

'This isn't a pipedream'

To mark 50 years of fine foods, Silver Hill is planning an expansion

INDUSTRY VIEW

Everyone likes a bargain when it comes to filling the shopping trolley, and some discount retailers are flourishing as a result. But in the food and drink industry it is paying off for a number of companies to take a different strategy by offering high quality goods.

Some companies have traded for decades on this basis. Silver Hill Foods, which sells its duck range into restaurants and retailers, has now been around for 50 years and, to mark this milestone, is expanding.

The company, which started as a family business in the village of Emyvale, County Monaghan, Ireland, will be taking the name Silver Hill Farm to highlight its heritage and says its success depends on the fact that it controls its own product and rears its own ducks.

The firm has developed a diverse business, which goes beyond serving local areas. It sells its duck range into retailers across the UK, and MD Stuart Steele says there are now plans to expand this selection.



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The company also sells into the food service industry – Steele says 98 per cent of the duck served in Chinese restaurants in the UK, and more across Europe – comes from his company.

And as with the retail products, there are plans to distribute this more widely and expand.

Focus on quality

Steele states there is a strong focus on quality. He says: "We have a real passion for what we do – we are a local company

and serve a lot of people in rural areas.

"We have our own business and do everything ourselves – so we have our own plants and processes. We use professionals to ensure the quality is high, and every part of the duck is used, so we are actually carbon negative."

He says the firm also excels because of its continual research and development, and the fact it can trace the lineage of a breed back to the company's inception.

He also stresses the fact that, though the company has grown over time, it is

still based around family and run by a tight-knit group.

This is highlighted by the various awards the company has racked up over time: the gongs received by the firm include an Ulster Bank Business Achievers Award from 2009 for best-run family company, a nomination as a finalist in the 2011 Green Awards and a place on Deloitte's 2011 and 2012 lists of best-managed companies.

Famous following

Silver Hill Foods has also picked up a few famous fans, including chefs Heston Blumenthal and Neven Maguire.

Stuart is now hoping to see the company – which is one of four in the world still breeding duck – increase its size and span.

He says: "We have a five-year plan and we are looking to double the size of the company. This is a set strategy: it isn't just about pipedreams."

But despite these plans, he says the main focus is still on quality and delivering a good product that consumers can rely on.

He says: "It's all about the quality and the flavour, and that's where we stand out."

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