

Catherine Cocollos

Celtic Escargot

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Having 350,000 snails in your back garden might sound like a pet control nightmare, but for Catherine Cocollos, it is her livelihood.

Catherine runs snail business, Celtic Escargot, from her home in Kinvara, Co Galway, farming two types of snails.

The Petit Gris are exported to the UK for use in top restaurants and hotels while the Gros Gris are sent to France for use in the cosmetic industry.

Catherine's background is in the hotel and restaurant trade and she is married to french oyster farmer Richard.

They built a home on land given to her by her uncle, who was always telling her to do something with the half-acre left around the house.

During the recession, the couple had to move to France. It was there, while Richard was running a seafood restaurant in Nice, that they had a brainwave as to how they could put the half-acre to use.

A world shortage of snails and the perfect soil meant the idea took off and, in March 2015, they had their first baby snails delivered.

The company also make a natural feed for the snails in a local mill and supply 15 other snail farms around the country. It also has the distribution rights for the French cosmetic range — LM Nature — which she supplies with snails.

Catherine feels ACORNS was a motivating experience and, as she heads into 'picking season' again this autumn, continues to expand her horizons.

With the Bord Bia/SuperValu Food Academy, she has developed a frozen product of snails in garlic butter and hopes to launch shortly.