



CIARA SAYS: "IT'S SUCH A DIFFERENT TASTE AND DIFFERENT TEXTURE TO TINNED TUNA – IT'S LIKE COMPARING MINCED MEAT AND SIRLOIN STEAK."



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Shines Irish Caught Tuna

FROM: Co Donegal
INDUSTRY: Fisheries
HERE SINCE: 2015
OBJECTIVE: Bringing Irish caught albacore tuna to market

Ciara Shine is ACORN's youngest recruit. The 23-year old recently graduated from university and joined the burgeoning family business selling jarred Irish-caught albacore tuna. It's the first time this albacore tuna is being sold commercially in Ireland, but the Shines have been privy to it for years. "We were on holidays in the Basque country as kids and we were visiting a fish-buyer friend whose mother gave us this albacore tuna that she did in olive oil in glass jars. We tried it as kids and that's what tuna was to us – tuna from

tins just wasn't the same," says Ciara. The Shines were so fond of this tuna that their friend would send jars of it to Donegal if there was a Killybegs boat in his town. Eventually the Shines decided it was time to bring this product to market in Ireland. They found out that there is a restricted quota of albacore tuna caught off the west coast of Ireland for a short season – which was being sent to Spain until then – and started sourcing it from the Irish boats. It's responsibly caught, too. Dolphin 'pingers' are fitted to nets to

keep curious dolphins a safe distance away, while smaller vessels use poles and lures to catch the fish. The Killybegs natives then travelled to the Basque country to learn about the hand-filleting and preservation of the tuna in salt and olive oil. "There's nothing else in there," confirms Ciara. "The jars have about a four-year shelf life because of the natural way it's preserved. "Our line is 'once tasted you'll be hooked'. It's such a different taste and different texture to tinned tuna – it's like comparing minced

meat and sirloin steak. We're also calling it Ireland's best-kept secret. The albacore tuna has been fished off Ireland for years but no one had even heard of it." The product hit shelves just last April and in September Ciara was selected for the ACORNS initiative. "I never expected I'd get so much from even one session. The energy of everyone supporting everyone else is incredible and I'm so excited to meet other people in business and make contacts and connections." www.shinesseafood.ie

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Hiveshare

FROM: Co Tipperary
INDUSTRY: Honey producer
HERE SINCE: 2014
OBJECTIVE: Fostering community support for bees and local honey

Ailbhe Gerrard is certainly enterprising. A former project manager, she studied sustainable development and organic farming and has now been farming at Brookfield in Tipperary for a number of years, developing skills from forestry to tillage; she sells lamb direct and cold-presses

her own rapeseed. More recently she got into honey and beekeeping, and came up with the notion of Hiveshare, to foster community support for bees and local honey. "Last year I saw a competition in the Irish Times for a stand at the RDS Craft Show and I entered my concept of Hiveshare.

I won and then I had about five weeks to run around and put everything together," reveals Ailbhe. She describes it as "the sweetest gift"; Hiveshare is like sponsoring an apiary. The share comes in a handmade gift box with a Hiveshare cert, a taste of honey and a beeswax gift, like a candle or balm.

You can invest in an eighth of a hive or an entire queen beehive. Share-owners get updates and pictures of the apiary and what's happening on the farm. After the harvest they're invited to the 'honey celebration' at Brookfield to collect their share of honey. Ailbhe also wants to bring the story of

Irish honey to the fore. "94 per cent of the honey eaten in Ireland is imported, but there are lots of advantages to eating home-grown honey. It helps with allergies and hay fever, and because the country is so small local honey is anywhere in Ireland. Raw honey is particularly good as it isn't heat-treated. Our honey is cold-filtered. All imported honey is heat-treated which damages the natural enzymes so it doesn't have the

same health benefits." Ailbhe's honey and beeswax products are for sale on her website and stocked in Killruddery House and Shannon Duty Free. "I'm in online sales, I'm stocked in a few shops and I've Hiveshare. I've three strands and I want to ensure they develop and commercialise properly. The main thing about ACORNS is I feel that someone has my back in developing my business." www.brookfield.farm

Hiveshare bees at Brookfield Farm



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