

VisitScotland Food & Drink QA Scheme

Taste Our Best

Criteria/Guidance Notes

Visitor Attractions



The Taste Our Best food and drink scheme brings together the tourism and food and drink industries in Scotland

The Taste Our Best scheme is designed to recognise businesses including hotels, restaurants, cafes, takeaways, visitor attractions and B&Bs that not only offer a quality food and drink experience, but include and promote Scottish produce on their menus to give consumers choice.

Research has shown that visitors are willing to pay up to 15% more for food that is of Scottish or regional origin and businesses that provide local food can typically enjoy up to 20% higher level of sales per year. Visitors currently spend around £800 million per year on food and drink in Scotland and more than 70% of potential visitors to Scotland want to taste traditional dishes, regional specialities and fresh local produce.

The Taste Our Best scheme is the latest addition to VisitScotland's Quality Assurance (QA) Schemes, which aim to drive up quality in tourism products across the country. Taste Our Best provides businesses with an assessment of their food provision and their menu by qualified assessors, with those meeting the necessary criteria gaining the award. The scheme responds directly to identified consumer needs.

Promoting Scottish produce in season not only meets consumer preferences but can have a wide range of benefits, as well as contributing to your business's sustainable practices. Local food can provide freshness, reduce food miles, offer benefits to local farmers and communities while seasonal food can offer better taste and be more affordable.

Taste Our Best has been shaped to take account of consumer preferences and has been developed by representatives from the public and private sectors with particular experience in the tourism and food sectors.

When will my visit be conducted?

As part of your scheduled QA visit, one of our Quality and Tourism Advisors will conduct a Taste Our Best quality assessment and provide you with comprehensive feedback. The assessment takes into account the quality of the food, the menu and in particular the extent to which Scottish produce is featured and promoted on menus. The aim of the scheme is to give recognition to those establishments who have a policy of sourcing and using Scottish produce and also promoting this to our visitors. Quality of cooking, service and presentation skills are also considered as part of this assessment.

There are various channels which can be used to highlight your use of Scottish produce to your visitors. Details of your purchasing policy can be featured on your website and menus, many establishments also promote

sample menus on their website. Dishes can have Scottish produce individually highlighted or a credit section added to the back of the menu detailing your suppliers. In smaller visitor attractions a personal approach is sometimes given and menus are handwritten and displayed on black boards or similar, highlighting daily specials and local produce.

There is a set of core criteria that our Quality and Tourism Advisors will follow when making this assessment. This gives slightly more detail than the food assessment currently conducted, as part of your regular QA visit, with the inclusion of a check on the use of Scottish produce, details of provenance and promotion to the consumer.

Please Note: You do not need to apply for a Taste Our Best assessment as this will be included in your QA visit. There is no additional fee for this assessment, giving considerable added value to your investment in Quality Assurance.

Criteria / Guidance Notes

We currently conduct a quality assessment of your business which includes a catering (where provided) assessment.

This quality assessment assesses the following within the Visitor Attraction's catering offering:-

Layout

Menu Presentation

Food Content and Service

Attitude / Efficiency of Staff

Appearance of Staff

Ambience and Atmosphere

Decor / Maintenance

Cleanliness / Tidiness

The Taste Our Best award will build on the above but be more focused on the Visitor Attraction's food and drink offering. Within the Taste Our Best assessment food will be judged against the following:-

- Quality of main ingredients, sauce and accompaniments
- Appearance / Presentation
- Culinary Skills

We will also make an assessment of:-

- Range and variety of beverages
- Table / Self service of beverages
- Quality of beverages (including service temperature)

In addition the Quality and Tourism Advisors will be looking for information and criteria as part of the Taste Our Best assessment, outlined below;

- **Management and catering customer facing staff demonstrate knowledge of Scottish produce on the menu dishes offered**

- *Measurement criterion - our Quality and Tourism Advisors will ask questions regarding the menu to test knowledge on dishes, provenance, Scottish produce and key ingredients.*
- **Demonstrates use of Scottish produce on menus**
 - *Measurement criterion - A minimum of 40% Scottish produce is identifiable on the menu.*
 - *Listed below is a ready reckoner for the 40% calculation. Your Quality and Tourism Advisor will be able to discuss this in more detail at the time of the visit.*

Total number of menu items / dishes	10	12	13	14	15	16	18
Total number of items / dishes with recognisable Scottish produce needed	4	5	6	6	6	7	8

Taste Our Best - Visitor Attraction assessment guidance

The following gives some more detailed guidance on what our Quality & Tourism Advisors will be looking for during the Taste Our Best assessment

- *Homebaking will be included in the 'Scottish' produce calculation if you can confirm that Scottish eggs and butter are used in the bake.*
- *For sandwiches, toasties, baked potatoes and similar items which are made with a range of fillings; it is the fillings which will count towards Scottish produce measure eg Ramsay's of Carlisle Haggis / Lockerbie Cheddar Cheese*
- *Home-made soups would require detail on provenance of the main ingredients used. To identify as 'Scottish produce', soups which consist of multiple ingredients will be required to have a main ingredient readily identifiable as 'Scottish' eg Cullen Skink could be Scottish haddock / Carrot and Coriander would have Scottish sourced carrots*
- *For larger Visitor Attractions which have more than one catering offering; the main visitor restaurant / cafe will be assessed for the Taste Our Best award. Other menus within the Visitor Attraction will be looked to ensure that the Scottish produce sourcing is consistent across your business*

Taste Our Best - accreditation standard

In summary, to achieve a Taste Our Best accreditation, a business should demonstrate the following;

- A quality assessment standard of food quality, presentation and culinary standards meets a minimum Sectional Consistency standard commensurate with 75%
- 40% of the (customer facing) menu identified as being Scottish Produce
- Management and catering customer facing staff (where applicable) demonstrate knowledge of Scottish produce used by the business and featured on the menu.

At the time of the QA visit any shortfalls can be discussed with the Quality and Tourism Advisor. Where a business does use the level of Scottish produce required but has not communicated this on their menu, the opportunity exists to amend their consumer facing information on menus and send it to VisitScotland for a re-assessment of the Taste Our Best award.

Advice will be provided, at the time of the Quality Assurance visit, on sources of information on the use and sourcing of Scottish produce.

Further information on sourcing Scottish produce can be found on the following links;

www.scotlandfoodanddrink.org - wide ranging food and drink business applicable advice. Includes the Scotland's Food and Drink's Online Supplier Showcase (search over 1000 Scottish suppliers); Seasonality Calendar (interactive online calendar or printable poster); Food Map (Locate regional food businesses); Case Studies (how Chefs source locally, how producers successfully supply food service)

www.scottishfoodanddrinkforums.org - Forums help businesses grow and connect with each other to find new opportunities. The network can help you to:- Connect with others in the Industry through a combination of regional events, workshops and social media; Participate in knowledge sharing and discuss Industry issues and challenges; Benefit from opportunities to discover new markets; Connect and find new people to work and collaborate with

www.provenanceonaplate.co.uk - Useful for clarifying legal requirements and best practice guidelines for food and drink origin declarations on menus, to help you to provide clear, accurate and consistent information to consumers when eating out. This will encourage them to make informed choices about what they eat

www.experiencingscotland.co.uk - Supports tourism companies to provide and promote the high quality food and drink produce Scotland offers. One-to-One business advice and support is available to tourism businesses with food and drink operations. A series of workshops suitable for groups are also available