



not what I wanted." He settled for transparent bags, because people are more likely to buy a product they can see. "People phone up now and want to speak to Mr Tyrrell," he says. "It would have been great to put my name to my chips but Chase Chips' didn't have the same ring to it."

He sent out sample bags to 20 delis, farm shops, hotels and restaurants, and waited for the reaction. All these original outlets are still customers and Tyrrells chips are now sold by 5,000 independent businesses – the only supermarket William supplies is Waitrose.

Spurred on by this success, William began experimenting; frying up chips from the parsnips they grew on the farm. "We sent them out to our customers to taste and were thrilled with the response," he says. The success of the parsnips encouraged him to launch a range of Mixed Root Vegetable chips and he now sells beetroot chips, too. "We aren't able to grow enough vegetables ourselves yet so we buy from a neighbouring farm. We get the carrots that they deem too big or too oddly shaped to sell because we don't care what they look like. We are now also growing our own sunflowers and plan to make sunflower oil."

"Looking back, the first 12 months was the easy bit," William says, sitting in his office above the factory. Outside, the orderly calm that pervades the farm is occasionally broken by the chug of a tractor bringing in potatoes from the fields. "When I started, I knew exactly where I wanted to be in a year's time. It was a huge risk but that motivated me to work harder. It was only when

things started slowing down that I became quite daunted by the financial gamble I had taken."

Potatoes are harvested from June to November and during those months it is not uncommon for a potato to be dug from the ground in the morning and made into chips by lunchtime. During other times of the year the potatoes are kept in a huge storage room at two degrees centigrade to stop them from sprouting.

"Our aim is for every chip to be eaten within three weeks of being made – one of the main reasons our minimum order is only four boxes. If we used distributors, the chips would sit in a warehouse for a few weeks." Reducing food miles is another reason for William cutting out the middleman and delivering overnight, direct to the customer in four small delivery vans.

"We get letters from people telling us how much they enjoy our chips. It is satisfying to make a product that people like so much," William says. Although William is determined not to grow "too big" and lose the personal touch that Tyrrells has become known for, he is constantly planning for the future. "I want to try making breadsticks or adding slices of tomatoes in with the Mixed Root Vegetables."

Despite his pride in what he and his team have done, William admits he no longer eats potato chips. "Once you open a bag of chips, it's very hard to stop eating them and when you are surrounded by chips, that's dangerous." ❖

For stockists of Tyrrells Potato Chips call 01568 720244 or visit [www.tyrrellspotatochips.co.uk](http://www.tyrrellspotatochips.co.uk).

William (far left) grows a range of old-fashioned potato varieties without the use of pesticides. Once harvested, they are brought to a converted farm building where it takes as little as half an hour to turn them into chips. Of the 160,000 packets of chips Tyrrells produces every week, each one is made using his own produce or root vegetables from a neighbouring farm

