

Meat and veg vending machines do roaring trade in coronavirus crisis

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Complete the definition.

A vending machine is ...

b. Where can you see vending machines? Name four places, for example, *at a train station*.

c. What types of products do vending machines sell? Name four product categories, for example, *sweets*.

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

stratospheric	dispensing	hassle	fussy	shine	honesty box
pests	profit margins	crate	roast	shipping containers	catch

1. a large piece of meat that has been cooked in an oven _____
2. show that you have a lot of skill when you do something _____
3. (of a machine) giving you something _____
4. a container where you put money for something that you buy when there is no shopkeeper or seller present

5. incredibly good, impressive or successful _____
6. the differences between how much money you get when you sell something and how much it costs you to buy or make it _____
7. a situation that causes problems for you or that annoys you very much

8. an amount of fish that has been caught _____
9. a large wooden box used for moving or storing goods _____
10. very large metal boxes designed to be loaded easily onto boats and trucks

11. insects or small animals that damage plants or supplies of food _____
12. only satisfied if things are exactly as you want them to be _____

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UK food producers find innovative ways to sell produce during lockdown

Fiona Harvey

18 April, 2020

- 1 Vending machines for the Sunday roast, fish to your door and salads grown in car parks – British food producers are finding new ways to get food to the table during lockdown, changes that may yield benefits long after restrictions ease.
- 2 Many UK farmers have been hard hit by the coronavirus crisis, despite the strong demand for fresh food. Before the lockdown, half of all food and drink was consumed outside the home, and switching from supplying big catering companies and distributors has been proving difficult.
- 3 But some farmers and food entrepreneurs are finding now is their time to shine, and the environmental benefits – and the profits – may encourage more to follow suit.
- 4 In 2018, Neil Stephen, from Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, invested in self-service vending machines dispensing everything from farmhouse cheese and shortbread to joints of meat, whole chickens and fresh fruit and vegetables.
- 5 He was inspired by his grandfather who, in the late 1970s, used to leave a wheelbarrow at the gates of the family farm filled with turnips and cabbages, and an honesty box for people to pay.
- 6 Now Stephen's investment is paying off, as people are attracted to a hygienic system where the goods are neatly packaged in portions in a refrigerated unit, behind glass doors. They punch in the number, pay by card, and the windows open for them to collect the goods.
- 7 Sales at Thorneybank Farm Shop are up fivefold, Stephen reports. "We were rushed off our feet. It's worked phenomenally; it's been stratospheric."
- 8 The shop sells produce from neighbouring farmers, too, with asparagus and strawberries coming from six miles away and eggs and dairy from three miles down the road. They can make better profit margins than they would selling to a big supermarket, without the hassle of door-to-door deliveries. The shop has a strong social-media presence, and shoppers come from nearby Turriff town, while the city of Aberdeen is about 30 miles away.
- 9 Fishing is another industry hard hit by the Covid-19 crisis. In normal times, most of Britain's catch is destined for overseas markets, where the species commonly caught in UK waters appeal to consumers' tastes. People in the UK have proved reluctant to move beyond cod, haddock and tuna, which mostly has to be imported.
- 10 The government is giving £1m to English fishermen to set up new ways to sell their catch and find local markets. There are already schemes for distributing fish directly, such as SoleShare in London and Call4Fish, a service that operates from Berwickshire to Cornwall.
- 11 Food campaigners hope these services, where the fish on offer depends on what is caught by small boats, will encourage a more sustainable way of fishing, as consumers experiment with species less overfished than cod that might not previously have found a market.
- 12 Sebastien Sainsbury has a London-based company, Crate to Plate, growing lettuce and other leafy greens in shipping containers, stacked up in air-conditioned units under heat lamps with conditions carefully monitored.
- 13 The containers seem more like labs than farms, with workers kitted out in protective gear, from boot shields to hairnets, to prevent pests getting in. As a result, the lettuce, kale, pak choi and herbs are free from pesticides, insecticides and herbicides, and water use is 96% lower than in fields, with wastewater being used on local lawns.
- 14 The first harvest is due in May, and once all of the units are fully up and running, there could be 12 harvests a year, producing 15 to 18 tonnes from this site. Another will be producing soon in London's Elephant and Castle, where a development of 3,000 homes will receive salad weekly from containers.
- 15 Sainsbury believes this is the future of fresh produce for fussy Londoners. "Younger people are more focused on where their food comes from, how fresh it is, what's in it. This coronavirus crisis is an opportunity for us all to become aware of what we are eating."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Complete the table using information from the article.

	Thorneybank Farm Shop	Crate to Plate
Where is the shop?		
Who runs it?		
What does it sell?		
Where does the produce come from?		
What are the advantages for the seller?		
What are the advantages for customers?		

b. What other type of produce and companies are mentioned in the article? What do you know about them?

4 Phrases

a. Find the following phrases in the article.

1. sell a lot of products, more than usual (three words, title)
2. lead to a lot of advantages (two words, para 1)
3. do the same thing that someone else has done (two words, para 3)
4. bring benefits (two words, para 6)
5. enter information into a machine by pressing keys or buttons (two words, para 6)
6. extremely busy (four words, para 7)
7. give someone all the clothes and equipment that are necessary for an activity (two words, para 13)
8. starting to work correctly (three words, para 14)

b. Check your answers. Then use the phrases in sentences of your own.

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5 Discussion

- **Do you ever use vending machines?**
 - o If so, what do you buy from them?
 - o If not, why not?
- **What do you think are the benefits of selling food items from vending machines?**
- **What are the drawbacks?**
- **Have you come across people selling food in other innovative ways?**
- **Have your food shopping habits changed in the last five or ten years? If so, how?**
 - o Do you go shopping more or less frequently?
 - o Do you shop more online?
 - o Do you buy more or less local or organic produce?
 - o Do you grow more of your own food?
 - o Have there been shortages of any particular items?
 - o Have any of these changes encouraged you to try new foods, combinations or recipes? If so, how did they work out?

6 Webquest

- a. **On a map, find the places in the UK that are named in the article, and write them down.**
- b. **How would you classify each one? E.g. town, city, area, county.**
- c. **Find out about these places. Which of them would you most like to visit and why?**