



tourism  
northernireland

A practical  
**toolkit** for  
the delivery of  
**food & drink**  
experiences

Northern  
Ireland  
Embrace  
a Giant  
Spirit





# We invite you to Embrace a Giant Taste

The Northern Ireland Embrace a Giant Spirit brand focuses on the experiences of Northern Ireland that we offer to our visitors. It provides an opportunity for us to work together to create unforgettable visitor experiences.

**Our food & drink connects visitors with our landscapes, history, heritage and our people.**

This toolkit provides guidance on how you can help visitors to Embrace a Giant Spirit and to awaken it themselves by unlocking the senses and sharing great stories of our food & drink, the ingredients and the processes, the people, craft and the skill.



# What's in here?

<b>Introducing</b> .....	4
<b>Part 1 About Food &amp; Drink Tourism</b> .....	6
Understanding .....	8
Unlocking .....	12
Elevating .....	14
Awakening .....	16
Enhancing .....	18
<b>Part 2 Awakening the Giant Spirit through Food &amp; Drink</b> .....	20
Farming, Fishing & Harvesting .....	22
Artisan Food & Drink Producers .....	24
Brewing, Distilling & Fermenting .....	26
Make it Yourself Experiences .....	28
Guided Food & Drink Tours .....	30
Foraging Experiences .....	32
<b>Part 3 Connecting Food &amp; Drink Experiences</b> .....	34
Trails & Networks .....	36
Food & Drink at Festivals and Events .....	39
Working with others in the Tourism Industry .....	40
<b>Part 4 Sales &amp; Marketing Channels for Tourism Experiences</b> .....	42
Selling your Experience .....	44
Distribution Channels .....	45



# Introducing

Our ambition is to compete globally by communicating in a compelling and motivating way, showcasing that Northern Ireland is a must-see destination with unforgettable visitor experiences.

We are on a journey to transform how the world sees us and how travellers feel when they are with us. Embrace a Giant Spirit is a promise to our visitors and is the beginning of an innovative change through supporting the development and delivery of experiences that awaken a giant spirit in our visitors.

Food & drink experiences play a central part in realising this ambition. By their very nature, experiences based on food & drink are amongst the most engaging and memorable of all. They help people to connect with and to discover our place. Both physically and emotionally, they are firmly rooted in Northern Ireland.

Together, we can create a consistent message that is delivered from the moment our visitors arrive and throughout their time with us here. These stories are told by our big-hearted people and our warm and engaging hosts.

Growing the tourism dimension of your food or drink business can enhance your reputation and revenue.

This toolkit will help you understand and develop experiences that will inspire and stand out internationally.

**Our Giant ambition is to deliver compelling food & drink experiences that will attract and delight world travellers**





# Part 1 About FOOD & Drink Tourism





# Understanding

In recent years, food has become a main motivation for travellers when choosing their destinations. Travellers are spending more time and more money on unique food & drink experiences.

## Fact

Food & drink are an essential and growing part of the visitor experience

## Fact

The pursuit of unique and memorable food & drink experiences is on the rise

- Research from the 2020 World Food Travel Association Food Travel Monitor highlights that 96% of travellers can now be classed as food travellers
- According to research by Skift in 2019, food travelers spend between 25% and 35% of their travel budget on food & drink experiences
- Visitors to Northern Ireland are spending £968m annually. Food & drink consumption accounts for around 30% of total visitor spend
- Airbnb®: Food & drink tours are the fastest growing tour experience category in the world





## Recent research identified the most desirable food & drink experiences to be:

- Visiting a local artisan producer or grower
- Exploring whiskey and gin distilleries, micro brewers, and cider producers
- Experiencing distinctive local culture by going on a food tour
- Making new discoveries at food festivals and events
- Encountering local people by following a food trail or network
- Connecting with nature on a foraging experience
- Learning new skills at a cookery school or demonstration
- Peer to peer dining – cooking with locals and eating at local homes
- Grow your own workshops
- Visiting sites of production



## Food & drink experiences that stand out and delight visitors:

- Are not just about the food & drink. They are about the story that the food & drink tell about the place. They are gateways to the local history, culture and people
- Are hosted by big-spirited, enthusiastic and knowledgeable guides
- Support and showcase local, family-owned restaurants
- Shine a light on dishes with a local story
- Feature stories and introductions to the producers and growers behind the food
- Are equally as authentic to locals as they are to visitors





# Unlocking

Food & drink have an unmatched ability to communicate a unique sense of place. Local gastronomy provides a direct connection to the history of Northern Ireland, the soul of its people and the rhythm of daily life.

Unlock a giant spirit and share it with the world through our distinctive food & drink experiences.

This toolkit should be read in conjunction with: **Northern Ireland, Embrace a Giant Spirit Experience Development Toolkit.**



Sharing our food & drink experiences is the best opportunity for us to showcase that special generosity, hospitality and warm welcome that we do so well



Awaken that sense of innovation in your visitors by sharing food & drink experiences that can only be had in Northern Ireland



Share the spirit of our gastronomy by connecting visitors directly to the history of our place, stories, myths and legends



Unlock the link between food and our landscape by bringing your visitors right up close to our rugged lands, wild seas and lush green fields



# Elevating

The experience criteria are tools for focusing on the quality of the visitor experience. Giant taste experiences should be:





# Awakening

## It's not just about food & drink.

It's about what the food & drink can unlock and awaken in your visitor. It's about ensuring you include elements that engage all the senses: smells and tastes, but also sights, sounds and textures.

Awaken the Giant Spirit in your visitors by:

Showing them something they've never seen before

Giving them a chance to be creative

Letting them try traditional skills

Giving them a challenge

Introducing amazing people and places

Uncovering local secrets

Giving a sense of history and connection with Northern Ireland

Dazzling them with hospitality

## Food & drink are awakeners of the Giant Spirit





# Enhancing



**In order to develop or improve your Visitor Experience, it is important to understand the five components that deliver world-class food & drink experiences and to integrate them into your offering.**

These components must be delivered seamlessly and consistently in order to create a memorable experience for the visitor.





A vibrant outdoor festival scene. In the foreground, a woman in a dark grey coat smiles as she is offered a plate of food by another woman in a black top. To the left, a man with a beard and a woman with a child on his shoulders are engaged in conversation. The background is filled with other festival-goers and colorful decorations.

**Part 2**  
**Awakening The**  
**Giant Spirit Through**  
**Food & Drink**



# Farming, Fishing & Harvesting



## Define your story

Food & drink are inextricably linked to our natural heritage, green fields, coasts and lakes. Making connections through food & drink will help visitors develop a taste of place.

Help visitors develop a deeper understanding through stories of your own traditions and personal connection with Northern Ireland. What is unique and distinctive about your location, produce or process?

Do you have photographs or equipment that tell the story of your farm or produce to display? Can you share insights on traditions or processes, has technology advanced how you work or are you rooted in tradition?

What is your own personal passion and how can you become a local legend?

Show visitors that you care about the community in which you live. Be authentic, welcoming and unforgettable!

## Creating an unforgettable experience

Showcasing what you do does not have to involve a lot of expense and is a great way to experience hosting visitors.

Delivering an experience does not have to be a year round commitment. Start small, perhaps evenings and weekends and build upon creating more regular opportunities for visitor interactions. Set goals for income and footfall so that you can measure performance.

Create opportunities for visitors to participate. Think about how you can offer visitors an opportunity to do something extraordinary that they won't forget.

Be weatherproof!

## Connect with others

Your ingredients and produce may form part of a wider food story. Create local ambassadors and storytellers who share your passion. Tellers of your food story may include:

- Food retailers & speciality shops
- Chefs, cooks & bakers
- Accommodation providers
- Hospitality staff
- Event & festival organisers
- Food network & trail partners





## Artisan Food & Drink Producers

### Ingredients with identity

Focus on the uniqueness of your product to give it stand out in a crowded marketplace.

It is not just offering fresh, locally sourced food but more importantly, sharing the story behind the produce. Focus on the combinations that deliver a memorable story that won't be forgotten!

Add value to your products by creating a visitor experience that connects your artisan produce. You not only have a product; you have a story to tell.

### Artisans at work

Can you offer an enhanced experience to visitors by communicating the traditions that surround your food & drink story, and your connection with Northern Ireland?

Why only sell produce in stores or at markets when you can invite visitors to attend a workshop or demo?

### Story of the producer

Visitors like to 'meet the maker' who shows passion and shares enthusiasm. Let visitors know about your motivations and your love of food. Share the pioneering inventiveness of Northern Ireland, how did you learn your craft and from whom? Create depth and add personality to your story.

### Promote your place

How can your story connect visitors more strongly to our landscapes, seascapes, and cityscapes? Ensure your experience is rooted in your local area and pair your food with stories of culture and heritage. Focus attention on your local environment. Immerse visitors in the location and bring it to life.

### Pioneering passion

Artisans distinguish themselves by their passion for producing top quality food. Tell visitors about your passion for what you do, for the craft and for the end product.





## Brewing, Distilling & Fermenting

### A spirit of tradition

Distilleries, breweries and orchards reflect our people, history and traditions that rely on centuries-old recipes that have been achieved and perfected by previous generations.

Provenance, sustainability and storytelling behind the liquid is becoming the norm. Whether your visitors are complete beginners or aficionados, find ways to surprise and delight by reflecting on the people and processes that make the drinks.

### Beyond the bottle

In a crowded marketplace, visitors need an emotional reason to connect with our drinks and spirits. How can you deliver a compelling story with spirit at the heart of your visitor experience?

Whether you are hosting visitors in a state-of-the-art facility or an intimate setting, develop one of a kind experiences where visitors can better understand and appreciate our strong traditions that create our award-winning drinks and spirits.

For visitors thirsting for knowledge about the processes and the role of grain farming, tell them how their drinks are made.

### Craft your experience

As well as a tour, experiences can be enhanced with cocktail making demonstrations, blending workshops and hand labelling and bottling. For the more bespoke experience, invite visitors to create their own brews, spirits and mementos.

Don't forget to promote exclusives, rare collections and items they won't see anywhere else.

As well as a tour, let visitors know where they can buy your products during the rest of their stay and where they can purchase it when they get home.



# Make it Yourself Experiences



## Sharpen your skills

Today's visitors are seeking hands-on experiences that deliver added benefits such as learning a new skill or recipe.

Allow visitors to sharpen their blades and test and tweak recipes under expert guidance. Take a story-based approach that reflects the food story of Northern Ireland by focusing on local food and ingredients.

## A sense of place

Share your own particular relationship with the dishes you love to create. What foods do you associate with your childhood and do you have generational recipes, stories and techniques to share?

Don't just know the story, tell the story of the ingredients and have the confidence to inform your visitors. Don't just talk about the food, talk about the farmers and producers that supply it.

## Forge new connections

Working collaboratively with your local tourism businesses could be the key to success. Partner with others to deliver a foodie experience like no other! Today's visitor likes the sense of immersion from taking part in an activity.

Catch and cook, chocolate making workshops and orchard baking experiences are on the rise. Pair the love of food & drink with a water or land based activity to whet the appetite for adventure.

## Memories of a Giant Spirt experience

Consider producing a recipe book based on authentic dishes and collaborate with local suppliers and talent to add depth and interest. Coming home with a local recipe and new memories is the best souvenir!





## Guided Food & Drink Tours

### Off the eaten track

Food tours are not only about the food & drink, they should be a learning experience that uncovers and celebrates our local produce, products and talent.

Make it memorable with a well-balanced itinerary and showcase the best eateries, local gems and authentic food & drink that won't be found anywhere else. Explore new methods of transportation including bicycle, bus, kayaking or canoeing.

Can you include participation? Learn how to make a cocktail, forage for lunch or perfect that Irish coffee. Keep it interesting and connected to your narrative.

Timing is everything, consider your stops and what you are serving, visitors want to leave satisfied but not full! Consider comfort breaks, toilets and reserved seating.

Will the chef be available to meet with the group or will the producer be on hand to weave in stories to add authenticity?

Pay attention and respond to the needs of your visitors. Evaluate, listen and tailor the itinerary accordingly. It is also important to have back up suppliers and venues in the event of a cancellation.

### Contact with local people

Share your story, why did you start delivering food & drink tours and what is unique about your experience?

Storytelling and atmosphere is as important as the food & drink. Keep it relatable to Northern Ireland, the region, town or village. Talk about how the history and culture has shaped food & drink and include stories of local people, past and present.

Integrate the wider story of Northern Ireland and ensure your guides are experienced to talk about the wider destination and what it has to offer.

Who are your key partners and storytellers? Collaborate with others that share your passion and bring business to like-minded businesses.



# Foraging Experiences



## Connecting with nature

To forage is to get outside and explore. Urban or rural, highlight the food that is growing around us to make connections between the environment and the food on our plates.

Discover diverse landscapes of Northern Ireland and have your senses enlivened by the elements. Make it sensory - touch, taste and smell. Guides must be more than experts and must have the ability to deliver rich and authentic storytelling.

Head back to nature and engage the senses. Foraging experiences give visitors the opportunity to truly connect with the nature of Northern Ireland. Our urban spaces, gardens, forests, green fields and coastlines have a big role to play too.

## Experiencing the elements

Foraging experiences are a great way to get out and investigate your surroundings. Whether in the sea or on the shore, make the most of our natural larder!

Consider a seasonal programme of foraging walks and activities that will appeal to beginners, families, and those with an advanced knowledge of wild edibles.

Develop a range of courses that can be enjoyed throughout the year. Translate your expertise into an individual story of seasonal and local food that grows in Northern Ireland.

What is safe to eat? Even for those with knowledge and experience, it can be hard to know so educate and inform. Create a reference book of the wild edibles and create a visual that helps visitors identify them. Producing a quality copy as a keepsake can be a source of revenue.

## Sharing our secrets

Enhance the experience by providing a picnic of foraged ingredients or cook a lunch or dinner to enjoy in natural surroundings.

Produce a recipe book based on wild ingredients and collaborate with local cooks and chefs to host events and unique experiences.



# Part 3

## Connecting Food & Drink Experiences

**Make it easy for visitors to Embrace a Giant Taste.**

Food & drink are drivers of destination choice and we know they have the ability to enhance the visitor experience.

Typically, visitors do not want to travel to experience the same food comforts they can get from home. Food & drink experiences offer a way to connect with a destination.

What are the various food & drink experiences on your own doorstep and how can these be elevated to highlight Northern Ireland as a globally competitive food & drink destination? Food trails & food festivals are great ways to build these links and are an important part of our culture.



# Trails & Networks

Trails not only create an experience that visitors can enjoy, they also connect a group of passionate producers who have collaborated, giving visitors a reason and motivation to explore the defined area and beyond.

Participants range from farmers to cider makers, artisan bakers to cheesemakers. Trails are designed to celebrate the very best of locally sourced food & drink.

Cooperation between the sectors can enhance the visitor experience and create linkages for the local economy.

- Take advantage of the increasing interest in the origins of food & drink. For food producers, experience providers and like-minded businesses, collaboration to devise a trail or network has the potential to reach a wider consumer base
- Trails and networks require clear leadership, common goals and objectives in addition to collaborative working to share resources and expertise. Members are likely to be more visible to consumers than may be possible on their own marketing efforts
- Establish a consistent experience and level of service for each stop on the route or network point
- At designated points have a clearly defined, recognisable point of arrival so the visitor knows they are in the right place
- Reinforce the connecting story at each location through signage, leaflets, wall displays, or through direct storytelling by people on site
- Can trail participants create a calendar of festivals and events to encourage footfall?





# Food & Drink at Festivals & Events

Food & drink festivals & events are the perfect opportunity for visitors to learn about, appreciate and consume food & drink that reflects the local region and culture. No matter what the event, visitors want quality on their plates and in their glasses.

- Who is your audience and what is the theme? Think about your unique selling point and how you can drive footfall
- Do you know who your audience is? Consider demographics and interests
- Take visitors on a journey that allows them to get under the skin of the destination
- Pool your resources and turn your event or festival from great to giant! Use local chefs and food ambassadors to participate in food demos and showcases. Use those with wide appeal but also consider who the food heroes are in your area and include them
- Use cookery demos, workshops and talks to enhance the festival or event experience and have enough features on the programme to offer an enjoyable day out. Make it inclusive and offer a diverse programme & don't forget about the children. It's more than just the food!
- Don't forget about the drinks, entertainment and music to create that festival atmosphere
- Consider festivals and events that have the ability to drive seasonal extension. Use this to promote seasonality of produce



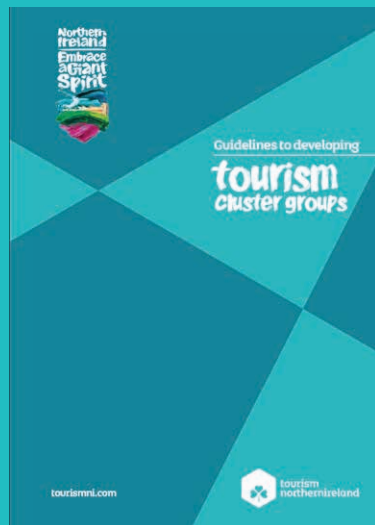
# Working with others in the Tourism Industry

The creation and development of food & drink experiences can help to promote the destination. Today's visitors are well travelled, better informed and are looking for the next new experience.

Food & drink plays an integral part of the holiday mix, and interactions with locals adds another dimension to the visitor experience.

- Unlock wider access to talent and ideas and increase potential for collaborative funding and support
- Partner for success - consider bundling and packaging. Collaborate with a walking guide or a local accommodation provider
- Become an advocate for other experiences in your region. Actively cross-sell and promote each other so that the visitor is encouraged to stay longer in your area

Check out **Tourism NI's guidelines** for developing cluster groups.







# Part 4 Sales & Marketing Channels for Tourism Experiences



# Selling your Experience

Now that you have defined your visitor experience, the next task is to ensure that people can find you during the vital time that they are planning and researching their holiday.

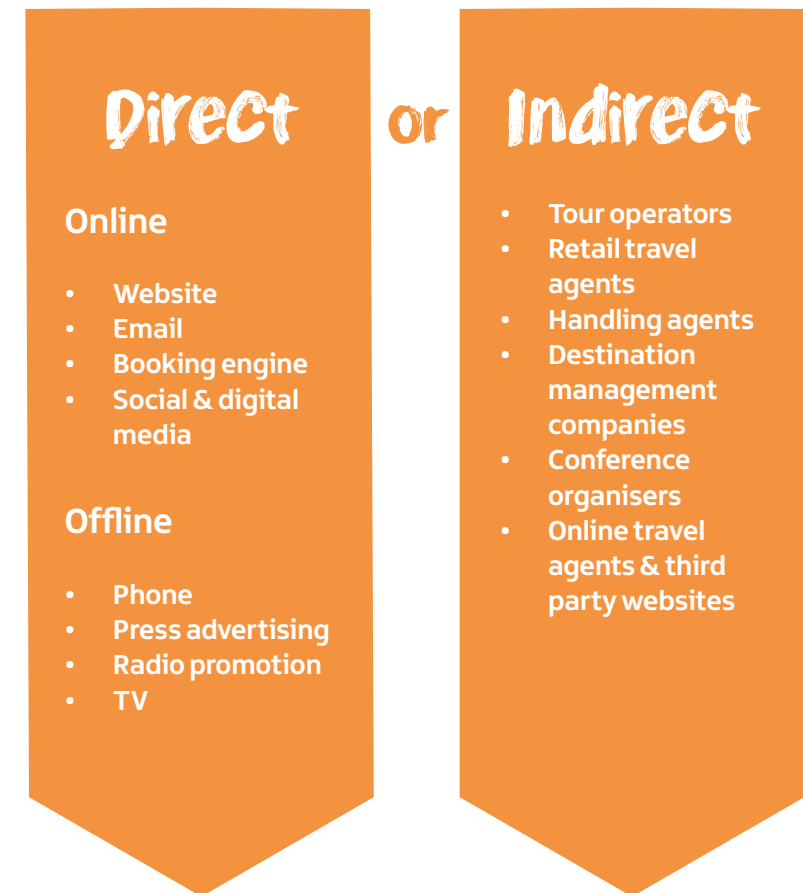
- Who are your visitors and what are their travel motivations?
- How do visitors find out about your experience or product?
- Where do they do their holiday research and are you visible on these platforms and channels?
- Where do they make bookings? Do you have the capabilities and infrastructure to support digital communications, payments and online bookings?

Visitors to Northern Ireland use multiple platforms and research methods before booking their trips. As an experience provider you should therefore aim to use multiple distribution channels to ensure your offering is visible in the marketplace. Distribution channels are either Direct or Indirect as shown on the right.

Tourism NI has developed a range of practical business supports to help you grow visibility and sales opportunities. These resources are designed to build your awareness and selling potential. For more information visit [www.tourismni.com](http://www.tourismni.com)



## Distribution Channels



## Your Visitors







# Embrace a Giant Taste

Sharing the Giant Spirit of Northern Ireland and  
Awakening a Giant Spirit in our Visitors.

Northern  
Ireland



Embrace a  
Giant Spirit



tourism  
northernireland