

# TASTE OF WALES





## A taste of Wales by Liz Sherry, General Manager of Brecon Mineral Water

Looking after the environment makes good business sense. This mantra is so familiar, so obvious, that sometimes it deserves greater examination. Increasingly, consumers care about the origins, provenance and content of the food and drinks that they buy. In recent years, Welsh foods and drinks have justly been celebrated both within and beyond our borders.

**W**ales is a “foodie heaven” and as VisitWales points out: “There’s more to Wales than lamb and leeks”. Much more. Take my own area of interest – bottled water. Water is much debated nowadays. So let me come clean about my opinions. Bottled water is often compared with tap water. In my view, tap water is a wonderful product, but to draw comparisons between this utilitarian necessity and a packaged, healthy drink is misleading as bottled water is a healthy and refreshing alternative to other packaged drinks – soft drinks, alcohol and numerous beverages.

Bottling water is arguably one of the greenest operations within the food and drinks industry. To promote British water to a British audience, many of us have banded together within the British Bottled Water Producers group. Founder members Ty Nant Natural Mineral Water (which also owns Tau) and Brecon Carreg have been joined by other Welsh brands, Princes Gate Spring Water and Llanllyr Source Natural Mineral Water, as well as, just over the border in the Welsh Marches, Celtic Vale.

Those who understand the sector find it astonishing that bottled water companies, whose stewardship of their precious natural resource is second to none, often find themselves under attack in a way that other drinks suppliers are not.

Not only is our product important in the fight against obesity-related diseases, we are also very important employers in our often remote rural communities.

Natural Mineral Waters and Spring Waters are essentially ‘natural’ and this wholesomeness is guaranteed and required by law. Bottled waters thus provide a unique and precious means to better health and for those people concerned to buy natural products and at the same time minimise food miles, British waters (and for those living in Wales, Welsh waters) are a perfect choice.

We pride ourselves on the stance we take on environmental responsibility with improvements to packaging, reduced energy use, recycling, minimising transport impact and a host of other measures constantly being upgraded or implemented to ensure the sector is as eco-conscious as possible.

As with all natural produce, the success of companies in the bottled water sector is reliant on the quality of their water source — land and resource management are crucial. The very nature of the product obliges companies to operate in a clean, green and sustainable way in order to be successful.

We in the bottled water sector are proud to stand alongside some of the other top Welsh food and drinks brands bringing good water both to ‘foodies’ through fine dining and, via the grocery and convenience sector, to children and on-the-go adults who appreciate convenience, good health and good taste.

When it comes to excellent food and drink, Wales has it all: cheeses, yoghurts and award-winning organic milk; Welsh cakes and chutneys; baked goods, pates, smoked goods and sausages; chutneys and jams; bottled waters, ales and Welsh whisky; pies, cakes and confectionery; retailers, hoteliers and restaurateurs that show-case the best of Welsh produce; even producers of delicious vegetables, fruits and meats, yes, including lamb and leeks.

It is no surprise, given this abundance of goodies, that Welsh producers don’t necessarily follow the crowd. Anyone who thought whisky was the provenance of Scotland or that bottled water needed to be imported from France, will certainly think again when they sample Penderyn Single-malt Welsh Whisky, Brecon Carreg or Ty Nant Natural Mineral Waters, for example. But it’s not just the taste that counts; these Welsh producers recognise that they are caretakers of the land and stewards of the natural resources that they use, preserving and improving the natural world for future generations. So, they recognise that sustainability is as crucial for the future as producing award-winning foods and drink is now. Healthy Welsh businesses, healthy customers and healthy sales: it all adds up to a sensible plan now and for the future.

I wish you good health.

[www.britishbottledwater.org](http://www.britishbottledwater.org)  
[www.breconwater.co.uk](http://www.breconwater.co.uk)  
[www.tynant.com](http://www.tynant.com)



# It's different, Wales

Jim Murray

They say it's similar to Scotland. With its mountains and fast-running rivers which sweep under ancient bridges that once carried drovers as they passed between skulking hamlets. The "they" tend to be those who have seen only the pictures, but never explored; never discovered. But for those of us who have got to know both lands well, well we can say: it's not, you know. Wales is different. Not just from Scotland, but anywhere, really. Its people, its architecture, its language, its song, the feel of the land...and certainly its whisky.

It is not uncommon for people the world over who have never tasted Welsh whisky to ask me what other whisky type it can be compared with. The expected answer is Scotch, mainly because of the superficial geological similarities and relative geographical neighbourliness. But I can say truthfully: there is nothing like it. It is unique in style. And not only is the Penderyn brand unique, so too are the individual bottlings which are made each month. Similar, but never quite the same.

We could get all romantic about it, and say that it is because of the fresh Welsh air blown across the Brecon Beacons, whose National Park sits on Penderyn village's doorstep and breathed in by the casks. Or the water used for the mashing, where the malt dissolves its sugars and flavours before brewing.

But that would be lying. The truth is that the whisky is unique because of the copper pot still they use, a beast unlike any other in the world, which through the present day alchemy of scientists at the University of Surrey was designed to get the spirit up to a higher strength than any other pot still in operation.

The result is a light spirit running from the still, stripped of some of its heavier barley and oily notes. And therefore more able to absorb the flavours offered by the oak casks in which it will mature for the next four or five years. First, American oak sent from a Kentucky distillery after just a single use. And then, for a rounding off period, juicy Madeira casks to lend a lively fruitiness.

No other whisky in the world is produced this way. It may not be 10 years old. Or 20 or 30. It doesn't need to be. Already, it has formed its personality and somehow reached an extraordinary balance between sweet and dry, and spicy and fruity. Sometimes the flavour element of cocoa will top it all off sublimely. The end product can often be truly excellent.

If you have never done so, go to Scotland. Visit a distillery. Visit five or six. Then, when you get the chance, head for the southern part of Wales just beyond Aberdare where communities thin out and nature beckons. Take a look around the Principality's only distillery. And, essentially, try its whisky. No water. No ice. Natural. I suspect you will come to the only conclusion possible.

It's different, Penderyn.



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# The No 1 Water for Wales

Liz Sherry

**Brecon Carreg Natural Mineral Water, the No. 1 Welsh bottled water in the UK, is perhaps one of the best examples of Welsh produce. Ours is a real Welsh success story. And it is a success story not only based on producing product in Wales but one which to a large extent still depends on the Welsh people and Welsh businesses buying the products.**



**B**recon Beacons Natural Waters started in 1978 as a cottage industry, in converted barns on Lwyndewi farm. In 1983 the company started expanding under new ownership and the business began to grow into a significant commercial operation, maturing into a major player that has consistently outperformed the UK water market, becoming the leading Welsh bottled water brand.

This brand, coming from one of the most special natural habitats in the country, has recently undergone some exciting new changes: a packaging 'facelift'; the introduction of some rather important steps towards greater sustainability; and the launch of a new sub-brand for children, Brecon Carreg for Kids.

Most 'production plants' do not encompass 21,000 acres of some of the most outstanding and beautiful protected parkland. Brecon Carreg, as the name suggests, is drawn from deep beneath the Brecon Beacons National Park. And therein lies the secret of our success.

Natural Mineral Water is not an alternative to tap water – it's an alternative to other packaged beverages. Above all, Natural Mineral Water is special. It tastes good; it is convenient when you are on the go; and it is natural. But some of the most special and crucial aspects are those you can't see or taste by simply looking at the water.

Natural Mineral Water must by law be naturally wholesome without treatment. It must not have anything taken out that alters the water's natural characteristics and must have nothing added (except in some cases carbon dioxide to make it sparkle).



Brecon Carreg for Kids – fresh-air refreshment for children

Natural Mineral Water status is not self-awarded: it is a legal designation and is the result of rigorous testing and assessment by the authorities to ensure it is consistent in composition over time. Its typical mineral analysis must be noted on the label; and it must come from a single source – in our case, the breathtakingly beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park – giving it a unique provenance.

The water is consistent but we regularly update and upgrade our packaging. Just recently we launched new packaging designs to make handling easier and to visually reflect the terroir from which the water is drawn. In addition to these visible

changes we have also introduced several environmentally-friendly improvements as we continuously strive for greater sustainability.

Our water appeals to what we describe as 'Fresh-Air Refreshed Families' – water from one of Wales' most important tracts of natural land to refresh on-the-go families. Calorie-free, tooth-kind, entirely natural and a perfect example of Welsh produce, Brecon Carreg is a brand that brings the best of Wales to a wider audience.

Liz Sherry is General Manager of Brecon Mineral Water.



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