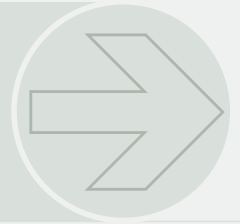


Provisioners



Cupboard love

WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO, SUPERYACHT CHEFS ARE UNDER PRESSURE TO DELIVER. FORTUNATELY, WHEN IT COMES TO STOCKING THE SHELVES, THERE'S HELP AT HAND

MICHAEL AND FRANCES HOWORTH

As superyacht guests expect increasingly high quality cuisine, chefs are having to become more creative. But to be able to put Maine lobster, Kobe beef and out-of-season raspberries on the table in the Caribbean, a chef needs a secret weapon — the provisioner.

Not every chef calls on the services of a provisioner, but as a specialist business the trade is flourishing. The industry could be worth €17.5m globally in food alone, according to estimates that puts a 12-passenger charter yacht as spending €7,000 a week on provisioning and there being around 250 such vessels working for 10 weeks of every year. On the drinks side, Alessandro Angelastri Sartore of Italian superyacht agency All Services recounts how, on one occasion, his staff supplied Grand Cru French wine worth over €48,000 for a yacht on a one-week charter.

Trust and precision

In such a demanding environment, trust between chef and provisioner is essential. Chef Simon Jones works aboard *Trident* and says the best way to get excellent service from a provisioner is to be precise. "I spell out my plans very carefully, tell them what I am going to do with the supplies and how long it is going to be before I use them," he says. "It is really easy to cook with high quality supplies, but jolly difficult to use produce that is of poor quality."

Legislation and regulations can cause headaches for provisioners and chefs alike.



Photo: Frances Howorth

Superyacht owners and guests can request difficult-to-source products

Goods may leave a distribution hub in perfect condition, stowed inside purpose built chilled containers, and meticulously prepared paperwork may have been compiled to see it safely through air freight terminals and across international borders, but it only takes a small set back to spoil everything.

Sometimes thousands of pounds worth of fruit and vegetables can sit inside a container basking under the tropical sun on an airport apron because an official hasn't matched up the paperwork. Stories of food going to Granada in Spain instead of Grenada in the Caribbean have been the downfall of many well meaning food suppliers in the past. Superyacht provisioners must also master the logistics shifting precious cargoes of foods and wines from one part of the world to another.

Perseverance can pay off, as it is clearly to the yacht's advantage if its provisioner is both extremely knowledgeable and dedicated to giving the yacht what it wants. A case in point is Debbie Gribbel who heads up Amare, a specialist superyacht provisioner based in Auckland, New Zealand.

Specialist knowledge

When she was asked by the crew of a Spanish yacht sailing around the world for jamon iberico de bellota — a ham that comes from black pigs reared on acorns in southwest Spain — she knew exactly what it was and where to go to get it. Debbie contacted the New Zealand importer and within a couple of hours was able to complete what was initially thought of as an impossible task.

“Superyacht chefs are fun people — creative, high-energy and intelligent. They love what they do”

Kathy Maxted



“In a couple of hours, she had found jamon iberico de bellota in New Zealand”

As yachts get bigger, so do the expectations of those sailing in them. Xenia Angelastri Cafasso, also at All Services in San Remo says, “Where in the past a guest might have asked for beef, now he asks for well hung Kobe steak and some people even demand specific breeds of pig when it comes to choosing pork.”

The lists of supplies available to superyachts from specialist provisioners generally dwarf the selection available at local shops in port. Generally there is no comparison between what is on offer locally and what a specialist supplier has to offer. Instead of a few hundred items to choose from there are usually a few hundred thousand on offer for the galley.

Provisioners save time, critical for a chef on a busy yacht who needs to be in the galley preparing the food, not ashore personally sourcing his or her shopping list. Provisioners provide difficult to find items, specific breeds and cuts of meat and preferred brands that are not available locally. They help chefs to plan and advise on purchasing quantities for long voyages, a job they do having taken into account the onboard storage available. For the chief steward provisioners can offer a wine cellar and bar list to ensure that even the most discerning guest can enjoy his or her favourite drink.

Keeping guests happy

Luigi Spaiggi who runs Mansueto, another provisioner based in San Remo, knows that it isn't just foodstuffs that are required by yachts. He ships wine, champagne and spirits to yachts around the world — Mansueto's wine cellar located inside 1,600m² of warehousing contains over 70,000 bottles, including a refined selection of the most prestigious and rarest Italian and international labels.

Mansueto also delivers a huge range of interior items to yachts all over the world — everything from linens to tableware, kitchen equipment to toiletries, first aid gear to office supplies.

The goal of all good provisioners is that of consistency, so that clients can enjoy the same quality of provisions wherever they are in

world. The recipe for success is simply to use the best suppliers possible, building strong relationships with clients so that both sides understand requirements and preferences.

Many provisioners operate on a global basis, enabling the yacht to use one company and one contact wherever she is located. To get everything that is needed supplied on an order, it is best to place instructions in advance, but last minute miracles are always possible — at a price. Good provisioners appreciate the pressures put upon superyachts



Only logistics can guarantee fresh produce

by those who enjoy being a guest aboard.

“Every order is different”, says Andrew Roch of London-based specialist supplier Shore Solutions. “Some orders are 60 lines long. Some demand 700 different items in a single order. Wagyu beef, super frozen blue fin tuna, specialist fruit and vegetables, and products guaranteed to be free from gluten, wheat and dairy — the lists yachts give us are so varied and so very different.

“Overall every year, we sell over 513 tonnes of meat, 267 tonnes of freshly prepared fish and more than 640 tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables.”

Yacht crews who are badly prepared for a charter and charter clients who fail to send through their preference sheets until a few

hours before they are due to board the yacht are just two examples of what makes the job of provisioning difficult.

Some provisioners offer more than just the food, drink and other domestic supplies needed to satisfy owners, guests and crew. Shore Solutions conducts a range of training for yacht crews, the most popular being wine and champagne, cocktail training, chocolate tasting and flower arranging.

“We offer these free of charge to yachts in half day sessions and we also offer more comprehensive two-day training in certain areas,” says Roch. Sometimes a provisioner can help in other ways. “If a captain comes to us with a position, we will often put forward a chef that we have worked with that we think might suit the yacht,” continues Roch. “But we don't charge for this service.”

Provisioners make catering to a guest's every whim that much easier. Life onboard yachts currently working with provisioners would become much more difficult without their specialist suppliers. “Certainly Madam, of course, Sir, we'll get that to you right away,” would over to “I'm sorry, Sir, but there aren't any Dover sole here in the Tobago Cays and you drank the last of the Johnnie Walker Blue Label last night” — words no superyacht guest would ever want to hear. ●

Specialist suppliers



► ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

Superyacht Business talks to provisioners stocking the shelves of superyachts around the world.

* GRIBBLE, Debbie

Sourcing the best of New Zealand

Debbie Gribble suggests yachts visiting Auckland sample more than just the food and drink

Debbie Gribble set up Amare Super Yacht Services in Auckland, New Zealand after a long career in yachting, working as chief stewardess on the 50m (164ft) *Blue Shadow* and Mohammed Al Fayed's *Jonikal*.

She now runs her own service company, established in 2008, and specialises in yacht provisioning and concierge services for yachts visiting New Zealand. The company operates from an office out of town but work as mobile provisioners out of the Viaduct Auckland Harbour the hub for superyachts visiting the city.

"We are here to help crew source their most detailed needs," says Gribble. "We take service very seriously having worked as superyacht crew ourselves since 1993. We are passionate about food and wine.

Most crew Gribble meets want to sample New Zealand food when they are visiting, so Amare frequently organises events such as onboard wine tastings.

"It is a busy role constantly sourcing

DEBBIE GRIBBLE



Name of company: Amare Super Yacht Services

Position within company: Owner/director

Nationality: New Zealander
Debbie Gribble

combines hotel, fine dining and yacht stewardessing experience with time spent working at New Zealand's largest dairy to run a provisioning company out of Auckland.

new products for our clients and working on the best ways of marketing our products to crew to give them awareness that these items are available," says Gribble. "We have some yacht crew that would like to use provisioners, but the owners say that the crew must provision themselves for budget reasons."

Amare's offer of concierge services involves organising and arranging specialised itineraries for yacht owners wanting to travel within New Zealand. "We promote various destinations and activities, such as flying over inactive volcanoes visiting geothermal wonderlands and pristine forests," explains Gribble. "We offer airport transfers and meet and greet services off commercial airlines."

Gribble says part of a provisioner's job is to keep up with ever-shifting trends. "I believe food is like fashion and it constantly changes and evolves," she says. "New products come on to the market all the time and as a provisioner you have to keep up to date. I have noticed that chefs like to offer meals other than the classics and will often ask to be supplied with specific Asian foods."

Auckland is a sprawling city and it could be difficult for visiting chefs to locate gourmet supplies with tight deadlines. "We have a vast range and can source most things a chef may need in a very short time frame," says Gribble. "We provide the yacht with one invoice, which

"It's part of a provisioner's job to stay up to date with the latest trends in eating"

is always more convenient for yachts, and deliver at times best suited to the chef."

Amare can source anything from New Zealand meats to olive oils and croissants, but the hardest part is gaining a chef's confidence. "We need to quickly convince them that we're the best provisioner in town and can make their job a whole lot easier," says Gribble.

* MAXTED, Kathy

A butcher to supply superyachts

Bush Brothers has been selling meat to yachts for over 50 years. Kathy Maxted loves her job at the firm

Kathy Maxted works for Bush Brothers, a fifth generation family owned and operated company that has been supplying meat, poultry and other protein-related provisions to restaurants, country clubs and resorts since 1925. For the past 50 years Bush Brothers has been

provisioning yachts in the Caribbean islands.

"Harry Bush saved me from a very boring job prospect by introducing me to this industry," explains Maxted. "He then became my hero once again when he suggested I become involved with the yachting side of the business. Having lived in New Zealand and spent time in Australia, I have a natural affinity with the Kiwis and Aussies who make up a large proportion of those who work as superyacht crew."

Maxted enjoys working with superyacht chefs. "They're fun people — creative, high-energy, intelligent, and they genuinely love what they do," says Maxted. "Their lives are intense and interesting and they really know how to have a good time."

The company employs around 30 staff at

KATHY MAXTED



Name of company: Bush Brothers Provision Company

Position within company: Yacht provisioning specialist

Nationality: American

Former swimming coach and teacher Kathy Maxted took to selling provisions to yachts some two years ago having returned to her native USA from New Zealand. She began working for Bush Brothers in Florida and has quickly built up a loyal following of superyacht chefs.