

Holy Island ice cream company Pilgrims Gelato switches to vegan

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A Northumberland ice cream company has ditched dairy to make its range completely vegan to make it accessible to all.

Pilgrims Gelato was first launched on Holy Island in 2011 by cousins Charlotte Thompson and Farah Weedon, but the pair have made sweeping changes during the pandemic.

Coming from a family that suffers from a mixture of food intolerances, the pair decided to make it their mission to create the tastiest vegan gelato, while also changing the containers in which it is sold to more sustainable methods.

Pilgrims Gelato received grant assistance under the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service Programme, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, to support the project to expand the business.

Ms Weedon, the gelatician of the company, travelled to Italy to learn her trade and now makes the gelato at the company's purpose-built facility on a farm near Alnwick, ahead of shipping it to the company's gelateria at Marygate, Holy Island, and to a range of independent retailers, cafes and delicatessens across the county.



Left to right: Farah Weedon and Charlotte Thompson
(Image: Pilgrims Gelato)

The gelato the firm now produces comes in a range of flavours and individual wholesale gelato is served in sustainable aluminium tins, a UK first, rather than using the traditional compostable or biodegradable ice cream tubs that can end up in landfill.

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Ms Thompson said biodegradable tubs can take years to break down in the wrong environment especially with their polyplastic linings, which need to be removed for successful decomposition. Aluminium, however, can be melted down and reused again and again, and Pilgrims Gelato is encouraging people to upcycle the tins into snack tins or money boxes, and is offering customers a discount on a refill if the tins are brought back to the Holy Island shop.

The gelato tins also include gluten free and vegan edible spoons from Spontainable.

Ms Thompson said: "We wanted our gelato to be enjoyed by everyone, irrespective of whether they have any allergies or dietary requirements, which is why we decided to go vegan and free from. The ethos has been to make a remarkable product that stands out for its flavour as well as its vegan and free from credentials, which we think we have achieved.

“As a business we are striving to make everything we do as environmentally friendly as we can do at the current time. We see it as our duty to create a delicious and sustainable future for us all, which is why the packaging was so important for us.”

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