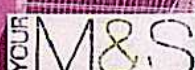




ASDA



YOUR M&S



Sainsbury's



Waitrose

Market leaders

You may not recognise their names, but chances are these men have a huge impact on the way you shop, cook and eat. Meet the driving forces behind four of the nation's leading supermarkets



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Forget TV and the internet – in many ways, the relentless rise of supermarkets over the past 50 years has had more impact on our daily lives than any other cultural change, revolutionising the way we shop and eat. As a result, these megastores wield huge influence over our dietary, cooking and budgeting habits. But how have supermarkets adapted to the changing financial times? And what is their approach to the ethical and environmental issues of the modern world? We meet the masterminds behind four of these vast enterprises and find out what makes them tick.



MARK PRICE, WAITROSE

Joined the John Lewis Partnership in 1982 as a graduate trainee and has held various posts on his climb to managing director. He lives in Berkshire with his wife and two daughters.

AT WAITROSE, WE HAVE A SIMPLE PHILOSOPHY – to sell great food that tastes fantastic. That's our bedrock. After that, we want whatever we sell to be ethically produced and, wherever possible, sourced in Britain. These remain our core values, recession or no recession.

But we had to reflect on the fact that some customers have less money to spend and feel less confident about the world going forward. We've responded by committing £40 million to reducing prices on thousands of lines. We've also doubled the number of lines on promotion, and

introduced Essential Waitrose, which offers own-label products of Waitrose quality at Tesco or Sainsbury's prices. We've paid for this by cutting into our own profit margin – so for customers it's win-win.

This approach has helped our sales grow, but that's not a story you'll read in the press because it doesn't fit the prevailing idea that everyone is trading down and abandoning quality in favour of the cheapest option. That's not our experience. We've found that people still want great-tasting food they can trust.

Research shows that people perceive Waitrose as costing 25 per cent more than

Sainsbury's. We've done our own research over a range of 12,000 products and the price difference is only three per cent, yet you're still getting that great Waitrose quality.

In terms of ethical shopping, we're involved in so many initiatives that it's impossible to pick just one. Many have been around for a long time – the use of free-range eggs in own-brand products, for example. We decided to do that years ago, but we don't make a big song and dance about our ethical initiatives, like some supermarkets. We just do it because it's the right thing to do.

10 must-have items in your shopping basket

1. Waitrose Burgundy or, if I'm pushing the boat out, Côte-Rôtie.
2. A Granary baguette from the bakery.
3. Dry-aged Aberdeen Angus beef – ours comes from Dovecote Park in West Yorkshire and is sublime.
4. Apples, especially pink lady.
5. Waitrose Cheshire cheese.
6. Fairtrade coffee.
7. Essential Waitrose chicken. I used to eat the organic, but I've switched to Essential, which is fantastic.
8. Yogurt – dairy is my downfall.
9. Any dessert from our Seriously range – all of them are delicious.
10. Green & Black's chocolate – I really love the stuff with 70 per cent cocoa.

Do you like to cook?

I've cooked since I was a kid. Now I don't spend so much time in the kitchen, as my wife Judith is a wonderful cook, but I do still dabble at weekends.

Who does the food shopping in your house?

I love food shopping and often go to my local Waitrose on a Saturday morning. I earwig what the customers are saying, and chat with the store manager – he really drew the short straw having me as a customer!

Do you ever shop at rival supermarkets?

I occasionally shop at Sainsbury's, if we're running late and are not near a Waitrose. I'll also call in to Sainsbury's for wine, as they do stock some good ones.

Looking forward to Christmas?

Yes, because we always experience a

massive uplift from shoppers who want to treat themselves to some extra-special food for the festive season. If you buy one thing from Waitrose this Christmas, make it the chocolate bombe, which is simply unbelievable.

What would you be in another life?

That's easy – I'd be a marine archaeologist, because I read archaeology at university and did a diving course, so they are both things I love. I also love the idea of being a singer, but sadly, I have a terrible voice. I sing in the shower and my daughters shout at me to shut up.

What would you serve at a dinner party?

The excellent Waitrose smoked salmon, roast chicken, Gü chocolate brownies and Waitrose Seriously Creamy vanilla ice cream.



ANDY BOND, ASDA

The chief executive joined the company 15 years ago as marketing manager and was promoted to top dog in 2005. He lives in Harrogate with his wife and two children.

MY MISSION IS TO DISPEL THE MYTH that ASDA is all about low prices. We're a store for everybody. The consumer is finding it difficult to make ends meet so we've broadened our appeal to attract people who would be described as middle class.

Previously, our own label might not have been all it could be – now we have lots of free-range and Freedom Food endorsed products. At the same time, we make no apology for positioning ourselves as the UK's lowest-priced supermarket, and the recession means more of the same.

We've also done a lot in terms of the environment – last year we reduced the packaging on own-label products, and also saved us £13 million. And we've put a lot into making sure our stores have a smaller carbon footprint, and buy British – 90 per cent of our produce is sourced from the UK. We source food from ethical, sustainable sources – on that we can stand up to any level.



M&S IS NOT A SUPERMARKET. We pride ourselves on selling the finest quality food in the UK, but don't see ourselves as the place people do their big weekly shop. Christmas is a great time for us because people want to put on a show – and we're the place for that. We see a big increase in our sales at that time of year, often taking more than £50 million a day on food – but I believe that if most people could afford to

Who does the food shop in your house?

We share it. I pop into my local ASDA in Harrogate pretty frequently, and we also do quite a bit of shopping online.

Are you a foodie?

I have a real passion for food and bet I'm the only supermarket boss who can genuinely say that food plays an important role as a fuel. I'm in training at the moment to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats for charity – trying to raise £1 million to encourage families to cycle for health and environmental benefits.

Do you cook?

My wife does most of the cooking, but I'm a bit of an exhibitionist cook – I cook when people come round and then take all the credit. I'm a good washer-upper, too.

Your favourite foodie treats?

English breakfast, peanut butter on toast and curry. And my daughter and I make a mean home-made Oreo ice cream.

What would you serve at a dinner party?

I wouldn't want to spend too much time slaving over a hot stove, so I'd focus on simple, great-tasting

ASDA fact file

- ASDA is a subsidiary of the American retail giant Wal-Mart.
- It's the second largest chain in the UK after Tesco.
- The company employs more than 165,000 people.
- There are 367 ASDA stores in the UK.
- ASDA was voted The Anthony Gregg Partnership Innovative Employer of the Year at the Oracle Retail Week Awards.

food such as our Extra Special 28-day matured rump steak with some green beans and jersey royals, followed by tarte aux pommes from our Extra Special range.

What's your favourite affordable wine?

I'd go for our Extra Special Shiraz 2008 – it packs a real punch.

10 must-have items in your shopping basket

1. ASDA orange juice.
2. ASDA Create Your Own pizza.
3. Good Natured plum tomatoes (Good Natured is a pesticide-free range of fruit, salads and veg that comes without the organic price tag).
4. British berries.
5. Extra Special pasta sauce.
6. Prepped salad.
7. Organic semi-skimmed milk.
8. Extra Special Victoria sponge.
9. Lancashire sausages.
10. Extra Special fresh pasta.



JOHN DIXON, M&S

Executive director for food, John began his career in store management and has been a food buyer. He lives with his partner and their new baby.

shop at M&S all the time, they would.

As soon as the downturn started we realised some customers might respond by saying they couldn't afford to shop at M&S for the time being. We've invested tens of millions of pounds lowering prices for our Wise Buys offers. These are existing products – we haven't introduced a value range or compromised in any way on quality. We've picked 500-600 staple

products and simply dropped the price.

Being an entirely own label business, we know the exact source of everything we sell and, for me, the relationship with our suppliers is one of the best parts of the job. Our ethical commitments are second to none, and they're not just reactions to stories that are in the paper right now, such as the sustainability of tuna – they're issues we've been addressing for years.

M&S fact file

- M&S employs 78,000 people in 668 UK stores and 296 international ones.
- Marks & Spencer is the leading retailer in the UK, with more than one in 10 items bought from M&S.
- The company has 1,500 healthy-eating assistants who can advise customers on healthier food choices.
- M&S was the first major UK retailer to use free-range eggs in all products.



Are you a shopper?

I do our weekly shop and believe it's really important to get out there and listen to what customers are saying. We eat all M&S food at home.

What do you have to offer at Christmas?

Those on a budget can buy products from our classic ranges, such as our fabulous mince pies, knowing the quality will be

excellent. And those who want to splash out can really go to town with some of our top products, such as 'three meat roast' (beef stuffed with veal mince and pork fillet).

Are there any areas where you could do better?

We're conscious that we attract a slightly older customer but we're now gaining more young people through our Simply Food stores.

Do you enjoy cooking?

I'm not as good a cook as my partner but I do enjoy cooking occasionally. We tend to eat quite healthily at home – lots of sea bass, salmon, chicken, fresh veg and salads.

Three favourite foodie treats?

Scallops, salt marsh lamb (served with maris piper potatoes, young spinach and baby carrots) and my all-time M&S favourite, which is our fabulous crème brûlée – I never tire of it, and I've never found a better one.

10 must-have items in your shopping basket

1. Scottish Lochmuir salmon.
2. Oakham chicken – it's slow-grown, has a great flavour and is only available at Marks & Spencer.
3. New potatoes – when they're in season.
4. Crème brûlée.
5. Pannacotta.
6. British cherries – Marks & Spencer has championed the British cherry, which was under threat.
7. A full-bodied Rhône red wine, such as Vaccras-Châteauneuf-du-Pape.
8. A white wine, such as Zephyr, a great Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand's Marlborough region.
9. Dine In gastropub beef ribs – or failing that, the Dine In cottage pie or moussaka.
10. Caesar salad.



JUSTIN KING, SAINSBURY'S

The CEO was instrumental in introducing Häagen-Dazs to the UK, and has previously worked for Mars, ASDA and M&S. He lives near Leamington Spa with his wife and children.

A YEAR OR SO AGO WE THOUGHT

Sainsbury's would have a tough time if we didn't get the pricing right, but the growth in our Basics range has been 50 per cent over the last year, and the RSPCA Freedom Food meat has seen a 300 per cent rise.

Sainsbury's customers really trust our own-label range more than those of our competitors. We've improved our top 200 products and our own-label range is seen to be as good as leading brands but with a 20 per cent saving (hence our 'Switch and save' campaign).

Research shows that consumers want value for money and good-quality products. We're seeing more savvy shopping – using Basics spaghetti but Taste the difference mince. And our customers tell us that the campaigns 'Feed your family for a fiver' and 'Love your leftovers' are striking a chord. One of the best ways customers can save money is to take a different approach to waste and leftovers.

We advocate sustainability – animal as

well as environmental. We've made a reduction in packaging. None of our food waste will go to landfill by the end of this year – it will go to an anaerobic digester, a sort of massive stomach that creates gas which is converted into electricity. One of our biggest partners is FareShare, which distributes food past its sell-by (but not use-by) date to charities.

We think charging for plastic bags is the wrong approach; instead, our incentive is free bags for life and low-impact bags, made of 50 per cent recycled content.

One of the most fascinating things research found about the recession was that 20 per cent of customers have said their diet has improved. Across social boundaries there's been lasting and accelerating change as we rediscover our relationship with food, taste, value for money and sustainability.

At Sainsbury's we believe we've marketed ourselves well and captured the public's imagination. Our values make us different.



Do you cook?

My wife does most of the cooking. I can cook a bit but have little opportunity to do so. I eat out a lot so I like to keep it simple when eating at home.

Your favourite foodie treats?

Plain steak, chips and green salad. We should all eat less meat from an environmental point of view and for our own health as well – less meat but better meat. I love Sainsbury's 21-day dry-matured beef, which benefits from hip-hanging, a technique developed by Sainsbury's 30 years ago, which is now industry standard. All our beef is British. And I'm a sucker for ice cream – Häagen-Dazs' Belgian chocolate.

Do you shop anywhere else?

You'll never catch me in a Tesco store, but we do grow some vegetables in a patch at home...

Sainsbury's fact file

- The company has 502 supermarkets and 290 convenience stores, and employs more than 150,000 people.
- A large Sainsbury's store stocks approximately 30,000 products.
- In 1989, Sainsbury's introduced the first carrier bags made from recycled material.