A Welcome Hamper - the best way to welcome your guests

It’s always a good idea to leave some pantry basics in your property for guests, as dashing off to the shops on arrival probably isn’t the best way to start their holiday! A genuine Northern Ireland welcome afforded by a hand-picked selection of locally sourced foods is sure to impress your guests and deliver a memorable food experience. Consider providing a hamper of foods that is just enough to give your visitors a light meal or first morning breakfast. This is a Unique Selling Point, so remember to tell your visitors - on your website, through social media and other promotional channels.

When putting together a welcome hamper, keep the following tips in mind:

- **‘Local’ is the buzz word** – Eating the local food gives visitors the sense that they are truly in a different culture. Local food tells a story of Northern Ireland’s culture, heritage, people and landscape, which is positive, unique and genuine. Try to fill your hamper with foods your guests will only get in Northern Ireland, so local or home made produce such as fresh breads - soda, wheaten, or potato, locally churned butter, artisan cheeses, jams, chutneys, artisan apple juice or craft beers/ciders. The produce in your hamper might be their first taste of Northern Ireland, let’s impress them!

- **Celebrate the story of the producer** – Use local produce and tell your visitor about it; who grew it, reared it or baked it! With our wealth of natural food resources and our strong agricultural traditions set amongst breath-taking landscapes, there’s bound to be a story behind the ingredients. You might wish to leave a welcome note for your guests highlighting the local producers you have used, for example:
  
  “We have arranged a small welcome hamper bursting with hand picked local delicacies from a selection of producers.
  
  o **Punjana Tea** – Punjana is synonymous with tea and their award winning tea has been blended in Belfast for over 100 years.
  o **Clandeboye Estate Yoghurt** – NI’s only locally made cow’s milk yoghurt made with milk from Lady Dufferin’s award-winning pedigree Holstein and Jersey herd.
  o **Erin Grove Preserves** – Preserves, Chutneys and Marmalades made the traditional way in Fermanagh, just fruit and sugar!
  o **Abernethy Butter** – Creamy, slightly salty Abernethy Butter is made by hand using traditional methods in the Dromara Hills, NI’s only company making butter in this way.

We hope it will be appreciated.”
• **Celebrate Our Food Traditions and Traditional Recipes** – Be proud of our food culture and traditional foods, research indicates visitors prefer fresh, seasonal locally sourced produce on menus and are interested in where the food on their plate comes from. Northern Ireland’s bakery tradition is a pure delight for most visitors. In contrast to the rest of the British Isles, where local bakeries have all but disappeared, most towns and villages in Northern Ireland still have bustling businesses, which are often in their second or third generation. Traditional butcher shops are also numerous in Northern Ireland, and many of our butchers work closely with local farmers, if not their own family farms, buying whole carcasses and dry-aging the meat themselves.

• **Consider costs** - It’s good practice to try and factor in the price of a welcome hamper when working out your rental rates. If your guest isn’t charged any extra for it, they will see it as being an added bonus and complimentary. However, if you’d prefer, you could charge a fee for the welcome hamper. In this case, do make it clear in your advert/website and specify the cost up front. Also, bear in mind if you wish to include alcoholic beverages, you will need a liquor license to charge for your hamper, if it’s a complimentary extra then you won’t.

The new **Food Producers Guide** enclosed with this information sheet should be an invaluable tool helping you source produce for your hamper.

We believe a simple local food hamper will enhance the perceived value and quality of the visitor’s experience. An enthusiastic visitor who appreciates the effort you’ve put into a welcome hamper will spread the news and drive repeat business.