

Flavours of the Med

ALEX JENKINS learns how the Mediterranean diet offers much more than just olives and sundried tomatoes when she heads to Newhaven.

Driving through Newhaven's industrial area it feels like a million miles away from a holiday destination where you might find culinary inspiration.

However, you are nearer to a slice of the Mediterranean than you think.

L'Isola Buona offers fine food from the Italian island of Sardinia and is run by the Cuccureddu family.

With rows upon rows of cheeses, cured meats, fish, antipasti, D.O.P wines (wines with Protected Designation of Origin) and other delights this deli offers everything you need to recreate the highly regarded Mediterranean diet.

"We have been following the true artisan 'food and drink culture' all of our lives," explains Lucia Cuccureddu, who along with

her two brothers Antonello and Salvatore run the business on the Bridge Industrial Estate.

"Having been raised in Sardinia – a leading country in healthy eating and longevity – family, food and farming are extremely closely linked together:

"The way we respect our family and love our family is the same way we love our food and treat our livestock."

The family business was initially run in Sardinia, with the family hailing from near Alghero.

However, it was when the Cuccureddu's late father Sebastiano came to visit Lucia while she was studying in England that he saw a gap in the market for their fine food.

"We have always been involved in our family business since we were young," Lucia goes on to explain.

"Our strong working ethic, encouraged by our parents, meant that we recognised each of our individual abilities and how to apply them to both our company and for the benefit of our clients and customers."

This means that while Lucia manages the business side of things, Antonello, who is a professional chef, helps create the menus and choose the produce, while Salvatore works directly with the handpicked farmers in Sardinia, where he's permanently based.

"We're so proud to be thriving today, it was always our father's dream that his children would eventually get together and carry forward the family business and tradition," Lucia says.

"And we are really pleased that after seven years of trading to see the English market is growing and it is more conscious about food

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Salvatore, Lucia and Antonello





Antonello, mum Giuseppa, Salvatore and Lucia



Grape picking in Sardinia

and quality," she adds.

This growth in the market has seen the business transform over the years.

What once started in a small warehouse in Peacehaven selling produce solely to restaurants, such as South Lodge Hotel near Horsham and Amberley Castle, has evolved into the warehouse, deli and online shop you see today.

"The shop we started to do as we had lots of demand from private people so I thought it would be a good idea," explains Lucia when discussing the deli that opened in August.

The lovely thing about the new side of the business is that Antonello is on hand should you be unsure how to cook any of the produce.

It also lets you try a variety of ingredients, with my new found favourites the duck with orange cured meat, the smoked ricotta cheese, the artichoke heart, and the music paper bread.

The latter has gained in popularity following Jamie Oliver promoting the paper-thin bread that looks like sheets of written music made from semolina.

Antonello is clearly passionate about good food, with the family legend claiming he demanded to run the family kitchen when he was just eight years old.

"There was a big argument with my mum as he wanted to kick my mum out of the kitchen so he could do the cooking," laughs Lucia. "He has been a professional chef since he was 16."

Visitors to the deli can enjoy some of Antonello's cooking, with a small selection of food and coffee available to be eaten on the premises.

This includes spianata sarda (flat bread filled with different ingredients), organic cassoni (folded pizza), and platters.

Every day inspiration is in abundance here, so much so you may want to give your Christmas a Mediterranean twist.

Just think, you could banish the boring Brussel sprouts, the stodgy stuffing, and serve



Antipasti suggestions

Cured meat and cheese antipasti

Wild boar prosciutto, lamb prosciutto, duck with orange cooked meat, sausage with fennel seeds, artichokes and asparagus in oil, pitted black olives, semi-matured pecorino and smoked ricotta. Served on a bed of music paper bread.

Fish antipasti

Smoked sword fish, smoked tuna, smoked eels, a touch of extra virgin olive oil and grated bottarga on top served on a bed of music paper bread.

Special hampers range from £30 to £200 and are ideal for gifts at Christmas.

The deli is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm. To see the array of food and D.O.P wines, visit the deli at Unit 2, Bridge Industrial Estate, New Road, Newhaven, BN9 0ES or visit www.lisolabuona.co.uk Alternatively you can call 01273 512260, follow them on twitter @lisolabuona or on Facebook.