

# THE CATERER

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## SUSSEX STYLE

How Lee Bye reinvented Tuddenham Mill, from tasting menus to tips

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# A Pig's tale

Robin Hutson looks back at a decade of the Pig as he opens the latest in the boutique brand's litter, in West Sussex





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# A different animal

As the eighth Pig hotel opens its doors to guests, founder Robin Hutson looks back on creating his litter of hotels and his loyal staff relate what makes working for the phenomenally successful brand so special. Janet Hamer reports

**"You never want to open a new hotel and be accused of it not being as good as the last one, so we put more and more effort in"** Robin Hutson

It is a few months' time Robin Hutson will be 65 years old, an age when many people retire or certainly start thinking about it. Retirement, however, is not on the cards yet for Hutson. He does admit, though, that he'd like not to continue working at the intensity he has over the past three years, juggling the opening of three hotels in Kent, Cornwall and West Sussex. Not to mention negotiating a trademark path through the pandemic, during which he fully felt the weight of responsibility for the livelihoods of more than 1,000 staff across seven Pig hotels and sister property Lane Wood.

We meet on the eve of the opening of the eighth Pig, located within a Grade I-listed Georgian property in the sleepy hamlet of Madhurst, just outside Arundel, West Sussex. The arrival of the Brocton Pig in the South Downs now means that every county on the south coast, from Kent in the east to Cornwall in the west, has a Pig presence, each located within a historical and often quirky building, together with a plethora of rustic outbuildings and garden wiggins.

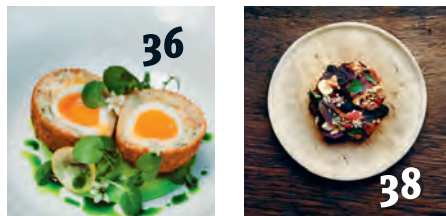
The latest opening also marks the 10th anniversary of the Pig and gives cause to reflect on the success of the brand, that is admired by the critics and public alike, with bedrooms and restaurant tables in each hotel booked up months in advance.

The backbone of the brand – with the kitchen gardens informing everything from the simple menus to the rustic but stylish interiors designed by Hutson's wife Judy – was created with a view to shake up the stuffy and formal experience so often found in country house hotels of old. While Hutson was convinced that this is what people wanted, he was unsure that people would travel to a property in the middle of nowhere on "a wet Tuesday in February", his barometer for a successful opening. But come they did – and in their droves, initially to the first hotel in Brocton, and then to the sister properties. Given that each hotel averages 30 bedrooms, the business looks set to achieve a total of 330,000 room nights and 1.2 million restaurant covers, achieved between July 2011 and October 2021.

"I think people came at the beginning because I was on my home patch and they were keen to see what I was up to," says Hutson, who had previously launched Hotel du Vin in Winchester with the late Gerard Bauer before they went on to sell what had grown to a successful group of five hotels.

"But ultimately our commitment to the kitchen garden and locally sourced food was something that resonated with people. We take it really seriously. We have 25 kitchen gardeners and 12 acres under production, as well as a nursery producing all the seedlings."

Equally important to the Pig's success has been the creation of a team that has focused on creating a relaxed, informal stay for guests, where a can-do attitude and smiles are in abundance. "The business is all about product



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# Government steps in on transport and tipping

HGV driver shortage, lack of CO2 and tips legislation addressed, but consequences of higher prices and lack of supply are inevitable

By Sophie Witts and Katherine Price

The government has stepped in to address issues affecting the whole of the hospitality industry, from the UK's catastrophic shortage of CO2 and HGV drivers to the tipping legislation.

Short-term visas will become available in the run-up to Christmas to tackle shortages of drivers and the supply chain disruption, which has forced kitchens to contend with a lack of ingredients. Suppliers have warned there could be a turkey shortage this winter.

The government has announced that 5,000 HGV drivers will be able to come to the UK for three months and a further 5,500 visas for poultry workers will be made available with recruitment to begin in October. These visas will be valid until 24 December 2021.

However, the government added that it wanted to see employers "make long-term investments in the UK domestic workforce instead of relying on overseas labour", adding that visas "will not be the long-term solution, and reform within the industry is vital".

The Department for Education is investing up to £10m to create new skills bootcamps to train up to 3,000 more HGV drivers. The free short courses will train drivers for category C or C&E licences. An additional 1,000 people are expected

**"The supply of EU labour was turned off with no clear roadmap as to how this transition would be managed"**

**Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith**

to be trained through courses accessed locally and funded by the government's adult education budget.

Fuel tanker drivers need additional safety qualifications, which the government said it will work to ensure drivers can access "as quickly as possible", with shortages of petrol being reported across the country. The shortages are being blamed on a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit.

British Chamber of Commerce president Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith pointed out that a post-Brexit transition plan "should have been in place from the outset".

"Instead, the supply of EU labour was turned off with no clear roadmap as to how this transition would be managed without disruption to services and supply chains," she said.

"Now some action has been taken, but additional testing



will take time and the low number of visas offered is insufficient. Even if these short-term opportunities attract the maximum amount of people allowed under the scheme, it will not be enough to address the scale of the problem that has now developed in our supply chains. This announcement is the equivalent of throwing a thimble of water on a bonfire."

## CO2 crisis

The food industry welcomed a government deal to restart CO2 production at one UK plant after fears its shutdown could lead to shortages of products such as pork and poultry.

Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng announced a short-term deal with US-owned CF Industries to restart its fertiliser plant in Teeside, though its Cheshire factory remained closed.

The sites, which together provide 60% of the UK's food-

grade CO2, were shut down following a sharp rise in natural gas prices.

CO2 is used in food packaging, fizzy drinks and beer, and to stun animals before slaughter. Food producers warned that any shortage could lead to issues with the supply of products, such as beef, pork and poultry.

The government said it would provide limited financial support to CF Industries for three weeks while the market adapts to global gas price rises.

Ian Wright, chief executive of the Food & Drink Federation, said that though there were likely to still be some food shortages, they would "not be as bad as previously feared".

However, Richard Griffiths, chief executive of the British Poultry Council, said the deal was "just the start of a long road ahead". He added: "Food is a national security issue and must be treated as such:





PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/VALENTYN VOLKOV, THOMAS HOLT

total poultry production in this country is 20 million birds a week. The run-up to Christmas requires additional pressure on existing supplies as demand increases across the board. We look forward to working with Defra and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to look at longer-term solutions to mitigate future impact on food supply in the UK."

### Price hikes expected

Three-quarters of hospitality business leaders are likely to raise prices for customers due to supply chain issues and growing costs, according to the latest Business Confidence Survey from CGA and Fourth.

The survey of 200 multi-site

hospitality business leaders found 99% were experiencing supply chain issues, while 88% had to contend with reduced product lines. Some 82% have seen deliveries of products delayed, while 84% have had orders fail to turn up completely.

Seventy per cent said food and drink costs had risen and 68% said access to products from Europe was a concern. Three-quarters were concerned about the price of cleaning supplies, while two-thirds had seen the cost of sub-contracted services, like cleaners, also increase.

Seventy-six per cent of the business leaders surveyed said they would have no choice but to pass the costs on to consumers by increasing their prices.

### Tipping

Hospitality businesses are to be banned from taking a cut of staff tips or service charge under new laws (*see panel*).

The government is to make it illegal for operators to withhold any part of tips in a move it said would benefit around two million people working in the hospitality, leisure and services sectors.

Labour markets minister Paul Scully said the law would reassure customers their money was going to "those who deserve it".

Workers will be given rights to request information relating to an employer's tipping record and take them to an employment tribunal to seek compensation if they break the rules.

A statutory code of practice

is to be introduced, setting out how tips should be distributed to ensure it is done so fairly.

UK Hospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls said ensuring staff received tips would help the industry's ability to create jobs.

However, she added: "For hospitality businesses, though, customers tipping with a card incurs bank charges for the business, and many also employ external partners to ensure tips are fairly distributed among staff. We urge the government to continue to work closely with the sector as it introduces this legislation to ensure this works for businesses and employees."

### Furlough and VAT

The furlough scheme and reduced rate of hospitality VAT both came to an end on 30 September. Hospitality VAT was cut to 5% from July 2020 to support businesses through the pandemic and will rise to 12.5% from 1 October until 31 March 2022, after which it is due to return to the full rate of 20%.

Trade bodies including the British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) have called for the reduction to be made permanent to help the industry recover. It said furlough had helped pubs "survive the worst" of the pandemic, but now people were needed as staffing shortages took their toll.

Treasury data shows there were still 259,100 staff in the accommodation and food-service sector furloughed on 31 July this year.

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## A troncmaster's view of the tipping legislation

After five years of waiting, the government finally published its long-awaited response to the 2016 consultation on tipping.

What the response reflects are the changes that the majority of the sector have already put in place. Most businesses now operate in ways which are fundamentally fair, seek to include and recognise the contribution of their entire team, and pass on all monies after directly related costs. The response recognises that the majority behave well and is very supportive of well-managed tronc systems.

There are, however, a minority who have chosen not to behave well and who have kept a significant proportion (if not all) of tips for themselves. This has caused reputational damage across the sector beyond just

those businesses and seems to have persuaded government that only legislation will solve the perceived problem once and for all.

The detail will be contained within a statutory code of practice, details still to be finalised. It's important that, in engaging with MPs, ministers and officials, operators do as much as possible to ensure that the changes don't harm the compliant majority or their employees.

Legislation that stops hospitality operators from making deductions from tips will only be seen as fair if it also stops others – such as the credit card companies – from doing the same. Those card fee deductions amount to millions of pounds and it is wrong to force businesses



to bear that cost. Legislation must be simple and allow businesses to operate in a way that continues to be open and fair to the whole team. Operators must embrace the opportunity to get on the front foot with customers by providing sufficient information to reassure.

Most importantly, the financial benefits that staff, businesses and consumers all receive through well-managed tips, service charge and tronc systems needs to be retained – and government has shown that, with some modest changes, it is happy for that to continue.

**Peter Davies is client service partner at WMT Chartered Accountants and managing director of WMT Troncmaster Services**



# Ritz London plans major redevelopment

By Sophie Witts

The Ritz in London is planning a major redevelopment to compete with other luxury hotels across the capital.

The plans, first reported by the *Evening Standard*, are estimated to cost £300m and will take over three and a half years to complete.

Documents showed the Grade II-listed hotel, founded in 1906 by César Ritz, is seeking to construct a five-storey basement extension that will include a two-storey pool, gym and spa.

It will also feature underground parking for 10 cars to accommodate VIP guests, which the hotel said includes the Royal Family and international heads of state. An additional 53 bedrooms will be built, 10% of which will be wheelchair accessible.

The hotel currently has 138 rooms and features the Michelin-starred Ritz restaurant, the Rivoli bar, Ritz Club and cigar shop.



The Ritz London will add a five-storey basement to the building

An application made on behalf of the Ritz argued that despite major refurbishments taking place in the 1970s and 1980s, the hotel has not been upgraded for decades and has fallen behind the “standards for luxury hotels”.

The aim is to upgrade the property to become one of the most luxurious hotels in the world.

Proposals included extending the main building at roof level to the Arlington Street Wing, while the basement extension would be constructed on the site of Eagle Star House, a 1970s office block which is being demolished.

Westminster City Council planning officers have recommended approval of the plans, which were due to go before a

committee this week at the time of publication.

The extension would be internally linked to the existing hotel, where the main entrance, restaurant, bar and function rooms will remain unchanged. No additional bars or restaurants are proposed in the application.

The hotel was sold to Qatari tycoon Abdulhadi Mana Al-Hajri for around £700m in March 2020. It was previously owned by the Barclay brothers, who paid £75m for the hotel in 1995.

A spokesperson for the Ritz said: “We are excited about the forthcoming development of the Ritz London that will continue to evolve the vision of our founder, legendary hotelier César Ritz.

“This inspired project will ensure that the unique essence of the hotel is retained, sympathetically restored and further enhanced to reaffirm its status, for generations to come, as one of the world’s most iconic hotels.”

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## Legal challenge launched against Scottish vaccine passport plans

A trade body representing nightclubs in Scotland has launched a legal challenge to the Scottish government’s introduction of vaccine passports.

From 1 October anyone over the age of 18 will need to provide proof of vaccination to gain entry to certain venues and large-scale events in Scotland.

But the Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) said the policy was “deeply flawed and incoherent”.

The group said the scheme did not represent the lowest level of intervention possible to achieve the public health aim and was therefore “likely to be unlawful”. It has instructed its lawyers to commence formal proceedings.

First minister Nicola Sturgeon called for a commonsense approach to the use of Covid-status certification. She set out the definition of a nightclub for inclusion in the scheme as any venue that is open between midnight and 5am, serves alco-



Vaccine passports will be used for events with more than 4,000 people

hol after midnight, provides live or recorded music for dancing and has a designated space for dancing.

However, hospitality trade bodies warned that the definition was too broad and could see late-night pubs and bars caught

up in the plans. The NTIA said it had been consulting with the Scottish government for three weeks but claimed it had not resembled a “meaningful consultation”.

The scheme will also be used for unseated indoor live events

with more than 500 people in attendance, outdoor events with more than 4,000 people, and any event attended by more than 10,000 people.

Gavin Stevenson, vice-chair for NTIA Scotland, said: “It is with an extraordinary sense of disappointment and frustration that we have commenced legal action against the Scottish government.

“We will, of course, continue to engage with Scottish government and the joint trade bodies group to try and mitigate damage from this scheme as far as possible in the interim. We also remain more than happy to engage in meaningful consultation with Scottish government should they be prepared to seek more workable alternatives.

“However we cannot accept the current proposals, which would create conditions for our sector that are unworkable and commercially unviable and will inevitably result in business failures.”



## Pâtisserie Valerie auditor fined £2.34m

The Financial Reporting Council criticised what it described as a “serious lack of competence” in Grant Thornton’s auditing



The pâtisserie chain’s auditors have to report to the FRC on the impact of its actions for three years

By Katherine Price

Pâtisserie Valerie auditor Grant Thornton UK has been fined £2.34m following the high-profile collapse of the chain in 2019, which saw the closure of 70 stores and more than 900 job losses.

Grant Thornton acted as statutory auditor for Pâtisserie Holdings, Pâtisserie Valerie’s holding company, since 2007 and signed off clean audit opinions for its 2015, 2016 and 2017 financial statements.

In October 2018, Pâtisserie Holdings announced that its board had been notified of potentially fraudulent accounting irregularities and the company subsequently entered administration.

The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) has imposed sanctions against Grant Thornton and audit engagement partner David Newstead that include reporting to the FRC annually for three years on the impact of its remedial actions (including a root cause analysis) on audit quality; a review of the audit practice’s culture relating to challenge; and additional monitoring in relation to bank and cash audit work.

### “The audit of Pâtisserie Holdings Plc’s revenue and cash in particular involved... a failure to stand back and question information provided by management”

Grant Thornton will also pay the FRC’s costs of the investigation.

Newstead has also been fined £87,750 and banned from carrying out statutory audits and signing statutory audit reports for three years.

Grant Thornton and Newstead accepted failures in their audit work relating to revenue, cash, journals and fixed asset additions.

In each of the three years, the FRC found the audit work included serious breaches which were “often repeated year on year”, revealing “a pattern of serious lapses in professional judgement, failures to exercise professional scepticism, failures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence and/or to prepare sufficient audit documentation”.

Claudia Mortimore, deputy executive counsel to the FRC, said: “This decision notice sets

out numerous breaches of relevant requirements across three separate audit years, evidencing a serious lack of competence in conducting the audit work.

“The audit of Pâtisserie Holdings Plc’s revenue and cash in particular involved missed red flags, a failure to obtain sufficient audit evidence and a failure to stand back and question information provided by management.

“As a result of this investigation, Grant Thornton has taken remedial actions to improve its processes and to prevent a recurrence of these types of breaches. The package of financial and non-financial sanctions should also help to improve the quality of future audits.”

Pâtisserie Valerie was sold to Causeway Capital Partners in 2019.

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## IHG appoints Joanna Kurowska MD for UK and Ireland

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Joanna Kurowska as the new managing director for its home market of UK and Ireland.

Kurowska will be responsible for driving sustainable performance in the UK and Ireland estate and working with owners and investors to unlock the growth potential of IHG’s brands.

Her promotion follows a 10-year career at IHG, which started at the InterContinental Warsaw in Poland as director of finance and business support before moving on to a number of finance and operational roles across Europe, most recently in Frankfurt, Germany, as director of operations for Northern Europe. Joanna also sits on IHG’s Europe diversity, equity and inclusion board.

She said: “I am honoured to take on this role at such an important time. This is a strong, established market for IHG Hotels & Resorts with incredible growth potential, that I’m excited to drive forward. I’m looking forward to working with the excellent team we have in the UK and Ireland to deliver true hospitality for our guests and robust performance for our owners.”

Karin Sheppard, senior vice-president and managing director for Europe, IHG Hotels & Resorts, added: “During her 10 years at IHG Hotels & Resorts, Joanna has risen through the ranks at a rapid pace and has built an excellent reputation as a team collaborator, people developer and a highly valued partner for owners.”

Kurowska replaces Karan Khanna, who has joined Unite Students as chief customer officer.

IHG has 358 hotels operating under eight brands in the UK and Ireland.



Joanna Kurowska



### OBSESSION 22 TO CELEBRATE THE UK AND IRELAND'S LEADING CHEFS

Obsession, the annual food festival at Northcote in Lancashire, will return next year as a celebration of the best of British and Irish food.

The pandemic has resulted in all the guest chefs for the 14-day event being invited from within the UK and Ireland, as opposed to previous years when they flew in from all over the world.

Tom Kerridge, Simon Rogan and Jordan Bailey will be among the 16 chefs – with 15 Michelin stars between them – who will join Lisa Goodwin-Allen, executive chef at the Ribble Valley hotel and restaurant, between 21 January and 6 February 2022.

### EG GROUP ACQUIRES 52 KFC RESTAURANTS



Petrol station forecourt operator EG Group has acquired 52 KFC restaurants in the UK from Amsric Group.

The deal included a mix of drive-through and eat-in restaurants across the south and south-west, employing more than 1,600 staff.

Once completed it will make EG Group, owned by the billionaire Issa brothers, the largest KFC franchisee in western Europe, operating 220 sites in Europe and the UK.

EG Group bought 146 KFC restaurants and one Pizza Hut store, as well as some sites in development, from Herbert Group in March 2020.

### GUESTHOUSE TO OPEN SECOND BOUTIQUE HOTEL THIS WINTER

Family-run boutique hotel brand GuestHouse is to open its second property in York this December.

Brothers Tristan, James and Tom Guest took over the former Grange hotel in the city this year and it has since undergone a refurbishment.

It will reopen under the No.1 by GuestHouse name, with 39 bedrooms, including a Georgian drawing room and library that have been restored to create two large suites. The hotel will also have a bar with a functioning miniature steam train and a restaurant serving 'wild British food'.

### CHEF MIREILLE HAYEK TO BRING LEBANESE RESTAURANT EM SHERIF TO HARRODS



Mireille Hayek

Beirut-based restaurant group Em Sherif is to open its first European restaurant in London's Harrods later this year.

The brand, which specialises in Lebanese cuisine, was founded by Mireille Hayek in 2011, and now runs 12 sites across the Middle East.

It will launch both a deli and restaurant in Harrods towards the end of November. No further details have been announced, but Em Sherif sites in the Middle East serve set menus with over 30 different dishes.

### KERB NAMED CATERING AND HOSPITALITY PARTNER AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE



Street food operator Kerb has been named as the official catering and hospitality partner at the National Theatre in London.

Kerb is teaming up with Levy UK, the sports, leisure and hospitality arm of Compass Group UK & Ireland, to create the offer.

It will see a transformation of the National Theatre's food and drink spaces over the next two years, beginning with its riverside cafes and Understudy bar.

A press announcement said the revamped venues will be "accessible, high quality and affordable", and draw on Kerb's network of independent food businesses.

### TORTILLA TO OPEN 45 RESTAURANTS AND FLOAT ON AIM

Mexican restaurant group Tortilla has announced a major expansion drive and plans to float on AIM, the London Stock Exchange's market for small and medium-size companies.

The company, which was founded in 2007, is aiming to open 45 new restaurants over the next five years, building on the success of its delivery-only 'dark kitchens'.

Tortilla runs 62 sites worldwide, including 50 company-owned UK restaurants, where two are run in partnership with SSP Group, and 10 are under franchise in the Middle East.



### GATHER & GATHER WINS £1.5m DEAL WITH LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Gather & Gather has won a £1.5m contract to provide catering and hospitality at London Metropolitan University for two years.

The agreement, which started on 1 August, sees the foodservice company work across the university's two campuses on Holloway Road and at Aldgate.

Catering facilities for students, staff and visitors include a street vendor concept through Gather & Gather's partnership with Karnivalfood and a new artisan coffee offer.

Gather & Gather launched in 2013 and was acquired by foodservice giant CH&Co from Mitie in 2019.

### TRAVELODGE TARGETS PARENTS IN BID TO FILL 750 STAFF VACANCIES

Travelodge has launched a recruitment drive targeting parents to fill 750 job roles in its hotels across the UK.

The chain, which runs 578 UK hotels, is offering flexible hours around the school run, access to management training and the promise of jobs close to home.

Openings include 720 full- and part-time jobs in properties across the country, including managerial, bar café team member, receptionist and housekeeping roles.

The group is also looking to fill 30 vacancies at its head office in Thame, Oxfordshire, in positions including finance, HR and PR.





### US CHICKEN CHAIN POPEYES REVEALS LOCATION OF FIRST UK RESTAURANT

US chicken chain Popeyes has confirmed its first UK restaurant will open at London's Westfield Stratford City shopping centre in November.

#### Popeyes



The group, which is aiming to grow to 350 UK sites over the next 10 years, has taken the 1,531 sq ft former KFC unit in the food court.

Popeyes was founded in New Orleans in 1972 and runs 3,400 restaurants in 29 countries.

Further UK sites are due to be

announced in the run-up to the November opening as part of a rolling expansion plan led by Tom Byng (no relation to the Byron founder).

### MAJORITY OF CONSUMERS IN FAVOUR OF DEPOSITS FOR RESTAURANT BOOKINGS

More than half of consumers are in support of paying a deposit for a restaurant table and a no-show fee if they fail to turn up for their booking.

The findings, from a survey of 5,000 consumers conducted by hospitality tech firm Zonal and research consultancy CGA, form part of Zonal's campaign #ShowUpForHospitality, which aims to highlight the damaging impact of customer no-shows.

Consumers were more likely to be in favour of deposits for special occasions such as Valentine's Day, with 65% happy to pay a deposit for a such events.

### MEGAN'S RECRUITING FOR 100 ROLES WITH PLANS TO OPEN THREE SITES



Neighbourhood restaurant group Megan's will have more than doubled the size of its portfolio since the start of the pandemic by the end of the year.

The 13-strong brand will open three new sites in Dulwich Village and Richmond in London, and Marlow, Buckinghamshire, by December, having started in 2020 with seven restaurants.

Further growth plans will see the group, which is predominately located in south-west London and promotes itself as dog-friendly, expand to 22 sites during 2022.

### MITCHELLS & BUTLERS SALES RISE BUT REMAIN 'VOLATILE'

Sales across the 1,650-strong Michells & Butlers restaurant and pub estate have returned to pre-pandemic levels, despite some "volatility" in performance.

In the 18 weeks since full indoor trading reopened on 17 May, like-for-like sales were 97% of those achieved during the same

period in 2019, according to a trading statement for the 51 weeks to 18 September 2021.

In the most recent eight-week period, business increased to 104% of 2019 levels.

Trading for the group, which operates 15 brands including All Bar One, Harvester and Vintage Inns, was stronger in suburban and food-led-brands, particularly more premium brands.

### ELLEN CHEW BRINGS MRS CHEW'S CHINESE KITCHEN BRAND TO LONDON

Birmingham's Mrs Chew's Chinese Kitchen has arrived in London with the launch of a site at Westfield Shepherd's Bush.

The restaurant will be the latest offering from Chew On The Group, which in addition to the Mrs Chew's brand, also operates Shan Shui and Simply Noodles in Bicester Village; Lotus Leaf in Westfield Stratford; Arome Bakery in Covent Garden; and Lobos Tapas in London Bridge and Soho.

Mrs Chew's is described as offering "unpretentious and authentic Chinese food that's prepared from scratch" as a nod to the Singaporean and Chinese heritage of Chew On the Group's founder Ellen Chew.

● *Turn to Openings, page 12*

### PRET A MANGER IN NEED OF 3,000 STAFF FOR MAJOR EXPANSION DRIVE



Pret A Manger hopes to hire 3,000 staff as it looks to double the size of its business within the next five years.

The coffee chain, which cut thousands of jobs after sales plummeted during the pandemic, said it plans to open more than 200 UK shops and expand into five new markets by the end of 2023.

Many of the new sites will be in regional and suburban areas, transport hubs and motorways, with around 100 locations run under franchise.

Pret's backers JAB and founder Sinclair Beecham have invested £100m into the company to drive growth.



# Review of the reviews

## The Observer

Like the polished concrete floors and the breezeblock walls, the menu is sparse to the point of minimalism. I count just 10 savoury items. One of those is a bowl of olives with pickled chilli peppers. Two of them are bread-based. Another has a line through it. The mackerel didn't arrive, apparently. So nine dishes...We order the lot.

The result, in its quiet, unshowy way, is one of the best meals of the year so far; a succession of modestly priced platefuls, which bring on low groans and delicate sighs of happiness. And that's even allowing for the fact that the olives and chillies are bought in. It starts quietly with a couple of Carlingford rock oysters dressed with a precisely judged spoonful of mignonette, that simple dice of vinegared shallots with cracked black pepper. How very bracing.

We have the thinnest slices of raw sea bass, cured in an acidulated dressing punched up with fermented chilli and decorated with rings of cherry tomato. It's vigorous and achingly fresh as if it's only just been fetched from the surf. Next up, a rough-cut steak tartare is topped with a fat dollop of the sauce that's the key ingredient of vitello tonnato. It is



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ERSTWICR/

**“The result, in its quiet, unshowy way, is one of the best meals of the year so far”**

such a smart idea I don't know why I haven't encountered it before. For scooping purposes there are shards of the crispest cracker. Both of these plates are £12. We finish this sequence with a heaped salad of finely sliced lamb's hearts, pink at the eye, with lettuce, grilled green beans and what's billed as a green chilli sauce. That dressing is a little bullying – and that's the best I can manage by way of criticism.

**Price: plates, £5-£12; wines, from £20**

Jay Rayner has one of his best meals of the year at **Erst** in Manchester

## The Daily Telegraph

**William Sitwell thinks the cooking needs some oomph at the Porlock Weir hotel in Somerset**

We sat around the large table, mooting that we should return one day with a larger party and have some noisy fun in this space. The menu is simple: five dishes offered from the kitchen, a selection of pizzas produced from an oven outside on the terrace and some puddings and local cheese.

We shared three dishes: a very fine pizza of locally picked wild garlic pesto; crisp edges, good dough, with melting flecks of pecorino and rocket leaves. A colourful salad of butternut squash was rather lacking in dressing and bulked up with chickpeas; it could have

done with a few more leaves to balance the heaviness of the squash.

And the seafood platter was on the measly side... a tiny pile of salmon, six soft squid rings, two oysters and a couple of prawns in red sauce, served with slices of cheap-looking brown bread and a salad garnish. I'd label it a 'small plate of seafood'; a seafood platter offers that dreaminess of a dish overflowing with the ocean's beauties that this was sadly rather remote from.

Still, we really liked this place: the location, the library, the dogginess, the quirkiness, the wildness, the suggestion that we can't handle the local cider... The cooking just needs a little added guts, a little oomph, a splash of the romantic passion of the forbidding seashore.

**Score: 3/5. Price: two-course lunch for three £55, excluding drinks and service**

## The Guardian

**Grace Dent finds Sessions Art Club in London's Clerkenwell infuriatingly chic, but with “mind-bending” cooking**

The mood is part artists' commune, part chic hotel, and it feels the perfect venue for the excellent, understated chef Florence Knight – previously best known for her work at Polpetto – to choose to set up court. Hers is a much-emulated, yet rarely surpassed style of cooking whereby simple, but extremely good ingredients are combined unusually, and without fanfare, causing the cynic to go, “Pffft – squid, calamarata and tomato? That's just squid pasta. I could cook that.” But there is a magic in the way Knight serves these silky rings of soft, fresh squid

and the almost identically-shaped tubes of calamarata (which is how that pasta shape won its name) in a delightful, souped-up tomato sauce that elevates it to something quite mind-bending.

Panisses, those dull, fried chickpea chips that are always disappointing elsewhere, are served at Sessions as long, crisp, delicious churros seasoned with lemon thyme and sea salt.

Yes, Sessions Arts Club is infuriatingly chic and dramatically staged – it's like eating on the set of Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* – and, yes, some of the prices will make your eyes swivel... But what the place isn't is drab, corporate-feeling, chaotically staffed or remotely forgettable, and there's a lot of those about these days.

**Price: about £40 a head, plus drinks and service**



## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Pulperia [is] a new restaurant from Aktar Islam, better known for his Michelin award-winning Opheem. This, apparently based on “regional Argentinian cooking”, is quite a departure from the intricate Indian cuisine at his original.

We kick off with smoked octopus – inspired, they say, by renegade chef Francis Mallmann – a decoratively coiled tentacle served with a layered potato cake heavy with paprika. It has a slithery quality, as though sous-vidé before grilling. And blood sausage – morcilla – laced with caramelised onion, so rich and sticky its drizzled almost-chimichurri dressing and charred cucumber are a refreshing blessing.

Meat is superb; the contrast between the leaner, more mineral Argentinian and the lusciously marbled, almost suave Finnish is quite something. Grilling is expert, too: almost-black crusts cutting through to juiciest, rosiest interiors, served with nothing other than tiny blobs of burnt onion purée and black garlic – more punctuation than garnish.

But for all that, sides come across as afterthoughts: pedestrian chips; a handful of what taste like bottled pickled onions



WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/PULPERIA\_ASADO



**“Grilling is expert, too: almost-black crusts cutting through to juiciest, rosiest interiors”**

given a turn on the grill. Churros with “el submarino” sauce (a play on the rich, chocolate-bombed Argentinian hot drink) are saturated in their oil, fried at too low a heat. And the kitchen needs to cool down on the wild oversalting of that fine meat unless it wants to give the carnivorous population of Birmingham chronic hypertension. But the steaks, the steaks...

**Price: meal for two, including 10% service charge, £160**

**Marina O’Loughlin says the steaks are superb at Aktar Islam’s *Pulperia* in Birmingham**

## THE TIMES

**Lisa Grainger says *Malmaison* York might just be the city’s buzziest new hotel**

Referencing the city’s industrial past (Rowntree and Terry’s had factories here), the designer Dexter Moren, who masterminded a clutch of hipster hotels around the world, has created rooms with concrete floors and Crittall windows. The 150 bedrooms are bright with modern furniture and pops of colour.

The rooftop Sora restaurant, which occupies the seventh floor, is the hotel’s highlight, with a bar stretching along a glass wall, allowing cocktail lovers to admire the cathedral’s spires as mixologists shake Asian-inspired drinks, including a delicious Sesame Old

Fashioned. In the restaurant the Sri Lankan chef Lasitha Rathnayaka, who previously worked at the Shangri-La hotel in London, delivers delicious oriental-inspired, small plates – featuring sushi, miso-roasted cod, KFC (Korean fried cauliflower) and tempura prawns – amid modern Japanese-inspired art and sumptuous peacock-coloured banquettes.

On the ground floor you’ll find the Chez Mal Brasserie, serving an all-day menu of favourites (from burgers and haddock fishcakes to sticky toffee pudding), as well as business “pods”, a street-side Starbucks and a bar that offers private cocktail-making lessons (popular, apparently, for hen nights).

Rooms are contemporary but comfortable and fitted with the latest tech. They are soundproofed and the bathrooms have rain showers.

**Price: B&B doubles, from £135**

## THE TIMES

**Giles Coren visits London’s first NoMad hotel and restaurant, the New York-based import**

We located our guests in a dark corner, looking a bit lonely, and sat. A tall woman with terrific fingernails, which were all I could see in the dark, came and took a drinks order. But at no stage was there a greeting here either. Certainly not of the effusive sort you’d expect in a brand new £150+/head “devastatingly chic” import. No offer to explain the cuisine or the menus that were, I now noticed, lying on my plate. None of the attempt to create a sense of occasion that you might get in, say, Nando’s.

For “small plates” (they mean “starters”), there was a surprising “Bibb lettuce” (£14)

presented like a green grenade, exploding with cucumber, pistachios and a vinaigrette dressing; a salad of impeccable tomatoes (£17) with tangy stracciatella, olives and summer melon; and a tagliatelle with king crab and Meyer lemon (£28).

The [“NoMad chicken dinner”] was good, the cooking correct, the flesh delicious. But wrapping it in cake is something only a New Yorker would do, and it’s not for me. Grilled hispi cabbage with almond and Amalfi lemon (£9), on the other hand, was amazing.

...But to my mind the menu, like everything else here, is scattergun, random and a bit deracinated. Which I guess is what happens when you pull something up by its roots and move it – especially a restaurant.

**Score: cooking: 6; welcome: 3; service (eventually): 9; overall score: 6**



## Openings

### Chourangi

Chourangi is the first UK restaurant opening from Indian restaurant group Speciality Restaurants. The group, founded by chef Anjan Chatterjee in 1992, now operates 130 restaurants across five countries and is making its UK debut on Old Quebec Street in London's Marylebone.

The restaurant is named after Chowringhee, one of the oldest districts in Kolkata, and will serve dishes inspired by the city's cuisine. The menu will draw on Chatterjee's mother's cooking and childhood in the city and include a blend of British, Dutch, Armenian, French, Portuguese and Chinese flavours.

Chef Surjan Singh Jolly, former director of food and beverage at Marriott hotels in Mumbai and Bengaluru, has joined the team as culinary director. Ingredients have been sourced by Chatterjee, including his home-made five-spice rub and Aam Kasundi mustard.

Chatterjee has partnered with aviation and tech entrepreneur Aditya Ghosh to open the 2,900 sq ft site, which will feature Indian limestone floors and rattan teak-stained furniture and fans in a nod to the British heritage clubs' famous coffee houses of Kolkata.

**Opening** 7 October

**Design** Design LSM

**Typical dishes** Prawn and crab parcels; banana flower croquettes; slow-roasted Kosha lamb; aam aachar hilsa

**Website** [www.chourangi.co.uk](http://www.chourangi.co.uk)



## Extra openings



### West 4th

This brunch restaurant aims to bring the cuisine of Canada's West Coast to London's Parson's Green. The 60-cover venue will become a wine and charcuterie bar in the evenings.

**Opening** 6 October

**Founders** Livia Boumeester and Louisa Stevenson-Hamilton

**Typical dishes** Breakfast poutine; pancake and waffles; açai bowls; banana bread with whipped coconut yogurt and maple sautéed bananas

**Website** [Instagram @west4thkitchen](https://www.instagram.com/west4thkitchen)



### Isola

San Carlo Group's latest opening is a 220-cover Italian restaurant in London's St Christopher's Place. Designed as a 'Mediterranean oasis', it features a pink marble bar with a menu inspired by Sicily, Sardinia and Capri.

**Opening** 4 October

**Founder** Carlo Distefano

**Typical dishes** Spaghetti for two served with whole crab; whole seabass baked in Tapani salt

**Website** [www.sancarlo.co.uk](http://www.sancarlo.co.uk)



### Mrs Chew's Chinese Kitchen

Restaurateur Ellen Chew has launched her Birmingham brand Mrs Chew's Chinese Kitchen at Westfield Shepherd's Bush in London. The menu includes dim sum, noodles and Canton roast duck.

**Opened** 13 September

**Founder** Ellen Chew

**Typical dishes** Siu man (steamed chicken and prawn dumplings); Golden Lava salted egg buns

**Instagram** [@mrschewschinesekitchen](https://www.instagram.com/mrschewschinesekitchen)





Please email your new openings to [openings@thecaterer.com](mailto:openings@thecaterer.com)



## Innside Liverpool

Meliá Hotels International has opened a 207-room hotel in Liverpool's old *Echo and Daily Post* newspaper building. It features a 140-cover restaurant, 18th-floor sky bar, 24-hour gym, and a conference and event space.

**Opened** 13 September  
**Hotel manager** Daniel Royo Rodrigo  
**Restaurant operator** Gino D'Acampo  
Hotels & Leisure  
**Room rate** From £73 a night  
**Website** [www.melia.com](http://www.melia.com)



## Dirty Bones

Dirty Bones is expanding its restaurant in London's Soho across two floors in Kingly Court. A huge basement bar will host DJs every Friday and Saturday evening and the venue will also serve weekend brunch.

**Opening** 4 October  
**Co-founder** Cokey Sulkin  
**Typical dishes** The Reverse Cheeseburger with a truffled hot cheese sauce; chicken and waffles; cheeseburger dumplings; baby back ribs  
**Website** <https://dirty-bones.com>



## Big Easy

Barbecue and lobster restaurant group Big Easy is opening its fourth London site, at Westfield Stratford. More than 500 bourbons, tequilas and whiskeys are available at the nine-metre bar.

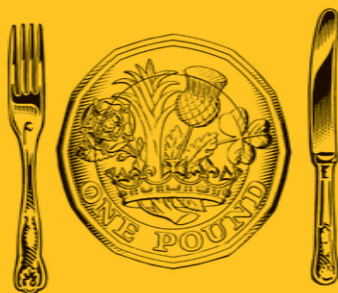
**Opened** 29 September  
**Founder** Paul Corrett  
**Typical dishes** Lobster and shrimp mac and cheese; barbecue pulled pork sandwich; lobster rolls; Nashville hot chicken sandwich  
**Website** [www.bigeasy.co.uk](http://www.bigeasy.co.uk)



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**JYOTIN SETHI**

CEO, JKS Restaurants



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**Wendy Bartlett**  
Co-founder,  
Bartlett Mitchell

## Panic rooms

Hotel owners, put yourself in your guests' shoes – please, pleads a disgruntled

**Wendy Bartlett**

## Inside track

**W**hen deciding what to write for this column, I always think about what others

may be interested in reading. However, please indulge me on this one, as I'd like to use it as a bit of a plea for common sense.

I don't know if it's because I've been travelling a fair bit, or that I'm just getting older, but I'm really struggling to see the sense in some of the changes recently introduced in some hospitality establishments.

I'm conscious I may start sounding like my favourite grumpy old man, Rick Wake-man (who I had the 'pleasure' of spending time with on two successive weekends in Tallinn a few years ago – long story), but forgive me.

no shelves for the toiletry bag. I also wondered why the TV remote controls in hotels are now in bags when everything else you touch isn't. Are remote controls more contagious than a glass or bottle opener or air-conditioning remote?

And why is the mini bar empty 'because of Covid'? I'm sure no one goes through and deliberately handles every bottle. Even so, it's now proven that it is rare to get the bug from a refrigerated bottle of gin that has been sat there for weeks.

And QR codes – that really is my pet hate at moment. I don't want to read menus on my phone – I spend enough time on that – I want a menu I can handle and mull over, not spend 10 minutes trying get it to download (to be fair the UK isn't as bad as Spain, where peo-

**"I'm all for tech, but help your guests out for goodness sake! Sometimes a simple guide to the complications of your room is needed"**

I'm not usually grumpy, but I'm a little cheesed off. I'm a firm believer in doing things right, and not just finding the easy solution. I work on the basis that you should always put yourself in your customer's, guest's or client's shoes. It's a simple approach but can often be forgotten when we are so wrapped up in the madness around us.

This morning I was in a shower in a dark and chic uber-trendy hotel (which basically meant there wasn't enough lighting). I had to get my glasses and turn on the light on on my phone to read which bottle was the shower gel!

The ridiculousness of this scene has, I'm sure, been repeated many times by others. I had already had to sleep with a light on as I couldn't work out how to turn it off. I'm all for tech, but help your guests out for goodness sake! Sometimes a simple guide to the complications of your room is needed.

It continues – the hairdryer was nowhere near a mirror, and I'm assuming the room designer had never put on makeup or had a bag of toiletries, as there was poor light and

ple are obsessed with QR codes).

I know I have to put up with people speaking to me with masks on – which means I cannot hear a word they say – but I'm hoping that some of the other Covid madness that doesn't make sense is reviewed and removed forever.

I appreciate that a lot of younger people are now thinking "she is complaining about not seeing and hearing – must be her age", but I don't think this problem is unique to my generation. It's proving to be an annoyance for so many.

We've been locked up for a while, so I appreciate that we can be more forgiving, but we can't lose the essence of what we are about. Hospitality is about giving people an experience they enjoy. A place they go to be happy. They need to be comfortable and feel looked after. None of this is rocket science.

There is enough going on in the world right now to give us plenty to think about and battle against. Let's make sure common sense wins the fight against some of this Covid-induced madness.



FABRIKASIMF/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



# A different animal

As the eighth Pig hotel opens its doors to guests, founder Robin Hutson looks back on creating his litter of hotels and his loyal staff relate what makes working for the phenomenally successful brand so special.

*Janet Harmer reports*

In a few months' time Robin Hutson will be 65 years old, an age when many people retire or certainly start thinking about it.

Retirement, however, is not on the cards yet for Hutson. He does admit, though, that he'd like not to continue working at the intensity he has over the past three years, juggling the opening of three hotels in Kent, Cornwall and West Sussex. Not to mention navigating a treacherous path through the pandemic, during which he fully felt the weight of responsibility for the livelihoods of more than 1,000 staff across seven Pig hotels and sister property Lime Wood.

We meet on the eve of the opening of the eighth Pig, located within a Grade II-listed Georgian property in the sleepy hamlet of Madehurst, just outside Arundel, West Sussex. The arrival of the 30-bedroom Pig in the South Downs now means that every county on the south coast, from Kent in the east to Cornwall in the west, has a Pig presence, each located within a historical and often quirky building, together with a plethora of rustic outbuildings and garden wagons.

The latest opening also marks the 10th anniversary of the Pig and gives cause to reflect on the success of the brand that is adored by the critics and public alike, with bedrooms and restaurant tables in each hotel booked up months in advance.

The backbone of the brand – with the kitchen garden informing everything from the simple menus to the rustic but stylish interiors

**“You never want to open a new hotel and be accused of it not being as good as the last one, so we put more and more effort in”**

**Robin Hutson**

designed by Hutson's wife Judy – was created with a view to shake up the stuffy and formal experience so often found in country house hotels of old. While Hutson was convinced that this is what people wanted, he was unsure that people would travel to a property in the middle of nowhere on “a wet Tuesday in February”, his barometer for a successful operation. But, come they did – and in their droves, initially to the first hotel in Brockenhurst in the heart of the New Forest and then to the subsequent properties. Given that each hotel averages 30 bedrooms, the business levels are astonishing: a total of 331,000 room nights and 2.2 million restaurant covers achieved between July 2011 and October 2021.

“I think people came at the beginning because I was on my home patch and they







were keen to see what I was up to,” says Hutson, who had previously launched Hotel du Vin in Winchester with the late Gerard Basset before they went on to sell what had grown to a six-strong group 10 years later.

“But ultimately our commitment to the kitchen garden and locally sourced food was something that resonated with people. We take it really seriously. We have 25 kitchen gardeners and 12 acres under production, as well as a nursery producing all the seedlings.”

Equally important to the Pig’s success has been the creation of a team that is focused on creating a relaxed, informal stay for guests, where a can-do-attitude and smiles are in abundance. “The business is all about product ►

## The Pig litter

**The Pig**  
Brockenhurst, Hampshire  
Opened July 2011

**The Pig in the Wall**  
Southampton  
Opened September 2012

**The Pig near Bath**  
Pensford, Somerset  
Opened March 2014

**The Pig on the Beach**  
Studland, Dorset  
Opened June 2014

**The Pig at Combe**  
Gittisham, near Honiton, Devon  
Opened July 2016

**The Pig at Bridge Place**  
Bridge, near Canterbury, Kent  
Opened May 2019

**The Pig at Harlyn Bay**  
Harlyn Bay, near Padstow, Cornwall  
Opened July 2020

**The Pig on the South Downs**  
Madehurst, West Sussex  
Opened September 2021



## Alex Coutts, head kitchen gardener

**2011** Gardener, Lime Wood, Lyndhurst  
**2021** Head kitchen gardener, the Pig in the South Downs

After initially working at Lime Wood, opened by Hutson in 2009, Alex Coutts moved to the first Pig hotel, on the outskirts of Brockenhurst in the New Forest, in 2012. Here he replaced Olly Hutson, Robin and Judy's son, as head gardener, following Hutson's move to launch the kitchen garden at the Pig near Bath. In October 2019 he was appointed head kitchen gardener at the Pig in the South Downs, having spent the four previous years overseeing the kitchen garden at the Pig at Combe.

The kitchen garden in the South Downs is one of the largest in the group and features an impressive number of 80-year-old espalier-trained apple trees framing the one-acre space. "It takes a couple of years to really establish each garden as you have to get to understand the soil type and climate in each one," says Coutts.

He explains that it has been "a hell of a learning curve" working alongside chefs and understanding exactly what they want and at what point they want the produce to be picked. "It has improved my interest in food and knowledge of cooking hugely."

Coutts likes to push the boundaries of produce grown on-site and is exploring Australian finger limes or caviar limes, as requested by the chefs. Meanwhile, Passandra cucumbers and Witkiem Manita broad beans have been some of his biggest successes.

"I've been involved in the vineyard since it was planted and we're looking forward to getting our first yield of grapes. It has been a great experience, which was helped by attending a week-long intensive viticulture course," he says.



◀ and people," explains Hutson. "You can generally get your hands on buildings and cash, but developing the team is the most difficult part, as well as being the most rewarding."

"Perhaps we are faring slightly better at the moment than those who don't have the deep culture that we have. We are seriously committed to training and development and have something like 55 apprentices now, as well as the Budding Entrepreneur Scheme to grow the next generation of managers."

"You never want to open a new hotel and be accused of it not being as good as the last one, so we put more and more effort in so that we don't fall down that trap." The 103 staff at the new property takes the total head count across the group up to 1,150.

While each hotel has a look that is readily recognised as being part of the Pig family, Hutson is determined that each has its own identity and this means coming up with new ideas all the time. At the Pig at Bridge Place, near Canterbury, there is an open kitchen, while the Pig at Harlyn Bay, near Padstow features a lobster shed for alfresco eating.

### A vine romance

Located within 25 acres of grounds, the latest Pig, which cost £14m to buy and refurbish, has enabled Hutson to indulge one of his great passions in life – wine – with the planting of the group's first vineyard. "With land on all sides of the property, it dawned on me one day that we could have vines on the two-acre field in front of the restaurant. It has the right orientation – south-west – and elevation, as well as being on the chalk band that runs from the south of England to Champagne. We also benefit from having land lower than the vines, allowing mist and fog to roll in and preventing the vines from freezing, which has been a significant problem across the whole of Europe this year."

## Chris Drodge, hotel director

**2011** Assistant restaurant manager, the Pig, Brockenhurst  
**2021** Hotel director, the Pig, Brockenhurst

On joining the Pig in Brockenhurst as the opening restaurant manager, Chris Drodge was unsure where his future lay. "I've well surpassed where I thought I would end up," he explains. Along the route to his current role, which he started in January, he has worked as food and beverage manager and deputy general manager at the Pig on the Beach.

"As I've settled into each role, I've always been encouraged to take the next step," says Drodge, highlighting three individuals who have helped his career progression. "I worked with Lora [Strizic] for six and a half years and she always helped me push boundaries. Tom [Ross, group operations director] advised me to take a step back and think about the consequences of what I was doing, while Robin has given me an eye for detail and general wisdom."

**"Developing the team is the most difficult part, as well as being the most rewarding"**

**Robin Hutson**







The busy nature of the 32-bedroom Pig at Brockenhurst, which is 98% full throughout the year, serving 200 covers a day across lunch and dinner, creates an enjoyable working environment. "It enables us to always be focused on the quality of the service, staff and food," adds Drodge.

Vineyard contractor Vine-Works confirmed the field's soil was ideal and has since supported the planting of 4,000 Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier vines, which should produce the first grapes next year ready for the first vintage.

The benefit of the vineyard is far greater than making some bottles of wine, explains Hutson. "We thought it would be great to have as many staff members involved, particularly our kitchen gardeners and sommeliers, who are super-excited. Frankly, in these days of challenges around recruitment and retention, all these elements are helpful."

Also new at the Pig in the South Downs is a somewhat surprising throwback to the avocado bathroom suites of the 1970s. These were inspired by a stay last year at Durslade Farmhouse, a property in Somerset owned by renowned art gallery Hauser & Wirth, described by Hutson as "shabby chic in the extreme".

After initially buying a reclaimed bathroom suite from Glasgow, which turned out to have parts missing, Hutson tracked down double-ended baths and had shower trays colour matched. The avocado suites are now found in four of the hotel's bedrooms.



## Hayley Wetherall, head housekeeper

**2011 Head housekeeper, the Pig, Brockenhurst**

**2021 Head housekeeper, the Pig in the South Downs**

Hayley Wetherall has known Robin and Judy for more than 23 years, having first worked with them as deputy head housekeeper at Hotel du Vin in her home city of Birmingham. She moved on to Hotel du Vin in Brighton as head housekeeper and joined the Pig in Brockenhurst in the same role. Since then, she has gone on to open a further three Pigs, in Southampton (in the Wall), Bridge Place in Kent and now the South Downs.

The big challenge for the housekeeping teams at all the Pig hotels is the fast turnaround of the bedrooms, which are always fully booked. "The hotels have such a big reputation that the guests are eager to check in early," says Wetherall. "I love the adrenalin involved in making it happen."

Another consideration for the housekeepers is the fact that every bedroom is different and the attention to detail in each one is second to none. To ensure her staff are on top of what they need to do, Wetherall encourages them to see each room through the guest's eyes. "We want the guest to walk into their room and say 'wow'.

"Working for the Pig is about being yourself, where you can bring ideas to the table. In a corporate hotel you are more of a number than an individual. Here, when I arrive at work each day, it is like coming home."



**"Here, when I arrive at work each day, it is like coming home"**



## Kamil Oseka, head chef



**2011** Sous chef, the Pig, Brockenhurst  
**2021** Head chef, the Pig in the South Downs

Kamil Oseka's preparation for cooking at the Pig began in his native Poland, where he was immersed in preserving, pickling and foraging alongside his mother and working in his grandmother's allotment. In his new kitchen in the South Downs, he has an entire room with floor-to-ceiling shelving full of jars featuring the produce from the kitchen garden that has been preserved and pickled.

The South Downs is Oseka's third head chef position with the Pig, the first being in Bath, followed by Bridge Place. "I love the excitement of moving between the hotels and the new challenge each one brings," he says.

The Pig style of food suits Oseka down to the ground. Having spent the earlier part of his career working in restaurants alongside French chefs who would put 15 components into one dish, Oseka much prefers the simpler approach of the Pig, where there is likely to be only three ingredients on a plate at any one time.

Meanwhile, he attributes the relaxed approach for which the Pig is renowned for helping to turn him into a calm and happy chef. "It comes from the top," he says. "Everyone who works at the Pig is happy."

Oseka, who oversees a brigade of 28 chefs, says he always remembers two pieces of advice given by Hutson when they first met. "The first was treat everyone like a VIP, whether it be a guest or the bin men or delivery driver. That's why I always offer delivery drivers a glass of water. And second, if you pass something that needs fixing – it might just be picking up a cigarette butt on the ground – deal with it. It encourages us all to be kind to everyone we meet and take pride in every property."

## "Everyone who works at the Pig is happy"

### Kamil Oseka

◀ "I think they're great," he says. With so many hotel owners readily admitting to being inspired by the look of the Pig when creating their own businesses, it remains to be seen where the next retro bathroom will appear.

### The creative drive

Creating and opening new hotels over the past 10 years has been a huge driver for Hutson. He loves the buzz of every element of the creative process, be it securing the building, puzzling out how to make the space work, working on the interiors with Judy or bringing together the team. "It consumes your life for the period of the project and the only way to launch these places is by being totally absorbed," he says. "Apart from four nights at home, I've spent the past six weeks here."







Such a solid hands-on approach, with the Hutsons personally involved in selecting every element of the operation, from the teaspoons to the bespoke beds, is ultimately what makes the Pig the roaring success it has become.

"I've always been of the view that it has never been a game of Monopoly. That is what some of the funds and institutional cash that get involved in developing hotels think it is about. But that is never what it has been in my book. It has been that total immersion."

With the new hotel up and running at full capacity, Hutson says he is now happy to take his foot off the accelerator and absorb the eight hotels, all profitable and all in good shape. For the first time in almost a decade, there is no new Pig on the horizon. While he is not saying that there will be no more Pigs in the future, he confirms that he doesn't see another 10 hotels in front of him. And he does not want to be in a position to look for more staff until the challenges around recruitment settle down.

"We've got plenty to keep us busy, we are writing a new book, we hope to start making wine at the end of next year and we are going to revive a big sustainability project that we started two years ago that has been delayed by Covid. Judy and I are also looking forward to spending more time in each of the other hotels." Definitely no time for retirement then.

## Lora Strizic, regional director

**2011** Hotel director, the Pig, Brockenhurst  
**2021** Regional director, the Pig in the South Downs and Pig at Bridge Place

Alongside James Golding, now group chef director of the Pig, Lora Strizic was on site at Whitley Ridge, the name of the hotel that was eventually to be transformed into the first Pig, prior to the brand's conception.

It was 2009 and Hutson was focused on getting Lime Wood in nearby Lyndhurst open. At the time, it was undecided what was going to happen to Whitley Ridge. Lime Wood and Whitley Ridge were then both fully owned by billionaire Jim Ratcliffe of chemical company Ineos. Home Grown Hotels, incorporated as the parent company of the Pig in 2011, saw Ratcliffe remaining as the majority investor, with Hutson taking a smaller share-holding.

"Robin gave us the keys to the building and a bit of money to spruce it up and we ran the property for about a year along the lines of a traditional country house hotel," says Strizic, who first worked for Hutson as assistant manager at Hotel du Vin Winchester, before going on to take on the same role at Hotel du Vin Brighton before being promoted to general manager.

"We weren't that busy, so we spent every afternoon between lunch and dinner service working in the garden, growing vegetables. Then we brought in some pigs and effectively created a smallholding, boosted by the mushrooms picked by our forager, Garry Eveleigh.



**"We've always looked for interesting people to train to be one of us"**

"It was a lot of work but great fun, and gave us the opportunity to work out what the kitchen garden could do for us. Having previously worked in towns and cities, it also gave us a greater understanding of being in the countryside and working with nature. With Robin sharing his thoughts on how he wanted the menu to evolve, the Pig became what it is today."

Lora explains that having that period working on the Pig concept before the brand was actually launched provided the team with the confidence that they could make it work. A key element was the writing of menus, with Golding creating dishes from produce available each morning rather than ordering ingredients the previous day to fit a pre-written menu. "It takes confidence to write a menu at 8am before serving the food at 12 noon," says Strizic.

As the menu evolved, customers to Whitley Ridge were confused by the juxtaposition of the simple dishes inspired by freshly picked ingredients and the fine dining environment. However, once the refurbishment took place, the shabby chic interior provided the perfect complement to the food.

For Strizic, the past 10 years has totally changed her focus as a hotelier, with the food and garden becoming significantly more integral to the operation. But perhaps even more important has been her increased understanding in how to employ cleverly.

"A key part of our success is about the service experience and that comes from the staff," she says. "So, we've always looked for interesting people to train to be one of us. When interviewing, we talk about what we can do for the staff, rather than just focusing on what they can do for us. This attitude has served us well over the years in creating a strong, loyal workforce."



# A new angle

Tuddenham Mill is proof that the wheels of progress keep turning, with the 250-year-old Suffolk hotel having refined its offer during the pandemic. Chef-patron Lee Bye tells *Tessa Allingham* how he's had the confidence to ring the changes





**T**owards the end of July, a new hashtag popped up on the Tuddenham Mill Instagram feed – #newangles. Instead of the familiar picture of this watermill-turned-hotel in rural Suffolk, taken through a voluminous weeping willow towards the mill's sky-scraping chimney and weather-boarded walls, the photograph was taken from the other side of the reed-edged millpond, from a house with a scarlet front door and elegant Georgian proportions.

Agellus Hotels, Tuddenham Mill's parent company and owner of the Lifeboat Inn and the Chequers Inn, both in Thornham, North Norfolk, bought the Mill House mid-pandemic for an undisclosed sum. The owners of 45 years wanted to see it reconnected with the rest of the 250-year-old mill; back in the day, it would have been home to the miller.

The purchase is the latest step in what chef-patron Lee Bye calls "Tuddenham 2.0". He admits that the 21-bedroom hotel, in its 12 meadowed acres near Newmarket, had "only simmered" pre-pandemic, despite having a 55-cover, three-AA-rosette restaurant, and rooms smart enough to have held four silver AA stars in 2015. It needed something – a new angle – to ignite its potential.

The Mill House will, after a complete refurbishment, provide a fresh layer of business opportunities. It's a rambling, blank-canvas space with seven bedrooms, original fireplaces, sashes and shutters, large dining and lounge areas and a domestic Aga kitchen, which Bye plans to transform into what he calls a "social eating area".

His ideas spill out: a place to learn and be inspired, tea in the waterside garden with its greenhouses and veg garden ("we'll tidy it up, but I don't want it over-tidy – this is rural Suffolk!") and magnificent cherry tree. "I can see the whole building being let for family gatherings, private parties – we could host wine tastings in the Dairy [a cool, arch-roofed, semi-cellar space]. Guests could self-cater or we could send over a chef. Pick 'n' mix!"

The hotel's gardeners have cut overgrown roadside shrubs to reveal elegant metal railings and the red door with its classic fanlight. Planning permitting, a bridge will connect the Mill House to the main hotel.

### **Innovation through crisis**

The purchase has been possible largely because of how Tuddenham Mill forged a path through the pandemic. Like many rural hotels over summer, occupancy is at a record high. Bye has just one bedroom to sell before hitting a 100% occupancy rate for September – which is making him fidgety during our interview – it's at 90% for October and 72% for November.

These are unheard-of levels, says Bye. "We traded for seven months out of 12 in 2020, but we've had a record year."

The pandemic allowed the team to be brave with new revenue streams, which have ultimately tipped the hotel and its restaurant from simmer

into rolling boil. "That Noma burger inspired me! I remember thinking that day, 'If René Redzepi can do a burger, than we as an industry certainly can'."

"But it's not easy. A lot of chefs I find are insecure. They have their identity and they're scared of moving away from it. They're worried about losing accolades, or putting off regulars. But the pandemic forced us all to rethink."

The Secret Garden stretch tent offered simple boxed meals through summer 2020 ▶

**"I used to see collaboration as giving over control, diluting, compromising, but now I see it as a mutual benefit"**

**Lee Bye, chef-patron**

### **Contact and details**

**Tuddenham Mill**  
**High Street, Tuddenham St Mary,**  
**Suffolk IP28 6SQ**  
**www.tuddenhammill.co.uk**  
**Chef-patron** Lee Bye

**Restaurant manager** Guillermo 'Will' Reyner  
**Covers** Upstairs at the Mill: 55; Tipi by the Stream: 40  
**Bedrooms** 21  
**Rate** From £165 B&B

Agellus Hotels is owned by Mark Harrod, owner also of Fenmarc Produce, the retail-focused veg prep and packing business based in Elm, Lincolnshire, and Pembrokeshire-based Puffin Produce. Agellus bought Tuddenham Mill in 2007, the Lifeboat Inn and the Chequers Inn in 2015 and the Mill House in summer 2021.



◀ – burgers, salads, arancini and lobster rolls. “Getting the food there from the hotel kitchen was difficult, but the team adapted superbly. The golf buggy never worked so hard!”

Autumn and winter 2020 saw the stretch tent replaced by a tipi in the carpark and a robust ‘mussels-meats-wheat’ menu. “The mood-board was ‘lumberjack, Mumford & Sons, fire, lumps of wood,’” says Bye. “It worked. It was easier to manage. Two starters, four buns – with a lobster one for a Tuddenham touch – and hot doughnuts.”

Come summer 2021 that same tipi migrated to a spot under the willow, and there it will stay as the permanent Tipi by the Stream. “It looks awesome where it is. Like it was meant to be,” he says. Its 2021 iteration is a tweaked rerun of last year’s menu, a lunchtime offer including the likes of a mangalitza pork bun with crispy guanciale, salsa verde and pickles (£16.50), Brancaster mussels with Grain Culture bread (£18), and a malted vanilla affogato (£6), and six hot doughnuts (£6).

## Lee Bye

Lee Bye has spent most of his working life – half his 35 years in fact – at the stove at Tuddenham Mill, working as a young chef under Gordon McNeil, through the glittery Paul Foster years as sous, then returning as head chef, on Foster’s departure in 2014, after a brief stint elsewhere.

“Gordon really instilled discipline in me and Paul developed my palate as a chef. Working with them were two key moments for me,” he explains.

Bye was promoted to chef-patron in 2019, with responsibility for all aspects of the Suffolk hotel, and two pubs – the Lifeboat and the Chequers – 60 miles away in North Norfolk. That’s 48 bedrooms, 2,400 covers a week on average, 114 people in total.

Bye’s potential beyond the kitchen was spotted by the Acorn Scholarship awarding panel in 2016, the same year that he won an Acorn Award. It spurred him to embark on a process of personal professional development beyond the stove, and to steer a culture change at Tuddenham Mill.

“When I first became chef-patron I sat at that second desk in reception for two days, in laptop-mode. The phone didn’t stop, there were people everywhere and I watched the reception team interact with everyone. Stepping out of the kitchen for me was critical in understanding how important it is for a business to be in the right place culturally in order to be successful. Culture always comes first.

“Before, it was all about brawn and long hours. Now, I ask myself what a person wants from their role, what their strengths are, and I build a team from that. It’s a balance, especially with young people. You don’t want to lose them, but you have to keep creating opportunities for them; inspiring them.”



**“We traded for seven months out of 12 in 2020, but we’ve had a record year”**

**Lee Bye, chef-patron**

The tipis with their straightforward menus and average spend of £20 opened the hotel to new customers. So too did lockdown collaborations with Steak & Honour, the Cambridge-based burger van that occasionally parked up at Tuddenham Mill for click and collect orders. “It worked for both our businesses. [The founder of Steak & Honour] Leo Riethoff had a new venue to shout about, and we could thread a quality burger brand into a place that wasn’t associated with burgers.

“Suddenly, all these different people were in our car park—a new crowd. I used to see collaboration as giving over control, diluting, compromising, but now I see it as a mutual benefit.”

Bye built on the realisation and decided to work harder at supplier relationships. “When we came out of the third lockdown, I said to the team ‘less time on the chopping boards, more time sourcing ingredients’. I asked everyone to come back with a new supplier.

“Will [Reyner, restaurant manager] came back with Thorne Wines [Cambridge] and that led us to Essex winery, Saffron Grange, and we now sell their sparkling wine. I found



Malloy’s butchers in Cambridge, and produce supplier Smith & Brock. Harvey [Thompson, junior sous] suggested Courtyard Dairy for cheese, Abi [De’Ats, senior sous] argued for Mike Warner at A Passion for Seafood.” The relationship with Ely-based Grain Culture strengthened, with the family-run bakery supplying milk buns for the tipi.

## Eat, drink and be merry

It’s impossible to say how many of those who drove up to Tuddenham Mill to collect their Steak & Honour fix have since eaten Upstairs at the Mill. But the hotel’s dining room, renamed and now open only for dinner, is





PICTURES: ANT JONES PHOTOGRAPHY

regularly full of people coming for its tasting menu-led offer. “We have two very strong audiences engaged in our business now. The magic moment was not turning the outdoor tap off, but keeping it fully cranked alongside the main restaurant. Full flow!”

Key to keeping customers coming, of course, is delivering what they want, consistently, at a price they’re happy to pay. The plan to offer tasting menu-only (five or seven courses) has softened in the light of feedback, and to shore up hotel revenue. “We’ve added a short à la carte to drive room bookings, not restaurant bookings. We can’t afford to lose the room bookings – especially Sunday evenings – because a guest doesn’t like the look of the menu, so we offer Orford lobster, chips and aioli (£38), or retired dairy ribeye steak with sauce Diane (£33). It’s about knowing what market is locked into the property and catering for it. We need to fill 21 bedrooms every night. When we do that we’re onto a winner.”

Still, the daily tweaked tasting menu is less complex than before. Multiple elements are out, in favour of just three or four components such as Holkham Estate venison, trompette mushrooms, fregola and red mustard leaf, or Tunworth cheese, Discovery apple and fig leaf.

“I need the menu to work with the situation we’re in right now with staff shortages and unpredictable supplies and uncertainty. We’ve got a great team, full of enthusiasm, but I have to be realistic about what’s achievable.”

Creating the pared-back menu was enjoyable. “Before Covid, I was so edgy about losing money running the business, yet I was in treacle from a creativity point of view. We’ve enjoyed doing less prep but really focusing on the individual components on the plate. It’s been refreshing. The Gigha halibut finished with seaweed salt with runner bean chutney from our gardens is my favourite at the moment – the ultimate in seasonal cooking.”

Tuddenham Mill has its foundations in the Domesday Book, its industrial and architectural heritage in the 18th century, its heart in rural west Suffolk. New angles keep all that intact, but the hotel and its restaurant are being directed firmly forward.



Squab pigeon, wild heather honey, baked celeriac, salad burnet

## From the Upstairs at the Mill tasting menu

### Food

- Wild oyster mushrooms, salsify, truffle
- Yorkshire Wold beef short rib, tarragon, broad beans
- Gigha halibut, runner bean chutney, seaweed salt
- Holkham Estate venison, trompettes, fregola, red mustard leaf
- ‘The Enigma’ – chocolate, sea buckthorn, cobnuts

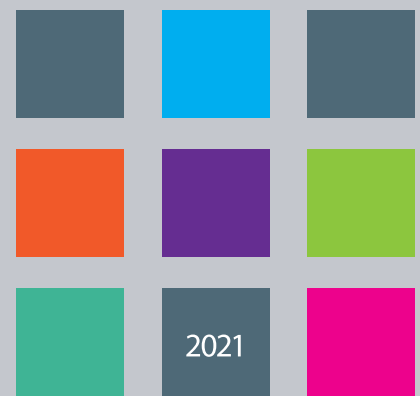
**Five courses: £49 (£89 with five paired wines). Seven courses: £60 (£120 with wine)**

### Wine

Wine pairings are devised by Cambridge-based Thorne Wines with restaurant manager Guillermo ‘Will’ Reyner. They include a crisp 2019 Albariño from the Bodegas Laureatus winery in Rias Baixas, northern Spain, with the halibut, and a full-bodied 2017 Barovo from the Macedonian Tikveš winery with the venison.



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# ...make your hospitality business more attractive to investors

A promising business idea with a strong brand identity and a long-term plan will all help lure in an investor, says *Julia Weeks*

**A**ttracting the right investor could be crucial to the future success of your hospitality business. They will bring not only financial backing, but expertise on how to scale your business and secure its future success.

It's a well-known truism that the best time to start a business is in a recession. This also holds true for the past 18 months – any business that has started, survived or grown during the pandemic must have a resilience and attractiveness to consumers that could see it go from strength to strength as easier trading conditions begin to emerge.

So, whether you are seeking loan or equity investment or jumping to the next level in seeking backing from private equity investors, the following tips may help to win you the interest of those key investors.

## **Make sure that you have a strong plan**

If your business has thrived during the past 18 months by being agile and entering new markets, such as home delivery, this is a good indication to investors that you have the commercial acumen to meet any future shocks head on.

A strong and regularly updated business plan will help to prove that you are planning for the future.

## **Protect your brand name**

In a highly competitive area, what makes your business unique? While recipes may not be protected, is the name of your hospitality business protected by way of trademark registration? If not, does any other business operate in the same area and use the same or similar branding, which could prevent you registering your business's name as a trademark?

If you have ambitions outside the UK, have you checked the use of your brand name in overseas markets?

## **Protect key elements of your branding**

Another key element of your branding may be the design of your premises and your cutlery and plates. If you use eco-friendly and biodegradable cutlery and plates as part of your take-away business, are your supplier relationships and contracts strong?

## **Build lasting supplier relationships**

If any other key supplier gave notice to terminate their contract, how easily could you source equally high-quality products?



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**“While recipes may not be protected, is the name of your hospitality business protected by way of trademark registration?”**

## **Create a stable cost base**

Your plan should deal with when the next rent review under your lease is due. When do staff appraisals and salary reviews take place? What opportunity do suppliers have to increase their prices?

## **Location, location, location**

Check the notice provisions in your lease. If you are operating from a glamorous venue with high passing footfall, you may wish to

ensure that you have a reasonably long time to run on your lease. The converse consideration is how quickly can you give notice to your landlord if you wish to move to new premises in order to expand?

## **Invest in staff training**

All businesses have key staff but no one person should be so essential that they could damage your turnover if they leave. As long notice periods are unusual in the hospitality sector, a good training programme will ensure that each key person trains a number of potential successors and that the ethos and ambience of your business continues, even if that super-popular person moves on.

As many businesses are now experiencing problems in recruitment, a good training programme may also help with staff retention.

**Julia Weeks is an associate in the corporate team at London law firm Goodman Derrick LLP**



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# Defend your staff from harassment

It's an employer's duty to keep staff safe in the workplace, which includes stopping customer harassment. *Daniel Stander* explains how the legal situation is likely to change and what employers should be doing to prepare

**H**ospitality businesses are in an uphill battle to recover, experiencing chronic staff shortages as a result of the pandemic. And news that hospitality staff have been subjected to rising cases of abuse from customers is concerning.

Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UK Hospitality, said: "After such a difficult 18 months, this behaviour is shocking and completely unacceptable...I urge all customers to treat hospitality staff with respect and remind them that just like any other person, staff are trying their best to navigate the pandemic."

Clearly, being abused by customers can increase feelings of stress, isolation and anxiety, which are factors for mental ill health. With hospitality staff already at breaking point given the chaotic first summer season since the government lifted restrictions, businesses are having to confront employee retention issues and stress-related absences at the worst possible time. In addition, they potentially risk exposure to legal claims should they fail to deal promptly with complaints of customer abuse and/or fail to properly discharge their health and safety obligations towards their staff.

The legal framework around customer harassment is not as clear as hospitality employers might like, and protection depends on who the perpetrator is. If an employee is bullied or harassed by a colleague in the course of employment, they may have claims under discrimination legislation, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, their contract of employment, unfair dismissal legislation and/or in negligence.

However, where the bullying or harassment is done to the employee by a third party, eg, a customer, until recently (and outside of the criminal law) there is little civil protection. However, this does not absolve employers from needing to take steps to protect employees from inappropriate behaviour from customers. Such issues can be hard to handle given that "the customer is always right".

In light of the rise of the #MeToo movement and this gap in the law, the government has announced that it will reintroduce previously repealed workplace protections against harassment by third parties. It is not yet clear precisely what this protection will look like, but it appears that it will include the existing vicarious liability "all reasonable steps" employer defence.

With changes to the legal landscape on the horizon, there are a number of things employers should be doing now, to discharge health and



## **“Encourage staff to report harassment by customers, support those who report harassment and take appropriate action”**

safety duties and to help demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent harassment, including:

- Make sure the fundamentals are in place. Prepare clear and up-to-date written policies on anti-harassment and bullying. Have a clear public notice advising third parties that harassment of staff is unlawful and will not be tolerated.
- Give regular training on policies and procedures. Recent case law has emphasised the need for refreshing these regularly.
- Conduct spot staff surveys. Take the temperature on how they are feeling and measure whether the organisation's approach to bullying and harassment is working.

- Encourage staff to report harassment by customers, support those who report harassment and take appropriate action.
- Ensure managers are equipped with the skills to spot the signs of burnout or mental health issues, and to signpost effectively to appropriate forms of support.

Now more than ever, showing a commitment to staff support and wellbeing may pay dividends as hospitality business prepare to weather ongoing staff shortages.

**Daniel Stander is an employment lawyer and certified mental health first-aider at Vedder Price LLP**





# A big appy family

There are myriad reasons for the staffing crisis, but giving your staff extra flexibility, training on demand and cutting their workload would no doubt solve some issues – and it can be achieved through technology. *Kathleen Hall reports*

**S**taff shortages are not a new problem for hospitality – although it seemed to reach a nadir this year due to Covid and Brexit. However, one big change is that many operators are increasingly turning to technology platforms to plug the holes in their operations. From helping with recruitment to longer-term investment in people, the sector seems set to innovate its way out of the crisis.

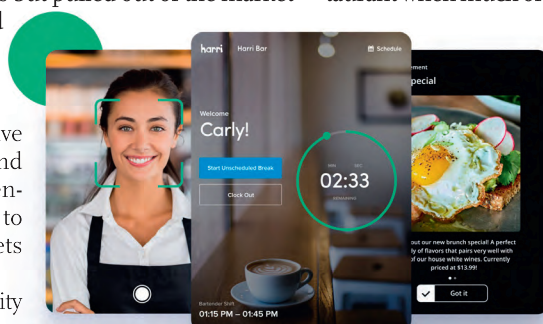
Despite the global pandemic, Wendy's has not lost its appetite for growth. The US burger chain, which ran around 10 restaurants in the UK in the 1990s but pulled out of the market in 2000, opened its first UK site in Reading in June, with plans for five more by the end of the year. Eventually it hopes to have 400 outlets in the UK.

With hospitality

staff in short supply, the brand has clearly chosen a challenging time to embark on a new venture. But Michael Clarke, UK operations director at Wendy's, says the buzz about opening has helped. "We have been very fortunate to have a steady flow of applicants and that so many feel a connection to Wendy's," he says.

However, the chain has been using HR and workforce management tool Harri to help navigate some of the current challenges around recruitment.

"We started recruiting for our Reading restaurant when much of the UK had restrictions on social distancing. Harri allowed us to overcome that by using video technology in lieu of in-person interviews, allowing a candidate to upload a video of themselves answering pre-set questions."







messaging feature. There is now no need for employees to search a team room for a schedule or call the restaurant to find their shifts. Having that self-service is attractive to candidates who are used to accessing information quickly or making changes in the moment.”

The tool has also proved useful for operators who have been using it prior to the pandemic. Kevin Coetzee, people and operations director at wine bar chain Humble Grape, says the app’s talent pool feature has meant it has been able to stay in touch with potential recruits who may not have made it through previous hiring rounds – helping to boost its recruitment pipeline.

“I had a candidate who applied for a job in 2019 and I messaged them [via the app] and said something is available,” he says. “They responded to say, ‘Thanks, I know it’s been a while, but I’d love to have a chat’.”

### Investing in the future

For Steve Rockey, people director for Home Grown Hotels and Lime Wood Group, the current crisis has been a long time coming, with Brexit and the pandemic only bringing this underlying issue to a head.

“I think we are only at the wound-licking stage [of the crisis]. We’ve got a long way to go to fill the [thousands of] vacancies...we don’t need to find them because they’ve gone, we’ve got to create them,” he says.

He adds that it’s the middle layer of staff that has been most affected. “Your assistant managers, supervisors, chefs, senior chefs – they’ve all scattered and it’s now on us to actually do something about, whereas I think in the past there’s been a reticence to fully commit to it.”

Part of the problem is the sector has been bad at retaining talent, he says. But he believes one good outcome is the way it’s forced operators to think and work differently. ►



Michael Clarke, Wendy’s

**“Having that self-service is attractive to candidates who are used to accessing information quickly or making changes in the moment”**

**Michael Clarke, Wendy’s**

He says the quick turnaround of applications has been attractive to potential staff, as candidates can apply directly on their phone via the app. Once on-board, employees can use the tool to easily switch shifts with each other, helping to create a flexible working environment.

“Everything is done via a mobile app, which means at the push of a button an employee can do so much. Our crew members now have the ability to request and swap days off, instant access to their payslips and the ability to communicate with each other through the group

### Suppliers

#### Access

[www.theaccessgroup.com](http://www.theaccessgroup.com)

#### Flow Hospitality

[www.flowhospitalitytraining.co.uk](http://www.flowhospitalitytraining.co.uk)

**Guestline** [www.guestline.com](http://www.guestline.com)

**Harri** [www.harri.com](http://www.harri.com)

**Rotaready** [www.rotaready.com](http://www.rotaready.com)

**Stint** <https://stint.co>

**Sunday** [www.sundayapp.com](http://www.sundayapp.com)

**Quinyx UK** [www.quinyx.com](http://www.quinyx.com)

**UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group)** [www.ukg.com](http://www.ukg.com)

#### Workplace from Facebook

<https://en-gb.workplace.com>





**Victor Lugger,**  
founder of Big Mamma

◀ One such change has been the growth of online learning programmes, through its Flow Hospitality learning and development platform. “Over lockdown [those programmes] were so successful, we’re now expanding them,” he says.

Previously training days were confined to how many people could fit around the table, but now the ability to upskill is open to all. “It’s such a great way to reach so many more people than we ever would be able to,” he says. “Two years ago [I wouldn’t have believed] online learning was the way forward, because you lose the nuance and the interaction. But what you gain is scope and mass training and mass interest. And people are learning and interested in the things they possibly weren’t before.”

Online learning is just one part of the puzzle when it comes to making the sector a place that staff want to stay and develop, he says. “We’re using all our internal platforms to help us create the hospitality team of the future.”

Lime Wood hotel has also been ramping up the use of its workforce management platform Access. Rockey says: “We have been able to use that more than we ever have done in the past. But I think it’s one of those areas where we’ve realised it’s something we can really develop. With the state of the nation, it’s a question of not having enough people to satisfy demand, so there is obviously a massive opportunity to refine that through a workforce management system.”

He added: “In terms of Access the biggest area we are using it for, and working on, is setting rotas further into the future to help

people plan their work and life. It allows for planning and flexibility for the team, which as we know is so important. We are working on a link between all of our systems (ATS through to payroll) to ensure smooth onboarding and ease for candidates to get onto payroll and get paid with minimal work on their part!”

Other operators have also found that existing platforms have gained a new purpose since the pandemic hit. John Wallace, general manager at the Churchill hotel in York, uses operations software provider Guestline for its property management, booking platforms and electronic point of sale systems.

He says it has been invaluable in helping to train up people quickly who don’t necessarily have a background in hospitality.

“It means I don’t have any concerns about taking in people from another industry or those without experience. It lets me employ people who I think have potential but experience is secondary, which gives me a wider pool of applicants. I know I can make them useful to us quickly if we are short-staffed.”

Because the system is cloud-based, it’s also

enabled some remote working, such as taking telephone enquiries. “It helps us move people around departments and not leave any short-staffed. Even if a receptionist gets told to self-isolate at 8am and we’ve got a big check out, I can be online with the phone calls at home,” he says. “So the reduced staff on the reception desk have less work to do. It’s really handy to have that flexibility.”

## New ways of working

For others, technology tools that were put in place out of expediency at the height of the pandemic are now expected to become permanent fixtures.

“We’re missing around 10% of our staff,” ▶







# Workforce Management

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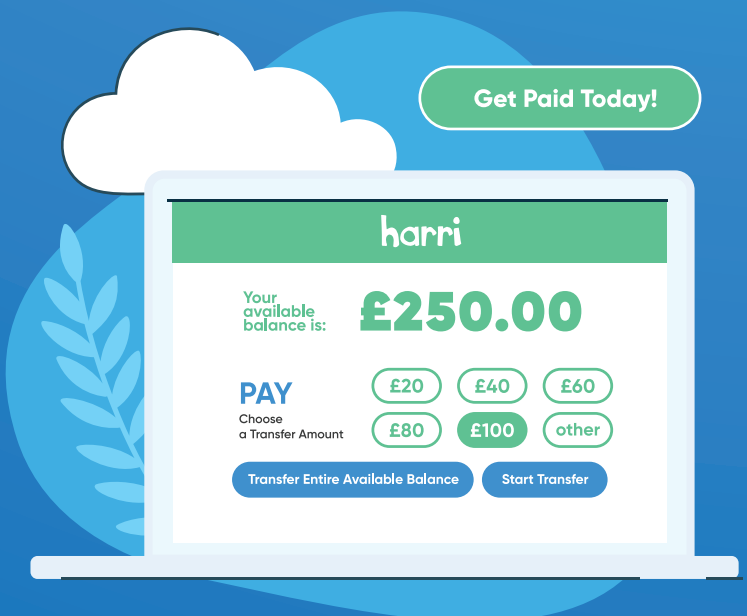


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◀ says Victor Lugger, founder of Italian restaurant Big Mamma. “Speaking with friends [in other restaurants] they’re missing 30%-40% of their staff. So we are fully opened but it’s a very intense period.”

However, he says creating a QR code payment tool he has dubbed Sunday has been “transformational” in helping staff to work smarter. He believes it has saved around 30% of waiting staff’s time dealing with payments.

“It has enabled people to tip more, but it is also reflective of the fact service staff are able to give customers more of their time as they’re doing less admin,” Lugger says, adding that it has also led to tables turning 15% faster.

“During the pandemic we noticed that in the span of three months, QR codes changed from something that no one understands to as natural as the salt and pepper on the tables.”

It’s a similar story for Pizza Pilgrims, which has been using Workplace from Facebook since the beginning of the pandemic to replace WhatsApp, so staff can more easily stay in touch. The platform has been such a hit they are planning to roll it out further.

“The next phase of our Workplace launch is just how we link it to everything,” says Hayley Cummings, head of people at Pizza Pilgrims.

“We want Workplace to be our one-stop shop. So we use [scheduling tool] Rotaready and it automatically feeds in when you have new starters or leavers and if people are promoted. It updates all that detail in the background.

“The next thing for us is how we push people’s rotas out there, making shift swapping super easy, and your payslip – we want Workplace to be the hub of everything.”

JJ Foodservice, a wholesale supplier that employs 800 employees across 11 branches, has also introduced new ways of working. “Communication can sometimes be a challenge, especially during a time of crisis,” says



**“We are only at the wound-licking stage of the crisis. We’ve got a long way to go to fill the thousands of vacancies”**

**Steve Rockey,  
Home Grown Hotels**

the company’s HR manager Joanna Florczak.

The group has introduced workforce management tools from UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group). “[It] helped us to mitigate this challenge during one of the most difficult times in our history – the Covid-19 pandemic – by giving us a platform that everyone could access,” she says.

“UKG has helped to introduce a level of transparency within JJ Foodservice that we’ve never had before. Employees can access their timesheets at any point, and staff also have more control over annual leave. Recording attendance is also much easier, as workers clock in and out independently. This has helped to save time for our managers.”

Chix Chandaria, owner of the Wine Parlour bar and shop in London’s Brixton, agrees that freeing up time has been one of the major benefits of using new platforms. Chandaria was using Stint prior to the pandemic – a platform that connects operators with students looking for casual shifts.

Having it in place already helped her navigate the worst of the crisis. “The idea of hiring an inexperienced young person – even washing the beautiful big wine glasses or serving water to customers – is never something I would have considered before. But it made me realise there’s a whole world out there that can help the business. And these brilliant people are open to learning and can come in with new energy.”

That has led to less time fire-fighting and more time for strategy. “It means I’ve been able to give the manager a whole admin day off. It also allows me to look at the bigger picture stuff.”

Hospitality has typically been seen as playing catch-up with other sectors when it comes to digital transformation, but given the range of technologies operators have been turning to, that perception may be starting to change.

## Retaining staff through tech empowerment

**Daniel Holmberg, country manager for workforce management provider Quinyx UK, on how hospitality has become more innovative when it comes to solving staffing issues and ensuring the workplace is somewhere people want to be.**

“The past 18 months have been challenging for those operating within the hospitality sector. Trying to keep their frontline teams happy, particularly as they navigated extreme peaks and troughs of demand, ongoing legislative changes, lockdowns and increased safety measures, all while bearing the brunt of customers’ frustrations, has been an unprecedented juggling act.

“Those who are faring well have been focused and kept their resolve – relying on automated solutions and harnessing technology to progress through the pandemic.

“By using our workforce management solution, which combines improved forecasting,

staff scheduling for optimised service and employee wellbeing, time/task tracking and seamless real-time communications, our hospitality customers have been able to empower and, fundamentally, retain staff.

“We know from our own studies that some of those working in the hotel and foodservice sectors are feeling unloved and undervalued. In fact, 60% of the anonymous, deskless hospitality workers we spoke to feel that their employer views them as a disposable or temporary resource; 49% say the company they work for is understaffed; and 86% acknowledge this has led to a more stressful working environment. Two in three have even considered quitting.

“Our customers who have addressed these concerns are now in a much stronger position than their competitors. At a time when hospitality workers are leaving roles en masse for sectors such as transport and logistics, this has never been more important.”





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All Menuwatches go forward to the judging of the Menu of the Year Catey

MENUWATCH



Glazed gammon with hen's egg, roasted pineapple and chunky chips

# The Bailiwick

Steven and Ami Ellis are applying high-end cooking techniques to classic pub-style dishes, with a focus on local flavours and game. *Ben McCormack* pays a visit

**Y**ou might not expect a chef who worked under Clare Smyth at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay to ask to postpone an interview because his pork pies need putting in the oven. But that is life for Steven Ellis and his pastry-chef wife Ami, who relocated to the Surrey stockbroker belt, swapping haute gastronomy for gastropubs at their new venture the Bailiwick.

The couple met in the kitchens at the Star Inn at Harome when Steven was on a 12-month sabbatical from Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, at the end of which Ami joined him at Royal Hospital Road. They left London to open their first solo project, the Oxford Blue in Old Windsor in 2016. Pork pies were on the menu there too, but presented with an open top filled with pea shoots and served on pea purée.

"We were our own worst enemy at the Oxford Blue," Steven says. "We made it too much like the high-end restaurants we'd been working in. We want to keep the heart of the Bailiwick as a pub."

The Oxford Blue didn't reopen after the first lockdown of spring 2020. A gamekeeper from the Crown Estate told Steven and Ami that the

**"We want to keep the heart of the Bailiwick as a pub"**

**Steven Ellis**

Bailiwick, on the other side of Windsor Great Park, was coming on the market, and the couple reopened it in May with backing from Brindisa Kitchens co-owner Ratnesh Bagdai.

Steven says there are two types of clientele at the Bailiwick at lunch and dinner, which means two separate menus. At lunchtime walkers and tourists choose from a bar menu of what Steven calls "pub classics", which includes those pork pies (£12). To make them, the chef adds egg yolk to a standard shortcrust pastry to turn the pie golden brown in the oven and fills the case with pork shoulder, belly, smoked bacon and salt, which he says gives a good meat-to-fat ratio and prevents it becoming too dry. Each pie is served warm with a cream-based pea and mint sauce poured through a hole in the lid.

Dinner is aimed more at destination diners in search of a two- or three-course à la carte (£35/£45). Pig trotter terrine with apple, black pudding and sauce gribiche might be followed by sea bass with capers, lemon, prawns, mussels and caviar butter sauce, with Ami's bestselling chocolate delicie with vanilla salted caramel and malt ice-cream to finish.





Roasted loin of Windsor  
Great Park red deer



Smoked haddock Scotch  
egg with confit lemon and  
watercress velouté



Jimmy Butler's roasted pork  
rack with roast potatoes, mixed  
vegetables, cauliflower cheese  
and Yorkshire puddings



Steven and Ami Ellis



Windsor Great Park venison  
bonbons with mustard mayonnaise



Chocolate delicie with cocoa  
nib, vanilla salted caramel  
and malt ice-cream



Lemon parfait with burnt  
meringue and verbena

On *The Caterer's* visit, however, the lemon parfait stole the show. Ami puts each parfait into a lemon-shaped mould before blast-chilling them to -50°C and glazing them with a vivid yellow jelly made from lemon skins and juice. The parfait is presented on a base of burnt Italian meringue and Swiss meringue cooked with lemon verbena and decorated with fresh verbena, picked from behind the pub.

However, Steven's real ambition for the Bailiwick is to make it one of the country's great year-round champions of game. For the best-selling main course of red deer, Steven gets a whole deer from Windsor Great Park, where the saddle is wrapped in smoked streaky bacon, poached and pan-fried to order. The bones are cooked down with red wine, port and brandy to make a venison jus, while the ribs are braised and turned into a breadcrumb croquette, served with celeriac fondant and purée.

The shoulders and neck are used in the venison bonbons (£5), which are served as a bar snack, while the haunch and back legs are minced for the Scotch egg (£10) and the royal stag burger (£12) on the bar menu.

## From the menu

### Lunch

- Buttermilk-fried chicken burger with Asian-style slaw, sriracha and mayonnaise **£10**
- Salmon, lobster and prawn cocktail, Marie Rose sauce, avocado, Gem lettuce **£12**
- Mussels marinière with white wine cream sauce and crusty cider bread **£16**

### À la carte

- Corned beef of cured aged beef cap with pickled vegetables and English mustard
- Isle of Gigha halibut with charred potatoes, mussels, Champagne velouté and Avruga caviar
- Aubergine 'steak' with mushroom duxelles and vegetable demi-glace
- Cinnamon-spiced apple doughnuts with toffee sauce and vanilla ice-cream
- Bavarois of bramble and vanilla mousse with blackberries, apple and sorrel sorbet

Two courses, £35. Three courses, £45

Steven is proud that the Bailiwick is one of the few places in the country to sell Windsor Great Park sparkling wine, made from the classic Champagne varieties of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, grown on a three-hectare vineyard planted by Tony Laithwaite.

Currently there is only the couple and sous chef Arran Jones in the kitchen; a brigade of eight is the ideal, not least so that Steven can introduce a four-day week for the team. The 60-capacity dining room averages 40 to 50 covers for each lunch and dinner service, with 90 to 100 customers for the all-day Sunday lunch.

The ultimate seal of approval came when Clare Smyth brought the Core team for lunch. "We were quite nervous, as it's the first time Ami and I Steven cooked for Clare since working with her," Steven says. "But she loved it. It's good for them to have people look after them for a change." Smyth, like everyone who leaves the Bailiwick, knew she was in a safe pair of hands.

Wick Road, Englefield Green, Egham,  
Surrey TW20 0HN  
www.thebailiwick.co.uk





## Septime, La Cave, Clamato, D'une île

By Bertrand Grébaut and Théophile Pourriat  
with Benoit Cohen  
Phaidon, £39.95

Septime was opened in Paris by chef Bertrand Grébaut and his partner Théophile Pourriat in 2011. Grébaut, who trained with Joël Robuchon and Alain Passard, wanted an accessible restaurant, serving a “rigorously French” menu.

From small beginnings and a €21 set lunch, Septime has grown to include Clamato, a tapas-style site, D'une île, a countryside B&B and farm, La Cave, offering cured meat, cheeses and natural wines, and Tapisserie, an artisanal pâtisserie.

The focus of *Septime* the book is the brand's development, through writing and a photo diary, with black and whites of tattooed chefs, freshly plucked produce rendered as a still life and action shots of fishermen and a bustling back of house.

The dishes themselves are predominantly plant-based, undeniably French in character, yet modern in execution and presentation. Of the 2,538 recipes created across the three restaurants over 10 years, the book offers around 50. Each has a note on vegetable accompaniments, a matched natural wine and when to serve the dish during the year. For example, free-range chicken is cooked with vernal grass, the hay gathered from the field next to D'une île, the recipe itself an homage to Grébaut's mentor Passard. It is served all year: in winter with a Savagnin sauce and in summer with a reduced jus.

Other creations include raw beef with rose mayonnaise and saffron-tomato jelly, French onion soup with eggnog brioche perdue, and fig and fig leaf tartlets with wild blackberry and purple shiso sorbet.

Grébaut shares his philosophy, with an ode to “restraint, discretion and finesse” in his simplified cooking. He adds: “Nothing is set in stone, but I do have some strong biases: food that is environmentally friendly, natural, digestible, fresh, modern while embracing the past, and that focuses on vegetables and micro-seasonality.”

But for all the whimsical language and romantic portrayals of life as a foraging French chef, it ends on a serious note: this is not a book for amateurs and some recipes need “professional know-how to achieve good results”.

By Kirsty Utting

## Aubergine confit with red rice miso vinaigrette, figs, wild blackberries, shiitake mushrooms, bee pollen and aromatic herbs

Serves 6

Recipe from Septime

3 large figs
3 aubergines
3 litres vegetable oil
30 wild blackberries
120ml fig vinegar
120ml fig leaf oil
Mushroom escabeche, made with 12 shiitake mushrooms (see below), cut into thirds
6-8 fresh hazelnuts, shelled
30 flat-leaf parsley leaves
18 small purple shiso leaves
30 coriander flowers
90g toasted buckwheat
12g fresh bee pollen
Fine salt
Fleur de sel

### For the red rice miso vinaigrette

50g red rice miso
20ml fig leaf vinegar
2tbs grapeseed oil

Quarter the figs then peel them, being sure to remove all the skin. Place the fig pieces on baking paper on dehydrator racks (or in the oven) at 70°C for three hours.

Peel the aubergines and cut them into 3cm-4cm cubes. Heat the oil in a deep fryer to 180°C and fry the aubergine cubes until nicely browned. Drain on paper towels and season with fine salt.

Set aside at room temperature.

### For the red rice miso vinaigrette

Mix the red rice miso and fig leaf vinegar with 40ml water in a blender at high speed for two minutes, then add the oil and mix at medium speed for another two minutes.

### Just before serving

Put the fried aubergine pieces into a bowl, stir in the red rice miso vinaigrette, and let marinate for about 10 minutes.

Put the fig quarters and wild blackberries onto a baking sheet and season with the fig vinegar, fig leaf oil and fleur de sel, to taste.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
ALEXANDRE GUIRKINGER

### Presentation

Place the diced aubergine in the centre of each plate, then add the fruits, shiitakes and hazelnuts. Scatter over the herbs, coriander flowers, toasted buckwheat and bee pollen.

### For the mushroom escabeche

200ml olive oil
5g coriander seeds
2g mountain peaks peppercorns
2g black peppercorns
1 garlic clove, crushed
3 each of thyme sprigs, bay leaves or other aromatic herbs



## Revelations

Chris Niven, executive chef, the Lawn at the Marine hotel, North Berwick



**What was your first job?**

Delivering flowers for a local florist in Dundee

**What was your first job in catering?**

I started out as a KP at Piperdam Country Club when I was 16 years old

**What do you normally have for breakfast?**

Toast with Dundee marmalade

**Which is your favourite restaurant?**

The Cellar in Anstruther

**What is your favourite drink?**

Whisky sours

**What is your favourite food/cuisine?**

Thai. I love the flavours and how fragrant the dishes are. I also love eating food that I wouldn't normally cook or eat at home

**Which ingredient do you hate the most?**

I don't like eating raw onions – they make me want to vomit! I can cook it, prep it and eat it cooked, but just not raw

**What flavour combinations do you detest?**

Chicken and banana (also known as chicken Maryland)

**Which person in catering have you most admired?**

Thomas Keller

**Cast away on a desert island, what luxury would you take?**

My tog knife, as I might need to hunt, prepare food I catch or find on the island. It would come in handy for personal protection too

**What daily newspaper/website do you read?**

*The Scotsman*

**If not yourself, who would you rather have been?**

Batman (Bruce Wayne)

**If you had not gone into catering, where do you think you would be now?**

I wanted to be a pilot growing up

**Describe your ultimate nightmare?**

Life without my partner and daughter

**When and where was your last holiday?**

Muskoka and Toronto in Canada in 2019. It was a great trip. Muskoka is a three-mile drive from Toronto and we visited a few smaller towns and some great breweries

**Tell us a secret...**

I'm scared of spiders. Depending on how close they are, I tend to run away!

**What's your favourite film?**

*Justice League*, the Snyder cut



500g fresh mushrooms (eg, shiitake, oyster, ceps, chanterelles)  
100ml dry white wine  
50ml white wine vinegar (plain or flavoured)  
10g fleur de sel  
5g unrefined caster sugar  
1g chilli powder

Heat 100ml of the oil in a pan over high heat and fry the spices, garlic and herbs for 10 minutes, stirring regularly. Set aside at room temperature.

Quarter or halve the mushrooms

so they are similar sizes (about 2cm-3cm pieces).

Heat the remaining 100ml of oil in a sauté pan over high heat and fry the mushrooms for three minutes, without colouring them, then deglaze with the wine and vinegar.

Reduce the heat to low and add the salt, sugar, chilli powder and spices. Simmer for seven minutes, then transfer to a glass preserving heat-resistant jar. Leave to marinate for at least 24 hours before use.



## New products



- There are two additions to the St-Rémy Cask Finish Collection. The first is a brandy finished in oak casks that previously held Sauternes, with notes of honey, candied fruits, citrus peel and roasted notes of coffee and cocoa. The Barbados Rum Cask Finish brandy has a soft, rounded flavour with aromas of chocolate and vanilla pod.
- Price 750ml bottle, from £26

• • • [www.st-remy.com](http://www.st-remy.com)



- Bemuse is a range of sparkling, modern craft meads, based on Britain's oldest alcoholic drink. The low-alcohol and low-sugar meads are available in four flavours: raspberry tarragon; basil and hops; ginger and cardamom; and craft beer-style hops.

• Price £55.20 for 24 x 330ml cans  
• [www.bemusedrinks.com](http://www.bemusedrinks.com)



- Wild Knight Distillery's 1837 Gin is raising funds on behalf of Hospitality Action, with £3 from every bottle going to the industry charity. The gin is a collaboration between Wild Knight and Charlie Hodson, a Norfolk chef and HA ambassador. The gin is distilled with citrus, thyme and nettle for a distinctive, aromatic flavour.

• Price Case of six 50cl bottles, £177

• [www.wildknightdistillery.co.uk](http://www.wildknightdistillery.co.uk)

Monin has created a sugar syrup using muscovado sugar from Mauritius, as well as reformulating its current syrups and creating a new pack design.

Price 70cl bottle, from £7.79

[www.monin.com](http://www.monin.com)





- Winterhalter has launched a new version of its PT Workhorse, which delivers an even greener wash than the standard model.
- Multiple new features enable savings of up to 25% on energy and reduced water consumption. The EnergyPlus version also has a larger waste water heat recovery system.
- Price PT-M Energy, from £18,330
- [www.winterhalter.com/uk-en](http://www.winterhalter.com/uk-en)



- Taylor UK now supplies the Perfect Fry PFA automatic countertop deep fryer, available in four different models with cooking capacities ranging from 22kg to 40kg per hour. The automatic cooking process allows staff to put product into a front-loading drawer, which is then automatically moved to the oil vat, and then removed and dispensed once cooked.
- Price PFA720 model, £7,260
- [www.taylor-company.co.uk](http://www.taylor-company.co.uk)

Kraft Heinz has launched Professional Mayonnaise, created for chefs by chefs. The thick mayonnaise retains its smooth consistency during frying, grilling and baking, and can also be used in blended and chilled dishes.

Price Five-litre tub, £14.69; 10-litre tub, £26.69

[www.brake.co.uk](http://www.brake.co.uk)



- Flatstone Pizza Co is a new branded concept from Country Choice that provides everything required to serve made-to-order pizzas, from the dough and sauce to marketing materials. The pizzas can be baked through three equipment options: a convection oven; a tabletop pizza deck, which includes a fire-brick base to give a great stone-baked result; or a Merrychef oven.
- Price Set-up costs from free to those with kitchens; around £800 to supply an oven; or £2,000 for full equipment
- [www.flatstonepizza.co.uk](http://www.flatstonepizza.co.uk)





# Liam Wood

The head of training and development at the New World Trading Company talks to *Katherine Price* about the myriad opportunities a career in hospitality can offer and making industry friends for life

## Did you do any work experience in the industry at a young age?

I did work experience at Pizza Hut. I enjoyed it and did well, and they offered me a part-time job. I ended up working there right through GCSEs and A-levels.

## What initially attracted you to working in hospitality?

Initially it was just the placement, and then it was the only job I knew. It wasn't until my A-level years and being faced with the decision of what to do next that I started to consider how much I enjoyed it.

It's always been the people factor for me: being able to deliver experiences that can make a guest's day, getting to know regulars and working closely with the rest of the team.

## Who was your first mentor/role model in hospitality?

The big one that comes to mind is Mike Stocks from Carluccio's. I learned a lot from him, often without realising, and he helped provide loads of great opportunities for me to develop.

## How did you decide on your career direction?

I'd been involved in training since my Pizza Hut days, taking on store trainer and area trainer roles. At Carluccio's I was given the opportunity to go and train a whole new floor team for an opening in Chichester – that really set me on the path I ended up pursuing. I went to 40-plus openings, including international ones, which really cemented my love of the job.

Mike was a big part of that journey, but I also had great mentorship and development from Aileen Moodie, the HR and training director, who set me up with the skills to move into a training manager role.

## What industry networks have you been part of that have supported you in your career progression?

Most of the networks I'm in are informal – I wouldn't necessarily



**"It's always been the people factor for me: being able to deliver experiences that can make a guest's day, getting to know regulars and working closely with the rest of the team"**

consider some of them as networks, simply friendships. Along your journey you meet people who you know will support you. I still have a group of friends from Carluccio's, and we often reach out to each other for advice and ideas.

You end up seeing lots of the same faces at industry events, especially if you're lucky enough to go to any awards. There are also the more obscure groups... have you ever heard of the Springboard hospitality pantomime?

## What are the biggest challenges you've faced working in hospitality?

I'm sure everyone is aware of the late nights and long hours, but

I've never minded them too much – I'm a bit of a night owl. In my roles travel has been a big thing – generally I love it and I enjoy seeing new places, plus it's helped me to get where I am in my career. But it can sometimes be tough to juggle a personal life and make plans around all the travel.

## Do you have any regrets/things you wish you'd done differently?

Beyond a few dodgy shifts, clunky training sessions and some openings that didn't go exactly to plan, not really. If I could go back and redo some things, I'm sure I'd be able to do it better, but that's part of the journey of development. Making those mistakes allowed me to gain the knowledge I have today. Saying that, I'd probably try and do it all again with fewer hangovers...

## What advice would you give someone starting out in the industry?

It can be as fun, dynamic and interesting as you want it to be. Navigate your way around the challenges and make it work for you – you'll get out as much as

## CV

### September 2020-present

Head of learning and development, the New World Trading Company

### June 2018-September 2020

Head of openings, the New World Trading Company

### March 2016-June 2018

Training manager, Byron

### August 2010-February 2016

Openings manager, general manager and trainer, Carluccio's  
2005-2010 Deputy manager and area trainer, Pizza Hut

you put in. The options for growth and development are numerous. The industry gets an unfair rep and we need to change that.

## What are your career goals?

For now, continuing to establish the L&D department and team at NWTC. We've got some ambitious things we'd like to achieve in the coming years. In the future I think I'll be aiming to gain a bit more generalist HR knowledge and aim for a people director role.

## Would you recommend a career in hospitality to your friends?

Of course! Even if you've never worked in hospitality before, if you have the right attitude and you like people, you can have a flying career in no time. We can teach you the skills.

## Who inspires you in the industry?

Nisha Katona jumps to mind: I love Mowgli and it's great to see it growing, but it still looks after its people and the brand. Tom Byng, founder of Byron, stands out too. And my boss, Natasha Waterfield, our chief operating officer. I'm not just saying that for brownie points, the amount she's achieved in her career is impressive and I'm grateful to have her guidance and support.



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## THE HOUSE OF BRUAR

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Patrick Birkbeck at [recruitment@houseofbruar.com](mailto:recruitment@houseofbruar.com)

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