

# Ready saltired

JOHN PORTER ON HOW A SCOTTISH SUCCESS STORY SPAWNED A PUB STAPLE

There are many Scottish inventions which can claim to have been a direct boon to the pub industry.

James Watt's steam engine enabled the industrialisation of brewing, while John Logie Baird's television has ensured that great sporting occasions can be enjoyed over the resulting pints of mass-produced lager.

Given the findings of a recent survey that more than half of us have dated someone we met in a pub, bar or club, Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin has also undoubtedly come in extremely handy for many pub-goers.

However, there is another pioneer who is all too often overlooked. In 1947, Scottish baker William Alexander began knocking out batches of potato crisps at the end of each early morning shift at his bakery in Stoneyburn.

The resulting snacks were sold under the name of a variety of potato widely grown in Scotland, the Golden Wonder.

## Bagged snacks by numbers

**Around 75% of Scots name crisps, nuts or bagged snacks as their favourite between-meals snack**

**28% go for a traditional flavour such as Cheese & Onion**

**8% go for unusual flavours like Lobster or Chorizo**

**5% will choose a low-calorie option in a pub or bar**

Source: Mintel

While old Bill the baker can't claim to have invented crisps – the Yanks had been making them for the best part of a century by that point – he did have an idea that revolutionised the market.

Rather than chuck in a twist of blue paper containing the salt, he pre-seasoned the crisps, which were sold as "Ready Salted".

That represented not only another triumph for Scottish ingenuity, but also a welcome addition to Scotland's noble tradition of coming up with culinary innovations guaranteed to make the po-faced health lobby choke on their rice cakes.

Not that the Scots are resting on their laurels. Last year saw the launch of the Mackie's of Scotland Potato Crisp brand. The business is a joint venture between the Mackie family, already well known for their ice cream and dessert ranges, and Taypack, a potato processing operation established by the Taylor family, who have been farming in Scotland for more than 300 years.

Alongside the flavours typical of any crisp range worth its salt, such as Mature Cheddar & Onion, and Sea Salt & Vinegar, the Mackie's range includes flavours with clear Scottish provenance, such as Flame-Grilled Aberdeen Angus, Scotch Bonnet Chilli Pepper and even Haggis & Cracked Black Pepper.

The range is also proving popular in many Scottish pubs, which benefit from stocking local brands.

## Scotland the brand

Richard Philip is the owner of The Ship Inn and The Golf Tavern in the coastal town of Elie, Fife. The town has many holiday homes which are both used by their owners and let to visitors from around the world. With one pub overlooking the beach and the

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other adjacent to the golf course, "we have a lot of visitors who are interested in products with Scottish provenance," says Richard. "We're only 20 minutes from St Andrews, so many people include a day trip to Elie as part of their visit even if they're not staying here."

"We already stock Mackie's ice cream, which is very popular. We previously sold an English range of crisps, so it made perfect sense to switch to the Mackie's brand when it was launched."

"As it happens, my wife knows the Taylor family and used to babysit for them, and I know several of the Mackies, so there's a

definite sense of the brand being part of the community."

While the biggest sellers are the core flavours, including Sea Salt, "people definitely also like see a bit of novelty and to try something different, so the Scottish-themed flavours such as haggis have been a big hit."

George Taylor, managing director of the business, believes the brand also has potential well beyond its home turf.

"The main strength we have is our crisp is different," he says. "We have unique and quirky Scottish flavours, and Scotland the brand sells worldwide." ■