

Virtual experience means strolling farmers market from home

A NEW 3D **Virtual Farmers Market** has recently enrolled two South Devon producers to operate over the internet.

The market is the 'brainchild' of Marcus Carter, who worked a market stall on Kings Road, London.

Marcus comments: "Seeing the face behind the food is more important today than it has ever been.

"To be able to connect remotely by using the internet, with the people who make what we eat, enables consumers to get a sense of trust before buying."

The two local producers involved are the South Devon Chilli Farm based in Loddiswell, Kingsbridge, and Luscombe Organic Drinks based in Buckfastleigh.

Both have won awards for their produce, with South Devon Chilli Farm being recommended on television by Jamie Oliver, who said 'these guys grow the best in the country'.

The South Devon producers are joined by more than 40 other small firms based around the UK.

The Virtual Market takes modern computer gaming technology to create a 3D market.

Visitors can 'stroll around' and 'meet' the people who produce the food and drink on offer via video stream.

Members can then buy the 'delicious' produce from the comfort of their own home, and to simplify the experience there is a 'virtual farmer' available to provide assistance.

The virtual farm is a 24s hour a day, seven days a week operation, meaning that buyers can shop for South Devon Chilli Farms 'Hot Apple Chilli Jelly' or Luscombe Organic Drinks 'Wild Elderflower Bubbly' at 2am, or 2pm, come rain or shine.

Producers provide video streams in which visitors can learn how their food and drink has been made, meet the faces behind the produce and listen to their interesting stories.

The **Virtual Farmers Market** is designed to be a 'top-up' to the regular household shop, so you can add 'exquisite' products to your weekly shop that aren't available at supermarkets.

It is simple to use, and the option to avoid exploring the 3D version of the market is also available, where users can simply explore the usual style web page available, depending on personal preference.

Once the order has been placed, the produce will be delivered to your door in temperature controlled boxes, so as to ensure the best possible freshness.

■ The website can be accessed at www.vfmuk.com.

Assistance

AARON TROTTER



■ TOP DROP: Caroline Westacott from Luscombe Organic Drinks, one of the producers in the **Virtual Farmers Market**

