

Of course, our priority is reducing the volume of food surplus happening in the first place, through improved processes and recipes. At COOK Classics the amount of end-of-line surplus being wasted was **down 28%** compared to last year, and at The COOK Kitchen it's been **reduced 33%** since 2017. This still means some food is going to waste but we've got targets and plans in place to go even further to save as much good food from being wasted as possible.

“The partnership has been a great benefit to the Felix kitchen. The quality of the COOK finishing line surplus is fantastic ... It's extremely pleasing that we can use this surplus to help feed London's most food-insecure people.”

Will Griffiths, Felix Project

84,195
meal equivalents
saved in the
last 2 years



A Decade of B Corp

In 2013, COOK became one of the UK's very first certified B Corporations. A decade on, more than 2,000 other UK companies have joined this movement for better business. James Perry, our co-Chair, recalls why we became a B.

“Back in 2010, COOK had an identity problem. People thought we were crazy and we didn't have a way to explain why we weren't. Then, on a trip to the US, we found the B Corp movement: the biggest idea in micro-economics in generations. Our identity problem was simple: we knew we were a business; but we didn't agree with what everybody told us being a business meant. Time and again, banks and prospective investors insisted our only purpose was to maximise financial value for our shareholders. It just wasn't what we believed.

“We knew in our hearts the role of business should be to create maximum value for all our stakeholders. Yes, our shareholders, but also our people; the communities where we operate; and the planet more broadly. We didn't want to maximise our profits, we wanted to maximise our purpose. But we had no language to explain this to people. Or none they understood.

“Finding the B Corp movement in 2010 was like finding our tribe. More than that, we discovered our identity.”



Life-Changing Meals

Our RAW Talent programme supports people into sustainable work after prison, homelessness, mental health challenges, and other obstacles to employment. When it launched almost a decade ago, very few businesses were doing anything like it, or even considering it. But attitudes are changing. **Today, the impact of RAW Talent is being felt far beyond COOK**, where we have now employed 212 people through the programme.

Last year we helped over 50 other companies set up or improve their own inclusive-hiring approach. A high point was in November, when we teamed up again with Timpson and the Ministry of Justice for a big event in London about hiring ex-offenders, attended by employers like Nando's and Five Guys.

With the support of our Kitchen leaders in Sittingbourne, we ran three Get Ready training courses last year. Over two weeks, participants get skills training, trial shifts, confidence-building support, and interview practice. While around half the graduates aren't yet ready for a job at COOK, it's invaluable for all the attendees. **"It's incredible how quickly strangers can become friends when there's an atmosphere of kindness, openness, and empathy,"** said Ellie, our RAW Talent Manager.

Our direct links to prisons have also deepened. We ran a second Get Ready training course inside a prison, HMP Elmley. Two of our team – Annie and Tina – sit on prison employment boards for HMP East Sutton Park and HMP Brixton respectively. Annie also chairs the regional board for Kent, Surrey and Sussex. While Rosie, our co-CEO, having chaired the employment board at HMP Wandsworth, has taken over as chair of the National Prison Employment Board.

On next year's to-do list: more prison visits, hosting more prospective partners, more Get Ready training, and celebrating **10 years of RAW Talent**. Exciting times.

"COOK has enabled a new me to emerge."

Greg, RAW Talent

18
new RAW Talents,
bringing the total
up to 212

4.6%
of our team
are RAW Talents



The Knife Angel

This touring statue, made from 100,000 blades seized from British streets, is a powerful reminder of the devastating effects of violence on our communities. During its time in Colchester, the local COOK shop hosted a stand, telling people of our commitment to reducing violent crime through RAW Talent. Then at the closing, Greg, one of our RAW Talents, gave a frank talk about his own experiences. "I've seen close up how violence wrecks lives," he said. "I believe we can change that."



Britain's Best Kitchens

The clue is in the name: our reputation is built on what we COOK. As we grow, the demand and expectation on our kitchens does too ... and it's thanks to a phenomenal team effort across all our kitchen teams that this year saw some huge strides forward.

We've won many awards for our culture and retail businesses, but never for manufacturing ... until now. In June 2023, we picked up the **Made in the South East Manufacturer of the Year Award**. A real milestone in our three-year Britain's Best Kitchens plan.

Last year also saw the opening of our third site in Sittingbourne, and fourth overall: COOK Pastry & Pies.

The COOK Kitchen 2007

COOK Puddings 2015

COOK Classics 2020

COOK Pastry & Pies 2023

Accidents down
28%

58
kitchen
leaders trained

Complaints down
15%



Hello Pastry & Pies!

Just in time for the Christmas rush, on 11th September, we opened our third kitchen in Sittingbourne, and fourth overall: COOK Pastry & Pies.

Andrew Perry, COOK's honorary father – and literal father of our CEOs, Ed and Rosie, and our Co-chair, James – cut the ribbon and we were joined by our Co-founder and original chef, Dale. Glasses were raised, speeches made, and it was a fitting launch for what will be the foundation of our growth over the next few years.

Despite a few teething problems, the new kitchen is now running smoothly and with consistently fewer customer complaints than our already ambitious target. **It's all thanks to an incredible joint effort by everyone in the team.**





The COOK Kitchen

With Pastry & Pies opening, this year we became very aware that there's still a lot of work to do to bring our original kitchen up to scratch. The team there have been amazing throughout. Just one example: disaster struck in November in the form of a massive refrigeration failure. Had the team not pulled together, it would have meant 9.2 tonnes of food wasted. Instead, we got 5 tonnes to people who needed it, thanks to our partnership with FareShare and the Gillingham Street Angels; 4.2 tonnes went to an animal sanctuary and rescue centre, and to a community farm. The Guinea pigs were apparently big fans of our Brussels sprouts!

529,162
portions of lasagne

938
tonnes of potatoes



COOK Puddings

It might be our smallest kitchen, but it was a **mighty year for the team** at COOK Puddings in the village of Ilton in Somerset. They made over 5.5million portions of pud, picking up loads of Great Taste Awards in the process. When they weren't busy rolling pavlovas and mixing mousses, the team got out in the sun for a sports day last summer, and some even helped set up at the Glastonbury festival, too.

1,208,547
puddings made

5,503,882
portions

“The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra ... and when I look around at the team here at Puddings all of our team bring that little extra.”

Kelly, COOK Puddings



COOK Classics

It's hard to believe COOK Classics only opened in 2020. The team there have become such an essential part of COOK, we can't believe we ever existed without them. It was another busy year: the launch of a partnership with FareShare that helped bring end-of-line waste down to 1.34%, a massive reduction in accidents with the new Culture of Care, a three-star Best Companies score for the Finishing Team, and lots of new recipes to master.

6

internal leadership promotions

£570k

record production week



Logistics

Rapid growth over the last few years has meant it's **all hands on deck for the Warehouse and Transport teams** that make up Logistics. As well as picking and packing delivery orders for the thousands of customers that aren't near our shops, they keep all our shops and Concessions partners stocked.

Last year saw new lorry and van designs, a huge new trailer, more electric vans to make our fleet greener, and records smashed in the cold stores. Plus the Warehouse Team were the most engaged team at COOK, according to the Best Company's survey. Team Logistics even tried their hands at micro-farming, transforming a verge into a vegetable garden. Each team has their own plot and it's getting quite competitive!

+24%
record dispatch week from cold store (on LY)



Winning in Taste

Britain's culinary equivalent to the Oscars, **The Great Taste Awards**, were announced last August by the Guild of Fine Food.

It is a huge credit to the care and dedication of everyone in our kitchens that COOK meals and puddings won a **remarkable 24 awards** last year, as well as a bronze British Pie Award for our Roasted Veg, Lentils & Kale Pie for One. We've not gone through other companies' awards over the years, but we're pretty confident we've won more than any other producer of prepared meals.



“Chocolate & Raspberry Roulade was supposed to be a limited edition and we didn't think it would be here, winning awards, all these years later... Well done, everyone!”

Sarah, COOK Puddings

Hold the Front Page!

COOK popped up everywhere last year: Radio 4, podcasts, newspapers, magazines, online...

And the reviews on *Trustpilot* kept rolling in, where we've maintained our official 5* rating.

Best meal delivery services to order 2024

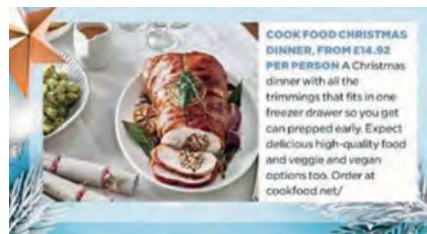


Table Manners with Jessie Ware



1 BEST VEGETARIAN EASTER MAIN Cook Roasted Pepper and Goat's Cheese Quiche

£21 AT COOKFOOD.NET



Score: 83/100

This is a generous, beautifully presented crimped quiche with red pepper and goat's cheese, which looks home-made (but a little bit better).

Testers loved the perfectly browned top and buttery pastry with a rich and creamy egg filling. An indulgent meat-free option, this makes an impressive centrepiece for any Easter table.

EAT

If you're cooking for friends or family this Christmas and want a stress-free vegetarian option, then this Portobello Mushroom Wellington, £14, from Cook Food (cookfood.net) is perfect. Delicious buttery flaky pastry is wrapped around a mushroom, celeriac and spinach filling. Simply slice and serve with roast potatoes and all the other festive trimmings.



THE TIMES

How to cheat at Christmas lunch: head for the frozen section now

How had we never tried it?

It was one of the first B Corp companies (meaning it makes a big effort as a business to be as sustainable as possible), it employs ex-prisoners among its workforce and has 94 high street shops. So why, we wondered, had we never tried Cook? Well now we have, and we were impressed.

The huge range is cooked by hand in four kitchens. The small sample we tried were all good – best being the lasagne al forno (£19.50 for four) and the saag paneer (£3.25). New dishes include roasted cauliflower & aubergine dahl and jerk chicken with pineapple salsa. Home delivery at cookfood.net; click and collect from Cook shops; limited selection at 1,000-plus indie retailers



The Road to 100

From Farnham in 1997 (opposite) to Poynton in 2024, the road to 100 COOK shops has been long and winding. We've finally arrived at a new store model we feel confident in, built on serving the community and with local delivery attached. It means we can see many more attractive locations for a COOK shop and plenty of scope for growth, with 14 shops now turning over more than £1m each.

Last year, we opened **six new shops, relocated two more** (Farnham and Marlborough) and **completed one refit** (Clifton). With the pace only increasing, we now have our own in-house shop-fitting team, Seb and Ebra (below). We wouldn't have got to 100 shops without our 12 wonderful franchisees (who run 25 of our stores). And, of course, everything is built on the work of our genuinely remarkable shop teams. Knowledgeable, dedicated, caring and kind, they make the COOK experience truly special.



COOK Poynton #100



COOK Heswall #101



COOK Malvern #98



COOK The Springs #97



COOK Market Harborough #96



COOK Norwich #99

COMING SOON:

- St Albans
- Frinton-on-Sea
- St Neots
- Chelmsford
- Fox Valley
- Macclesfield
- Hoole
- Newmarket

Hello (again) Farnham!

The very first COOK shop opened in Farnham on 22nd March 1997. Exactly 9,271 days later, Co-founders Ed and Dale were back in the town, along with original COOKies Sophie and Matt, to celebrate the shop's new location on East Street. The original shop was tiny, with only five freezers on the shop floor, and it was high time we found a more suitable home.

Of those early days, Ed recalled, "I was 26, with a full head of hair (sigh) and a ridiculous level of delusion as to how straightforward it would be to grow a food company ... I will be forever grateful to the people of Farnham for their help in getting COOK off the ground."



Responsible Retailer of the Year

In March we were honoured to receive the Responsible Retailer Award at the 2024 Retail Week Awards.

It's rare that a day goes by where we don't witness some act of kindness in the shops, see a message from a partner charity in the local community, or are inspired by some story of our purpose in action.



“Being responsible is not just a choice; it’s COOK’s way of life.”

Hannah, MD at Retail Week

“Thank you for bringing such a wonderful shop to our area; it has transformed our lives.”

John & Barbara, customers at COOK Malvern



A Cracking Christmas

+14%
growth

After the extraordinary +27% growth over Christmas 2023, we set some seriously ambitious targets for last year.

While we didn't quite hit them, it was still our biggest ever Christmas. The shop teams were extraordinary, and records were smashed all over the business.

£1.78m
(+32%) record
production week
in the kitchens

£5.9m
record overall
sales week



COMMUNITY KITCHEN

We love helping bring people together over good food. Last year we re-launched our Community Kitchen to bring together the work we do to have a positive impact on the communities served by our shops, kitchens and beyond.

The Kindness Fund we launched at the start of the pandemic will be folded into the Community Kitchen, having provided about 500,000 free meals to people in need since 2020, including nearly 100,000 last year. We are refocusing our meal donations on charities and organisations seeking to bring people together over food, helping combat loneliness and promote social connection. Shops will continue to donate meals through local partners with the goal of close to 2,000 people every week sitting down to a free COOK meal.

Our 30% Community Kitchen discount will continue to support customers organising local get-togethers like clubs, PTA events and charity fundraisers.

And then there are the school meals donated in Malawi via One Feeds Two (see p.11); the meals given by our kitchens to Caring Hands, a drop-in centre in nearby Chatham; our partnership with the pay-as-you-can community restaurant The Long Table (pictured left); and many more...

8,981
meals donated to
Caring Hands

22,850
people eating
together at
515 Community
Kitchen events

98,887
meals donated
through the
Kindness Fund

9,452
Care Card
transactions

Everyone in the COOK team can give a Card Card to someone going through a tough time, like a cancer diagnosis, a bereavement, or being a carer for a loved one at home. People like little Ezra, who got home last August after a year in hospital.

"Baby Ezra stole our hearts," said Tracy at the Locks Heath shop. "It fills us up being able to help a family so special."



Serving Christmas Lunch at Caring Hands

Independent, Together

Not every community in the UK is a suitable location for a COOK shop, and that's where our partnerships with independent retailers come in. We love working with like-minded retailers and our Concessions business has been a shining example of **what independents can do when we work together.**

It was a bumper year for Concessions, with 149 new partnerships forged, adding 432 new freezers, with a further 146 new freezers added with our existing partners.



1,000 Concessions

When we launched our first partnership at The Hollies Farm Shop in Cheshire in 2006, we had no idea that the Concessions business would become such a central part of what we do. Last year, 10 days before Christmas, we celebrated the opening of our 1,000th partnership: **The Black Farmer Farm Shop** in Brixton, south London. A remarkable milestone.



£40.8m
net sales

578
new freezers

15%
growth

“When deciding to open my farm shop I knew they would be the first people I'd turn to. Our partnership with COOK exemplifies our shared ethos and brand values”

Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones MBE,
Owner of The Black Farmer

Meals for Marlow

As part of the Community Kitchen (*previous page*), our Concessions team are supporting this wonderful project to feed people in need in Marlow. Set up by celebrity chef Tom Kerridge (*below*) and friends during the pandemic, **Meals for Marlow** has delivered more than 170,000 meals to vulnerable people locally. They approached us to ask if there was any way we might supply them. Our Concessions team stepped up to sort out the logistics to get them regular deliveries of discounted meals. It's essential work that we're thrilled to support.



Getting the Show on the Road

Concessions are built on **maintaining genuine, reciprocal partnerships**. Visiting the many trade shows and events around the UK is a must. Last year was no exception, and the team attended three trade shows and eight events, many organised by the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS).

At this year's Farm Shop & Deli Show at Birmingham's NEC, Annie, Andy and Angela gave a talk about our mission to Nourish People and Planet, deepening our reputation as a business with purpose.



Vending in NHS Hospitals

Among the Concessions launched last year were **17 new COOK vending machines**. They're proving particularly successful in NHS hospitals ... not so much for patients as for hardworking staff and visitors heading home after seeing loved ones.

Working with two NHS Trusts, we 'opened' three vending machines in hospitals last year: at the Medway Maritime, the William Harvey in Ashford, and the Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate. They provide the perfect solution for having good food available out of normal working hours. In fact, 38% of our meals are sold between 9pm and 5am.

According to Jonathan Pinnick at the East Kent NHS Trust: "The COOK 24/7 vending machines have been filling an **irreplaceable out-of-hours meal service** for us. We've seen a 70% uplift on the previous offering." We also launched our first vending machines in railway stations, at Bromley South and Orpington (photo below right).

"Please don't get rid of these vending machines - lifesaver at the end of the month when you've not got a lot at home to make a meal up. I also think from a patients/visitors view these are a great option when you have been stuck in A&E for hours."

Nurse at The Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital, Margate



COOK Culture

We have, once again, the highest possible rating of three stars from Best Companies. This annual rating, based on employee feedback, has become the best way to check in on the health of our culture. For all of our work with sustainable ingredients, the Kindness Fund or One Feeds Two, **the greatest impact we'll ever have will always be on the people working here.** We are, after all, a people business.

At the Best Companies Awards in November, we discovered we were officially #1 in the Food & Drink category, and came in at #31 overall. "Best Companies is the ultimate team sport and that's why this result is something you should all feel proud of," said Ed.



"If we could only see one statistic every year, it would be our Best Companies score. Because if COOK is a great place to work, and we're all pulling together, then every other number will look after itself."

Ed & Rosie

Of course, there is still work to be done. We're always keen to hear from the team, and last year's Churchill's Pig Week saw almost 250 people get in touch with observations, suggestions and feedback. Hot topics included maternity and paternity pay, break times for the kitchen teams, and the tasting schedule in shops.

God's Own Country

A lovely surprise from last year's Best Companies Awards: COOK was voted the **Best Company to Work for in Yorkshire.** In November last year, our shops in the county got together at St Edmund's Community Hub in Leeds and put on a special community Christmas lunch. Everyone paid what they could afford and they raised £350 for the community eating project The Long Table. Inspiring stuff from Victoria, Dario, Daniel and Mike.



Leaning into Learning

It was another busy year for learning and development. 743 members of the COOK community took part in some form of learning. We ran **10 COOK Academy** training courses, where everyone from retail, operations and the office teams can spend days away from their job and focus on **honing and growing their skills**. Plus there was the Dream Academy, our free life-coaching sessions, and the launch of the new **menopause and neurodiversity affinity groups**.

743
people attended
L&D workshops



“I have come away from Zone 2 feeling like I have grown. Built friendships, knowledge and confidence which is something that I will forever be grateful for, so thank you.”

Zone 2 Graduate

The Great Outdoors

Every year, each of the office teams spends a day away from meeting rooms and computers for a Free Range People Day. It's a chance to connect, celebrate their achievements, and make plans for the future.



SAUCES

We ended the year with the launch of our new Sauces, perfect with pasta or for whipping up more creative, speedy suppers. It takes us into a new space and early signs are encouraging.

“Impressed by them all” BBC Good Food



“Fabulous food,
brilliant business,
incredible impact.”

Donna ★★★★★

“Meals and hospitality
superb, ethical
credentials faultless.”

Carol ★★★★★

“It makes me feel good
to support a socially
conscious company.”

Lauren ★★★★★



Nev Farrington – in memoriam

We were devastated to lose our close friend, Nev Farrington, in February to a rare cancer. Since 2012, Nev had facilitated our annual strategy sessions and various other projects and initiatives. There was magic in his twinkling, blue eyes. He possessed a rare ability to synthesize a blizzard of diverse ideas into a coherent whole. Nev played a pivotal role in shaping the COOK of today. He was a hugely generous host and always thought-provoking and joyous company. We held our last strategy session with Nev in September last year, for Project Polaris (p.18), about which he was passionate. We will miss him.



“Fantastic, home-cooked food
from an ethical company.”

Lyn ★★★★★ ★ Trustpilot

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