

SHOPWATCH SOUTH WEST

Quality and care cheer The Beer



Mark ensures high standards are maintained by demanding quality on the four basic ingredients – fish, potatoes, batter and oil

The Beer Fish and Chip Shop is a traditional fish and chip shop located in the quaint village of Beer on the Jurassic Coast in East Devon. A steady winter trade of villagers and locals is boosted by a tourist influx on weekends and during the summer.

Mark has been in the trade for over 30 years and is a fervent believer in quality and attention to detail. He says: "You must go for quality on the four basic ingredients of fish, potatoes, batter and oil, and then watch to ensure that the standards are maintained."

He buys top quality frozen at sea cod whenever possible from selected brands and trawlers. "Frozen at sea is not all the same; you need to select the best brands and ensure your suppliers deliver them, even though it may cost a little more." The care continues with the fish being defrosted naturally, kept at 0°C in the fish fridge and boned and cut on a daily basis by experienced staff.

The batter is prepared daily to a recipe created by the team at Beer. It's carefully

prepared using very cold water and kept in the fish fridge at 0°C to maintain quality. The staff have been trained to ensure that great care is taken over the thickness of the batter coating as Mark explains: "This is crucial as the correct balance of quality fish and quality batter produces a beautiful tasty fish."

The potatoes are Maris Piper from Cambridgeshire. Mark has been loyal to his supplier for 30 years. "Good supplier relationships are essential in this trade. There is no benefit in constantly changing to save a few pennies. My loyalty to my supplier is rewarded because I know that I will get good advice and the best produce available." Peeling is hand finished by an experienced operator who has been with Mark for ten years. "Many shops give this job to a young lad; we prefer the hand of experience," adds Mark.

The final key ingredient is the oil. "A quality oil is essential to produce delicious fish and chips. There is no substitute for Frymax which over 30 years I have found to be the

best oil on the market. It lasts longer and it produces beautiful fish and chips, which my customers really enjoy." Mark is a great believer in correctly managing his oil. In addition to regular skimming, the oil is filtered by machine on a daily basis. And finally, when the fish is fried, excess oil is completely drained off before putting the fish into the display box or onto the plate.

"Some of our procedures may take a little longer than other shops but they are aimed at producing beautiful fish and chips. Our customers will wait an extra two minutes because they know they will be served a really delicious meal. I have seen many changes over 30 years but the basic rule is the same... invest in quality and maintain your standards and the future of our trade will be secure."

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