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Last month I was fortunate enough to be present when the 2022 candidates for the Gold Service Scholarship were put through their paces at a lunch service in Corinthia London's Northall restaurant.

It was an opportunity to see just how skilled those at the top of their service game are, challenged as they were by a menu designed to test even the most dextrous with serving spoons and confident at creating a quenelle. With a selection of slippery hors d'oeuvres and a rack of lamb to carve tableside, just watching these young professionals was nerve-wracking. That they had the added burden of television cameras made their grace under pressure even more inspirational.

So much has happened since Elizabeth Forkuoh, assistant restaurant manager at Gleneagles' Strathearn restaurant won the last competition, that she could be forgiven for having forgotten quite how much pressure the competitors are under. She won the Gold Service Scholarship in February 2020, just before Covid hit, and is only now able to enjoy the significant benefits of being a member of such an exclusive club.

Forkuoh tells us this week what it took to win such a significant competition (page 20), why she believes "this year will be my year" and how she plans to use her profile to publicise front of house to new entrants.

This ambitious role model is a wonderful proponent for the hospitality industry at a time when it needs all the positive noise we can muster to promote new recruits. Having seen this year's finalists, I'm in no doubt they will be just as inspiring. Good luck to them all!



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‘Dining out risks becoming a luxury’: chefs warn of menu price rises to combat costs

Rising costs of ingredients, energy and wages mean hospitality venues face having to raise prices for their customers. *Sophie Witts* reports



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Hospitality businesses are having to raise prices to combat soaring costs, with one chef warning dining out is at risk of becoming a “luxury”.

Several operators told *The Caterer* they were expecting menu prices to increase by around £10-£15 a head as food, energy and wage costs continue to climb.

One chef said customers could be in for a “shock” in April as venues adapt their menus to counter a return to the 20% VAT rate and rise in the National Minimum Wage.

A UKHospitality survey of more than 340 businesses – representing some 8,200 sites – found that 15% anticipated price hikes of more than 20% to offset the cost pressures they face.

Rising costs

Last week Simon Hulstone, chef-owner of the Michelin-starred Elephant in Torquay, posted his gas bill on Twitter showing payments had risen almost £1,000 in eight months and joked he would be “cooking by candle soon”.

Danny Parker, head chef at Jesmond Dene House hotel in Newcastle, told *The Caterer* the price of staple ingredients had risen at an “astonishing” rate, and he was now paying 48% more for butter, 31% more for pistachios and 30% more for flour.

He said: “For me it’s the basic things we can’t do without – you can change menus and stop using certain things if you need to, but you can’t stop using potatoes, oils or butter.

“And it’s not imports it’s British products: clotted cream from Cornwall, mixed leaf salads, Maldon sea salt, they’re not from far-flung places.”

He said suppliers were blaming an increase in their own energy and wage costs for price hikes. “The staff are having to be paid more – especially transport staff and their general operating costs are going up.”

Parker added there was a “turn the lights out, shut the door” mentality in the hotel to save money but said cutting energy bills would require a bigger investment. “You can talk about changing to induction and things like that but it’s a massive capital injection and most boutique hotels or restaurateurs don’t have that capital kicking around.”

Reluctance to change ingredients

Kenny Atkinson, chef patron at House of Tides in Newcastle, told *The Caterer* he needed to find savings of around £2,000 a month after seeing his electricity and gas bills double.

“You can change menus and stop using certain things if you need to, but you can’t stop using potatoes, oils or butter”

Danny Parker

He is reluctant to use cheaper ingredients on the multi-course tasting menu, for which the restaurant has held a Michelin star since 2015 and is instead raising the cost of lunch from £85 to £100 and dinner from

£110 to £120 from 1 April. He said: "We either make a saving on the menu by buying cheaper produce, which is something we won't do, or look at taking luxury ingredients like caviar and truffle off the menu. It's hard because you want to make sure that you're offering value for money, and someone is coming for a luxury experience."

Atkinson is due to relaunch his Newcastle bistro Violets as fine dining restaurant Solstice this spring but said the opening had been hampered by rising costs. "We had all our budgets set and loans agreed but everything changed. Tiling went from £5,000 to £10,000 because tiles got more expensive, no one could get hold of any timber; materials were doubling in price.

"Going into spring we're looking to recruit and have had to re-cost plans for our menu because wages have had a massive increase."

Hove restaurant Wild Flor is set to see its energy bills increase by around £800 a month and the team is looking to invest in more efficient equipment.

Co-owner Rob Maynard said the restaurant was aiming to keep prices rises reasonable by focusing on serving the best cuts of meat and quality fish and vegetables rather than including more premium menu items.

"We're serving oxtail suet puddings and stuffed mackerel tranches, these are items of real skill and frankly are more impressive in my opinion and are far more enjoyable than raising prices through the roof," said Maynard.

Brett Lee, owner of the Stuzzi restaurants in Leeds and Harrogate, said businesses had a responsibility to raise wages to try and help staff manage the increasing cost of living. "Every household in the country will now be reviewing how they're spending money due to the rise in energy costs," he said. "This may push people to only visit their favourite restaurants once a month instead of more frequently."

Dining out a privilege

Parker said he feared more expensive menus could lead to some customers being priced out of restaurants from April.

He said: "I think dining out might become a special thing again like it used to be in the 1970s and 1980s. I hope it doesn't but how many people will eat out two or three times a week if a meal is going from £35 a head to £45-£50?"

Atkinson echoed his concerns, adding: "Fine dining and dining in general is in danger of becoming a luxury because it's becoming an expensive thing to do.

"It's becoming more and more expensive to eat out. I can see a lot of mid-market restaurants that rely on turnover might struggle. Even your higher-end restaurants, we're all going to struggle."




Kenny Atkinson

"It's becoming more and more expensive to eat out"
Kenny Atkinson

However, the chef insisted he was still positive about the future. "I think people have missed dining out, are looking at their hard-earned cash, and spending it more wisely. They may eat out less and dine out better. We're already seeing guests buying better wine but not as many bottles."

Maynard is also remaining optimistic. He said: "This moment is supposed to be a recovery period for restaurants that have seen a good kicking over the last two years, but it would appear we're heading for another round.

"[But] I can't see much point in doom and gloom...there are so many options available to soften the blow, keep prices steady while retaining margins and being more efficient.

"It's important to remember hospitality, or the act of looking after guests is what it's all about. People want a good time, they want delicious, tasty food and some good memories."

The Caterer will be taking an in-depth look at the issue of rising costs and how operators can adapt in our 25 February issue.

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VAT freeze vital to industry recovery

Freezing hospitality VAT at 12.5% could create more than 250,000 jobs over the next 10 years and help 'level up' parts of the UK, according to a new report. UKHospitality, the British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA), the Tourism Alliance and the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions have commissioned a study which suggested fixing the rate could set off a cycle of industry investment.

Hospitality VAT was reduced to 5% to support the industry in 2020. It returned to 12.5% in October 2021 and is due to rise to 20% from April.



The report claimed that keeping the 12.5% rate over the next decade could create 286,850 jobs, generate £7.7b of additional turnover and deliver £4.6b in fiscal gains to HM Treasury. One survey of 815 businesses cited in the study found that if VAT rises to 20%, four in 10 operators expect to see further cutbacks and jobs losses, while 10% might face closure.

A spokesperson for the trade bodies said: "We are united in calling on the government to change course and cancel the planned increase. The economic and societal benefits of making this change would be enormous."

Police investigating suspected fraud targeting Just Eat accounts

By Katherine Price

Police are investigating several reports of fraud affecting food outlets in Northern Ireland, with one takeaway owner claiming he lost £9,750.

The businesses said that expected payments from delivery platform Just Eat were not being received, alleging that bank details were changed by scammers with payments being redirected to fraudulent accounts. One business reported losing up to £10,000 in four weeks. Police said enquiries were continuing.

Joe Morgan, owner of Nemo's Fish & Chips in Belfast, said he received a suspicious phone call claiming to be from Just Eat at the end of December, which he hung up on. After not receiving the expected payments in his account by January, he rang Just Eat and was told the money had been deposited in his account – only to find bank details had been changed, with around £9,750 lost.

"We're not a large company, we're a family-owned fish and chip shop," he told *The Caterer*. "We're not made of money. That money would have carried us over into February. I had to go and borrow money to replace that. I still have to pay wages."

He said he would not have given his login details out and the business was now having to deal with "the quietest January we've ever had".



IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Operators say that they have received suspicious phone calls from people claiming to be from Just Eat

Michael Henderson, director of the Northern Ireland Takeaway Association, said he had been contacted by three members at the beginning of January with similar experiences regarding missed payments from Just Eat, with an estimated £15,000 lost across the three outlets.

Henderson said: "A lot of our members now claim that they are getting fraudulent phone calls from people saying they are from Just Eat and asking for their bank details and their login details. There's been an uptick in that in the last few weeks in Northern Ireland."

Superintendent Gerard Pollock, chair of ScamwiseNI, said: "We would encourage anyone who may have had similar encounters of this nature to contact police, or to report these incidents to Action Fraud and make your bank aware.

"We would always urge people to contact the company the person is proclaiming to be from directly, via an independently sourced phone number before speaking to them any further."

A Just Eat spokesperson said: "We take the safeguarding of restaurant accounts on the Just Eat platform extremely seriously.

"We continually review our security measures and always advise restaurant partners to be vigilant about their online security and recommend that they use unique passwords for different online platforms."

Anyone concerned they have been a victim of a scam is urged to report the matter to Action Fraud via www.actionfraud.police.uk or by phoning 0300 123 2040.

katherine.price@thecaterer.com

Richard Caring steps away from Corbin & King battle

Ivy owner Richard Caring has reportedly signalled he has pulled out of the running to take control of restaurant group Corbin & King.

The holding company for the business, which owns sites including the Wolseley and the Delaunay, was placed into administration last month with founder Jeremy King and investor Minor International battling for control of the group.

Caring was understood to be among those considering a bid for Corbin & King, but *The Sunday Times* reported that he said: "at this moment, I am not intending to pursue [the deal]".



The paper said Caring had been due to meet with Minor, which is based in Thailand, last week.

The Sunday Times quotes Caring praising King and his co-founder Christopher Corbin, saying: "They're the guys that actually started this whole image and impression of hospitality in London."

The move comes after King accused Minor of trying to "seize control" of the company. He reassured customers in a video that it was "very much business as usual" at the restaurants.

King is seeking to buy back his company with backing from US investment fund Knighthead Capital, which has reportedly offered to repay £38m of debt owed to Minor.

Sodexo founder Pierre Bellon dies aged 92

The founder and chairman emeritus was a "free spirit and risk taker"

Pierre Bellon, founder and chairman emeritus of French foodservice and facilities management company Sodexo, has died in Paris on 31 January at the age of 92.

Bellon was born in 1930 and graduated from French business school HEC. He and started work in his father's maritime supply company in his hometown of Marseilles.

In 1962 he launched Repas Service, a small meal delivery business for the Marseilles area. He was able to win its first contract for a project to set up a self-service restaurant with 2,000 seats, even though the call for tenders was closed and he had no experience or commercial references. In 1966 he launched Sodexo.



Bellon launched Sodexo in 1966 and it now employs 412,000 people

Just eight years after its international debut, Sodexo was operating in 35 countries, generating 55% of its revenues and employing 8,000 people outside France, more than half of the company's total workforce of 15,000.

Global expansion remained a priority in the 1990s: between 1990 and 1994, the business entered 25 new countries and Sodexo became a partner in the Tour de France and the Olympic Games and developed partnerships with top chefs.

The size of the company doubled with the acquisition of British company Gardner Merchant in 1994. After acquiring Partena in Sweden, the company set its sights on North America and merged with Marriott Management Services in 1997. The early 2000s saw the acquisition of Sogeres in France and the American company Wood Dining Services.

After a 12-day stay in China, Bellon returned convinced of the country's potential and saw the opening of an American school as an entry point for the business. This strategy paid off: two years later, Sodexo was present throughout the eastern part of the country.

In 2005 Bellon retired from executive functions and chose Michel Landel to succeed him as chief executive. He retained the position of chairman of the board of directors until 2016, when his eldest daughter Sophie took the mantle, and he became chairman emeritus.

Today Sodexo has a presence in 56 countries and 412,000 employees catering for 100 million people every day.

Sophie described her father as a "free spirit who was never afraid of taking risks". She said: "The mission and values of service spirit, team spirit and spirit of progress which he gave Sodexo are part of our fundamental principles and will continue to guide the group."

Bellon leaves behind his wife Nani; children Sophie, Nathalie, François-Xavier and Astrid; and 13 grandchildren.

Britannia voted worst UK hotel chain for ninth year running

Britannia Hotels has been voted the worst UK hotel chain for the ninth year running, according to Which? Travel's latest survey.

Britannia received a guest score of 49% and two stars in most categories – including cleanliness – and just one star for bathrooms.

Over half of survey respondents (51%) said they had a problem or issue during their stay at a Britannia hotel. The most common issue was cleanliness, while others said that the hotels were 'tired' or 'in need of a make-over'.

Premier Inn was once again voted Britain's favourite large hotel chain. Over 1,000 Which? members gave the brand a customer score of 79% – higher than any of its rivals. It was given five stars for cleanliness and comfort of beds, as well as for the measures it put in place to deal with Covid-19. This is despite the fact that the average price paid was £66 – less than any other chain except Travelodge.

Travelodge was two pounds cheaper on average at £64, but its customer rating was 64%, and it had two-star ratings for rooms, bathrooms and communal areas.

JD Wetherspoon received a customer score of 74%, but only three stars for cleanliness. Hotel du Vin, classed as a small hotel chain by Which? Travel, received 80% and Warner Leisure 75% – with both receiving at least four stars in every category except value for money, in which they scored three. At Hotel du Vin guests paid £150 on average, while at Warner Leisure it was £171.

In October 2021 Which? asked 2,603 people to complete an online survey about their experience of staying in small and large UK hotel chains in the past 15 months.



Britannia received a score of 49% and two stars from its guests

News in brief



BACKWELL HOUSE TO CLOSE NEXT MONTH

Backwell House in Somerset is to close on 31 March after being hit hard by the pandemic.

A statement from the business said: "The Covid-19 pandemic has made the last two years extremely difficult for many businesses, but the hospitality industry and Backwell House have been particularly hard hit.

"The management and staff have worked extremely hard to try and make a success of the hotel and restaurant despite these difficulties. Therefore, it is with great regret that the decision to close Backwell House has been reached."

BERENJAK TAKES BOROUGH MARKET SITE



Iranian restaurant Berenjak is to open its second London location in the former Flor site in Borough Market this spring.

The opening comes four years after chef Kian Samyani and JKS Restaurants launched Berenjak's first venue in Soho in 2018, inspired by Tehran's hole-in-the-wall kebab houses and offering an expanded menu of homestyle Iranian dishes alongside charcoal-grilled kebabs.

Flor permanently closed its Borough operation last month after two and a half years of trading, with backer JKS keeping the site.

REDCAT PUB COMPANY ACQUIRES BOROUGHBRIDGE HOTEL

RedCat Pub Company, the investment vehicle founded by former Greene King boss Rooney Anand, has acquired the Crown hotel in Boroughbridge, Yorkshire.

The hotel will be operated by RedCat's subsidiary, the Coaching Inn Group, which it bought last August when it had 18 sites.

Coaching Inn Group now operates 24 inns in market towns across the UK, with RedCat adding six sites to its portfolio in the past six months.

The Crown hotel features 37 bedrooms and a leisure centre with indoor swimming pool, sauna, gym, fitness suites and sun shower.

HOSPITALITY'S GENDER PAY GAP INCREASES



Hospitality's gender pay gap increased for the first time in three years in 2020/2021, according to a report by WiHTL – Diversity in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure and professional services network PwC.

The report found that in hospitality the average mean gender pay gap had increased from 5.4% to 7.7%.

Data showed that of the highest-paid 25% of positions across hospitality, travel and leisure, 58% are held by men. Among the lowest paid 25% of positions, 54% are held by women.

The report highlighted that as well as contributing to pay inequalities, this meant that jobs held by women were more likely to be casual and vulnerable to reactionary business decisions.

ARAMARK WINS F&B CONTRACT WITH MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS



Legoland Windsor

Aramark has won a contract to provide food and beverage at five of Merlin Entertainments' UK locations, as well as two in the US.

The multi-year contract win will see the foodservice company overseeing F&B at Alton Towers, Chessington World of Adventures, Thorpe Park, Warwick Castle and Legoland Windsor in the UK, and Legoland California and Legoland Florida in the US.

Aramark will begin operating from March in the UK, with US operations up and running by the end of March 2023.

CARRIE WICKS' CHATEAU DENMARK TO OPEN 4 APRIL

Chateau Denmark in London's Soho, operated by Carrie Wicks' CAW Ventures, will open on 4 April.

The hotel, inspired by Denmark Street's history, will be set across 16 buildings with 55 'session rooms'. Apartments and interiors will be by Taylor Howes and are described as "punk rock and vintage gothic meet modern psychedelia with a timeless grandeur".

Session rooms in the Now Building, accessed through Denmark Place, will include superior, luxury or deluxe categories, with gold-trimmed, graffitied beds and bold colours, and 'kitchenette maxi-bars' in the deluxe rooms.

Apartments will be located in Grade II-listed townhouses, a mews house and mansion buildings along Denmark Street. Starting from 35 sq m, apartments will feature a fireplace opposite a roll-top, red-lined bathtub on a marble plinth, full-size bars and concealed doorways.



EAST LONDON HOTEL TO BE REBRANDED AS YOTEL

The East London hotel is to be rebranded as the Yotel London Shoreditch from April, marking Yotel's fifth city centre hotel in the UK.

It will be the fourth franchise property, second UK hotel conversion and 19th hotel in operation globally for the Yotel brand.

The 161-bedroom hotel, located





in Bethnal Green, will be lightly refurbished to incorporate Yotel's signature design and technology features. Guests will be able to check-in on self-service stations and use their mobile devices as SmartKeys.

Yotel London Shoreditch is owned by Crestline and Avelios, which bought the hotel last year from Definition Capital, and will be managed under franchise by Michels & Taylor.

DANIEL SCOTT NAMED EXECUTIVE CHEF AT 20 STORIES



Daniel Scott has been named executive chef at D&D London's 20 Stories restaurant in Manchester.

Scott, who replaces Mike Jennings in the role, has worked in hospitality for more than two decades. In 2019 he was asked by Tom Kerridge to open the Stock Exchange hotel and Bull & Bear restaurant in Manchester as executive chef. In 2020 Scott joined Mana, Manchester's only Michelin-starred restaurant.

TOM AIKENS TO CONSULT ON FOOD OFFER FOR THOMAS FRANKS LONDON

Tom Aikens has partnered with Thomas Franks to consult on the food offer at the caterer's new London B&I division and offer stages to its chefs.

Last year Thomas Franks launched a dedicated London business headed by Paul Hurren to service corporate contracts in the capital. Its offer will now be bolstered by the signing of the Michelin-starred chef.

Hurren, who is managing director of Thomas Franks London, said: "For many years I have admired and enjoyed Tom's trailblazing culinary excellence, we could not have found a better partner to work with."

Aikens said: "I am delighted to be partnering with Thomas Franks, a company that shares the same values in terms of using ethically sourced produce and having respect for freshly sourced and seasonal ingredients to create authentic, delicious food."

GUINNESS MICROBREWERY AND CULTURE HUB TO BE BUILT IN LONDON



Diageo, maker of Guinness, has announced plans to invest £73m in Guinness at Old Brewer's Yard, a new microbrewery set to open in London's Covent Garden in autumn 2023.

The new venue at the historic brewing site will produce limited-edition beers, offer guest tours, and feature event spaces and a restaurant and open fire kitchen.

The 50,000 sq ft venue will create up to 150 jobs and will also become the southern UK hub of Diageo's Learning for Life Bartending and Hospitality Programme, which has so far trained more than 5,500 people across the UK. The ambition is for more than 100 London-based students to graduate from the Guinness at Old Brewer's Yard programme each year, with a proportion of employment opportunities to be ring-fenced for graduates.

ONE IN THREE PUBS 'HAS NO CASH RESERVES'

The future of Britain's pubs hangs in the balance with many facing crippling debt and empty coffers after the pandemic wiped out their cash reserves.

A survey of just over 250 members of the British Institute of Innkeeping (BII) showed the scale of the crisis facing the sector. One in three respondents have no cash reserves in their business, while half of those with cash remaining said they only have up to two months before they run out.

Some 75% of publicans said their revenues were more than 20% down in 2021 due to the impact of lockdowns and coronavirus restrictions. Half of those saw revenues drop by over 40%, meaning the majority were loss making for the whole year.

RESTAURANT SAT BAINS RANKED NUMBER ONE IN HARDEN'S TOP 100

Harden's Best UK Restaurants 2022 has placed Michelin-starred Restaurant Sat Bains in Nottingham at the top of the 'Harden's Top 100' UK's best dining destinations.

Ratings and reviews in the guide, now in its 31st year, were based on 30,000 reports from Harden's annual survey of 3,000 diners.

The restaurant was opened by Sat Bains and his wife Amanda 20 years ago in a converted red-brick motel tucked under a flyover off the A52. The guide said: "Once you find it, you will keep going back for more – superb cuisine and correspondingly varied wine list, full of surprises."



Review of the reviews

The Guardian

Renaissant, the rebirth of the Blackbird, which was also run by [Dom] Robinson and his wife, Marliz, is a determinedly serious restaurant.

So, yes, three hours we stayed, with course one being warm bread, then a fairly long gap before the second act, a play on Russian salad involving brunoise potato, beetroot and carrot set in a mould and topped with scallops – a bit like a shuba herring salad and delicious, if a touch stodgy. Up next was a large, delicately executed crayfish raviolo featuring good fresh pasta enveloping a crayfish tail that came on a scallop and salmon mousse.

There is no doubt that Robinson is a confident, technically brilliant chef who worships at the altar of kitchen gods such as Nico Ladenis and the Roux brothers. His cooking is a paean to butter and time spent huddled over pans, and to dancing a fine line between the almost-too-rich and the almost-too-much.

After another long intermission, a very delicious plate of thinly sliced Victoria pineapple appeared topped with ricotta, powerfully scented marjoram leaves and a scattering of pine nuts. Hour two heralded my favourite course – seared brill with pomme puree in a world-class, glossy, red-wine sauce and topped with a clove of mellow roast garlic.

Over the course of the third hour, there was a pear-based, egg-cup-sized palate cleanser and two choices of dessert, of which the better was a slab of dark-chocolate Negus mousse – fiercely rich, yet deceptively light.

Price: five-course lunchtime menu du jour, £55 a head; seven-course dinner menu hommage, £95 a head, both plus drinks and service



"His cooking is a paean to butter and time spent huddled over pans"

Grace Dent says Dom Robinson of Renaissant in Bagnor is a 'confident, technically brilliant chef'

Daily Mail

Tom Parker Bowles sings the praises of the curry house after a visit to the Zaika Inn, Marlborough

Sometimes, only a curry house will do. A place where the poppadoms are as crisp as the pints are cold and the vindaloo so fierce it could strip paint from the wall. I want stainless-steel thali plates filled with oversweet mango chutney, lurid raita and chopped raw onions that make the eyes water. And delectably inauthentic dishes, like chicken tikka masala and the blessed balti – almost entirely unknown back home, but revered and relished over here.

I love the curry-house menu almost as much as I love regional Indian food. Yes, the former is mainly built around base gravies, and the spicing is often brutishly unsubtle. But here at The Zaika Inn in Marlborough, the cooking is a cut above the norm. Take the tarka dal, tempered with fragrant cumin and coriander-seed tadka, both a technique and infused oil. The chilli-powder heat, though, is curry house to its core, rendering speech temporarily impossible.

Butter chicken is gently sweet and soothingly unsubtle, almost Mughal in its lavish, dairy-drenched majesty. They know how to use a tandoor too, the chicken wearing both crisp crust and deep char, while there's a precision, an understanding of spice, to their vegetable dishes that make the flavours sing. You'll even find a few regional classics, decently done. As ever, we order too much. But that's part of the curry-house joy. Last night's excess means next morning's delight.

Price: about £20 per head

THE TIMES

Giles Coren finds there's an awful lot going on at Bibi, Mayfair

I toddled off to BiBi for lunch after a hard morning's writing at my office round the corner from it, and enjoyed myself rather too much with the wine list (and everything else) to have all the finer details ready at my fingertips when it came to writing up the meal next morning.

It wasn't that I didn't remember every wondrous mouthful in glorious detail – I totally did and do. It was that it only dawned on me slowly, as the meal went on, quite how innovative and special it was.

There were four chaats before the mains, little riffs on street food ideas, including a raw Highland beef pepper fry; nashpati bhel with puffed heritage grains as opposed to plain old rice (of which more anon) and a spectacular pear granita on top; and a violina pumpkin dahi puri with the puri shell made from pumpkin juice and semolina and filled with black chickpeas under a natural yoghurt dressing... There's a lot going on here, it's all produce-driven, ever changing, seasonal to the minute, with new ideas taking shape every second.

From the sigree (grill) section, there are stunning little galouti (soft, round kebabs) of Swaledale lamb belly with a shimmering pool of coriander and mint chutney; chukh masala tikka (actually, maybe that is a little joke) of boned, crispy-skinned, herb-fed chicken thigh with fermented chilli paste; celeriac with a creamy cashew makhmali, all blackened and bubbling from the grill, piqued with dried fenugreek and slathered with Wiltshire black truffle...

London Evening Standard



Jimi Famurewa discovers high-level technique without any of the attendant faff at Carousel

Here is Fitzrovia's Carousel Wine Bar: a first permanent operation for the team behind the acclaimed, revolving-door restaurant that brings neighbourhood warmth, stealthy ambition and a certain youthful swagger to a part of town not readily associated with those things.

Housemade crisps, trickled with a kind of preserved tomato salsa and strewn with shreds of anchovy, brought to mind English nachos while a brittle, deep-fried boat of sweet and sour onion cracker held an outrageous, spurting payload of whipped Cora Linn cheese.

Carousel's founders have clearly absorbed plenty from the international rock star class of chefs that have breezed through their doors. But what's so pleasing about the food — whether it is gnarled fried chicken anointed with gherkin, honey and habanero or a fantastically deranged, textural scrum of mash, grilled pink firs and golden-fried straw potatoes, brightened by empirical hot sauce and pickled onion slivers — is that you get studious, high-level technique without any of the attendant faff, oppressive seriousness or interminable gastronomic tantra that occasionally accompanies a tasting menu.

Ultimately, these are full-throated hymns to the glory and scope of global drinking food.

One boon of the relative lightness of a meal here is this: it leaves more room for a climactic, sugar-dusted triangle of fried apple pie. Hot, cinnamon-warmed, nuzzled beside lemon thyme caramel ice cream and – yes, all right – vaguely redolent of burning the roof of your mouth in a suburban McDonald's, it is a dish that encapsulates this little Fitzrovian marvel's irreverent, intensely considered approach.

Price: meal for two plus drinks around £140

The Mail on Sunday

Adrian Baker finds beauty in simplicity at the Pig In The Wall, Southampton

Nestled in the medieval walls of Southampton – and in the shadow of giant cruise liners in the city docks – the Pig In The Wall hotel offers a welcoming retreat in the heart of a busy city less than half an hour from the New Forest.

The smallest in the group's 'litter' of eight hotels has just 12 rooms, a treat-packed deli for light bites and a delightful lounge that wouldn't be out of place in any country house hotel many times its size.

The attraction of this hideaway lies in its simplicity, the quality of service and the quirky touches in its shabby chic rooms.

All meals are taken in the lounge – at a mix of vintage wooden tables and low comfy sofas with coffee tables – as there is no separate restaurant.

At dinner, starters, from £8, include pork pies and thyme sausage rolls or quiche of the day. Smoked pork belly (yes, there's a theme!) with roasted squash and parsley dressing comes in at £15, as does a delicious cottage pie and curly kale. Service has a family feel to it and the friendly staff, known as piglets, are knowledgeable about what's being served.

At breakfast, guests are charged £10pp on top of the room rate for the continental version with a selection of cereals, yogurt, ham, cheese, eggs and pastries – or £14 for the Piggy Pan cooked breakfast.

There's a comfortable quirkiness about the Pig In The Wall, and this little piggy certainly went home feeling content.



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Simon Cohen, Global Partner Director, Condeco

CONDECO

The competition is open to any receptionist working in a corporate organisation, whether directly for that organisation or through a third-party contractor service provider. Entries are limited to just one application per corporate organisation and each application must be endorsed by the reception manager, front of house manager or facilities manager. The competition is open to front-line employees, not supervisors, managers or more senior personnel. More details about the competition can be found on the official website.

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Lahpet West End



Burmese restaurant Lahpet is opening its second London site in Covent Garden, serving dishes inspired by the street food of the cities of Myanmar.

Lahpet was founded by friends Dan Anton and Zaw Mahesh, who are both of Burmese heritage, and started out as a stall at London's Maltby Street Market before launching a permanent site in Shoreditch in 2018.

The West End site will be the pair's biggest opening yet, seating 100 covers across two floors with a 50-cover heated terrace on the first floor and a small front courtyard area seating 20 guests. In the kitchen a robata grill will be used to serve a variety of grilled dishes, as well as meat and vegetable skewers and street food-inspired staples.

Dishes will include roasted pork belly and bamboo shoots; a spicy and sour Rakhine fish noodle soup; and Shan fish and rice, a popular Shan state street food dish containing jasmine rice, sea bream, potato, tomato, fried garlic, shallots, peanuts and chives.

Opening 21 February
Design Natalie Weavers Interiors
Address 21 Slingsby Place, St Martins Courtyard, London WC2E 9AB
Website www.lahpet.co.uk

Extra openings



The Butcher

Gourmet burger brand the Butcher is now bringing its 'haute couture fast food' to the UK. It has taken a site at the Urban Playground entertainment venue at Manchester's Arndale Centre.

Opening 10 February
Typical dishes The Butcher burger with Aberdeen Angus beef, lettuce, tomato, grilled onion, gherkin and house sauce
Address Manchester Arndale, M4 3AQ
Website www.the-butcher.com



Marsha

This minimal-waste chicken restaurant in London will aim to use as much of the bird as possible across the menu of small plates, roast chicken and burgers. Several cocktails make use of surplus kitchen ingredients, including cauliflower, pickle juice and chicken skin.

Opening 14 February
Address Kingly Court, Carnaby Street, London W1B 5PW
Website www.marshalondon.co.uk



Emilia's Crafted Pasta

The pasta restaurant group's flagship site in Canary Wharf will feature its first bar area, compete with four-metre bocce table. It will seat 70 guests inside and 30 outside, with pasta to click and collect or on Deliveroo.

Opening 28 February
Typical dishes Homemade Parmesan crisps; Genovese pesto with casarecce
Address 12 George Street, Wood Wharf, London E14 9QG
Website www.emiliaspasta.com









Please email your new openings to **openings@thecaterer.com**



Em Sherif

Beirut restaurant group Em Sherif has opened its first European restaurant at Harrods in London. Founder Mireille Hayek and her daughter Yasmina have designed the à la carte menu for the 80-cover dining room.

Opened 1 February
Typical dishes Fattoush salad with pomegranate molasses; wagyu hummus and Em Ali; vanilla-infused milk, nuts and puff pastry
Address 87-135 Brompton Road, London SW1X 7XL
Website www.harrods.com



The Cinnamon Club bar

Vivek Singh's Cinnamon Club restaurant in London has relaunched its bar with a design inspired by British and Indian architecture. Cocktails mixed with spices are served alongside a menu of snacks and small plates.

Opened 25 January
Typical dishes Chicken tikka and cheese naan; tempura shrimp with curry leaf; moutabal
Address The Old Westminster Library, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BU
Website www.cinnamonclub.com



Bread Street Kitchen & Bar Liverpool

Gordon Ramsay's latest spin-off restaurant has opened at the Liverpool ONE development. The huge site seats 163 indoor covers over two floors, with Gareth Jones overseeing the food.

Opening 11 February
Typical dishes Beef Wellington; fish and chips; prawn cocktail; sticky toffee pudding
Address 45 Paradise Street, Liverpool L1 3EU
Website www.gordonramsayrestaurants.com

More online
www.thecaterer.com

Shining a light on the invisible department

The laundry department may be behind the scenes, but its work is at the forefront of the hotel guest experience, says *Sandra De Sousa*

The laundry department at the Hyatt Regency London – the Churchill hotel seems like an easy entry-level position for a young person looking to break into the hospitality industry.

It provides an opportunity for someone to work their way up the career ladder within hotels and many have done it with me very successfully over the years. But to achieve that, we have to find ways to motivate, train, coach and persevere to develop ourselves and our staff to be their best.

Who wants to wash dirty clothes and work in a role that is physically hard every day? But the department is much more than dirty clothes.

The laundry department is "invisible" to our guests, working behind the scenes and seen as one of the lowest-skilled jobs in the industry – but I can assure you that's not the case. The job is expected to be carried out to perfection.

At the Churchill, we aim to deliver laundry back to the guest as new, with a personalised touch. From picking it up to cleaning, ironing, packing and delivering it back again, all steps have to be taken with extreme efficiency, organisation, and professionalism, as a small mistake may destroy a guest's valuable item, and that can be a very disturbing experience for our guests. We understand that items are extremely valuable because some can have a very personal significance.



"How nice is it to have your laundry delivered nicely packed, clean, fresh and ready to wear?"

How nice is it to have your laundry delivered nicely packed, clean, fresh and ready to wear? I would find it amazing, and for that matter, we aim every day to meet the guests' expectations and get valuable feedback on their experiences and feelings throughout their stay. We are very lucky to have great guests that appreciate our service, and as a head valet, I'm very proud to manage a laundry department that allows me to be myself every day.

Aside from the guests, we also have the pleasure of meeting our new colleagues first-hand, as they all have to come to the valet department to collect their uniforms when they begin their new roles. It is extremely rewarding to help all co-workers look smart and professional on a day-to-day basis so they can do their best for the guests, staff and our hotel in general. And the added bonus is that we are able to start creating great connections straight away with all our new colleagues.

As a head valet, it's my responsibility to ensure this part of the business is running as smoothly and professionally as possible for everyone that we encounter in our working day, and I will continue to run the "invisible" department with as much pride and motivation as I can.

Sandra De Sousa is head valet at Hyatt Regency London the Churchill



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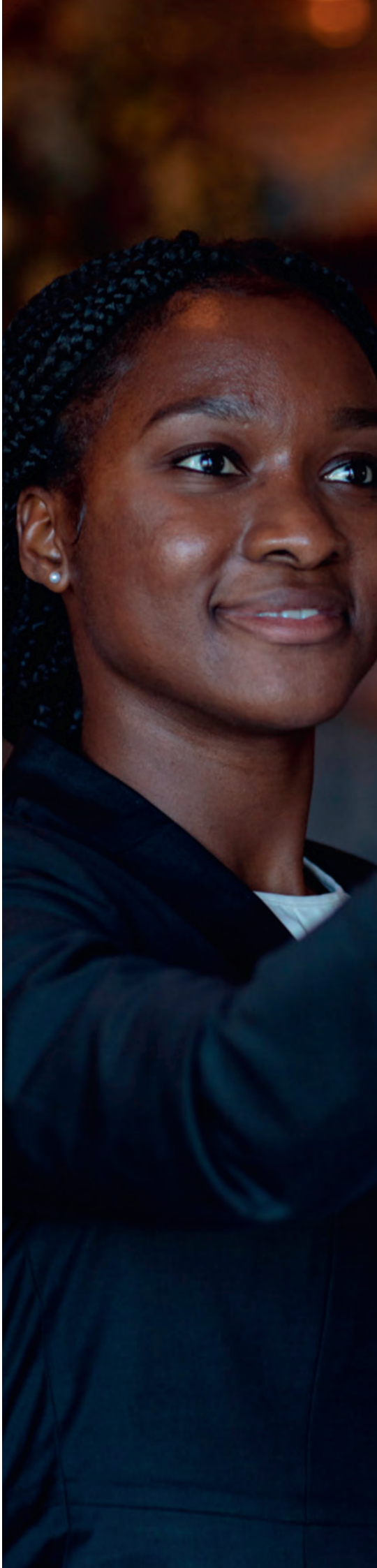
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Two years in the making

The Gold Service Scholar 2020 winner, Elizabeth Forkuoh, was forced to wait for the world to reopen to embark on her victory lap. Finally able to sit down with *Katherine Price*, she speaks about her career ambitions



In normal times, the most recent Gold Service Scholar would be sitting down to speak to *The Caterer* a year after winning the young front-of-house professionals competition, having spent the last 12 months enjoying prizes, trips and stellar networking opportunities. These, as we all know, are not normal times, and sadly, although Elizabeth Forkuoh won the scholarship two years ago, due to reasons that require no explanation, she is only now looking forward to finally taking advantage of these opportunities.

"I believe this year will be my year," says 25-year-old Forkuoh, speaking over Zoom. "I'm very excited, I'm keeping positive."

It's quite a line-up of prizes she can look forward to; as well as a trip to Champagne, she has elected to take up work experience at the three-Michelin-starred Waterside Inn in Bray, Berkshire; at the Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok, Thailand; and three-starred Core by Clare Smyth in London's Notting Hill.

Forkuoh, assistant restaurant manager at Gleneagles' Strathearn restaurant in Auchterarder, Perthshire, is the eighth Gold Service Scholar, a competition aimed at inspiring, educating and nurturing the UK's finest front-of-house talent as well as driving standards in the sector. Launched in 2012, it offers the opportunity for an aspiring individual to hone their craft through mentoring, travel and placement opportunities provided by senior service professionals.

Finalists from each year of the competition automatically become members of 'Team Gold', the scholarship's alumni network, and trustees include industry legends Alastair Storey, Willy Bauer, Edward Griffiths, Silvano Giraldin and Sergio Rebecchi. The Queen herself is patron of the competition.

Elizabeth Forkuoh's CV

January 2020-present Assistant restaurant manager, Gleneagles, Auchterarder, Perthshire

May 2019-December 2019 Junior assistant manager, Gleneagles

April 2018-April 2019 Head waitress, Gleneagles

July 2017-March 2018 Chef de rang, Gleneagles

July 2012-June 2017 Waitress, Stradey Park hotel, Llanelli

In it to win it

Entering the scholarship had been on Forkuoh's to-do list for some time, but she hadn't previously felt ready even though competitions have been very much a part of her development. She competed at WorldSkills Abu Dhabi in 2017, representing the UK in restaurant service – in which she won a Medallion of Excellence – and was recognised at the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts' Annual Awards of Excellence in 2018, all with the backing of her tutors and trainers.

She studied an NVQ Diploma Level 3 in hospitality supervision and leadership at Coleg Sir Gâr while working as a waitress at Stradey Park hotel in Llanelli, Camarthenshire. Forkuoh originally planned on becoming a translator – she and her family moved



to Llanelli when she was 15 from Italy and she speaks English, Italian, Twi and French. Although she intended to study both hospitality and languages at college, the subjects were taught at two different campuses, and while she chose to prioritise catering and hospitality with plans to complete her Italian and French A-Levels afterwards, she fell in love with the guest interaction side of hospitality.

“I just fell into it and I happened to enjoy it,” she explains. “With my personal tutor back at college telling me how good I was and how many things I could achieve, I kind of believed in it, and it brought me to where I am now.”

One aspect of college she says she really enjoyed was her experience in its training restaurant, Merlin’s. “It’s essential and really important to have a realistic environment,” she enthuses. “It prepares you for the real world.”

Despite this, the industry has seen cuts to further education funding put college training restaurants in the firing line, with high-profile casualties in recent years including Foxholes restaurant at Runshaw College in Lancashire and Oxford Brookes’ Brookes restaurant. Time will tell if efforts being put in by the industry, institutions and reforms to further education will provide the stability colleges across the country need.

After finishing college in 2017, Forkuoh was recommended by her WorldSkills technical ▶

The Gold Service Scholarship trustees on Elizabeth Forkuoh

“Elizabeth was such a worthy 2020 Scholar. This all happened just before the outbreak of the pandemic, and Elizabeth has shown great resolve in remaining enthused and positive throughout the following year, whilst unable to benefit from her educational rewards, both as a winning finalist and as Scholar. However, she has used her time to continue to contribute towards the Scholarship and we are so proud of the wonderful masterclass she has presented on the preparation of fruit, available to see on our website. Elizabeth is an inspiration to her generation and has joined the valued group of outstanding Gold Service Scholars, as we approach our tenth anniversary.”
Edward Griffiths, trustee, Gold Service Scholarship

“Elizabeth has been an outstanding scholar. She is both humble and excellent. Her dedication to improving and perfecting her craft is exemplary. Young professionals within her team will benefit from her mentoring and the eagerness to learn that she possesses. Customers in her establishment will be engulfed by her warmth and charm.”
Sergio Rebecchi, trustee, Gold Service Scholarship

expert Dr Shyam Patiar to gain experience at a five-star hotel such as Celtic Manor Resort in nearby Newport – or Gleneagles. Having never previously been to Scotland, she was excited by the opportunity to travel and flew to Edinburgh to undergo a placement at the hotel.

After just a week or two, she was offered a job and has been there ever since, joining as a chef de rang in the Strathearn, progressing to head waitress, junior assistant manager and finally assistant restaurant manager in February 2020. She says her Gleneagles colleagues have also been very supportive of her development, encouraging her to enter the Gold Service Scholarship and helping her prepare for the final.

"I had five days to prepare for the final menu, so after the developer seminar, while I was on the train travelling back to Scotland, I sent one of the executive chefs the menu," she recalls. "The following day I came to work and they had actually prepared some dishes from the menu that required some guéridon work, I think it was a pâté en croûte that I needed to carve for the guests during the final. They actually prepared a pâté en croûte within 24 hours for me.

"And then they prepared a rum baba, which was one of the desserts, with the chantilly cream which we needed to quenelle or rocher. I was so overwhelmed and full of joy to see that they actually went out of their way to help me... I had support from the chefs, from my restaurant manager, from the sommelier. It was amazing. I really enjoyed it and I honestly felt prepared when I went back to London for the actual final."

The Gold Service Scholarship 2022 finalists

Julien Beltzung, executive sommelier at the Glenturret Lalique restaurant, Perthshire

Harry Champion, private members' club manager at Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, London

Max Daglish, assistant restaurant manager, Northcote, Lancashire

Manon Gaillard, senior footman, the Royal Household

Thomas Gammella, restaurant manager, Clockspire restaurant, Somerset

Riccardo Migliorini, chef de rang, Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester, London

Valentina Pirri, guest relations manager, Davies and Brook, Claridge's, London

Anne Rasing, restaurant supervisor, Kerridge's Bar & Grill, Corinthia, London

The 2022 Gold Service Scholarship winner will be announced at a ceremony at Claridge's in London on 15 February.



Gleneagles





The previous scholars: where are they now?

2013 Rebecca Clough, people and culture manager, the Dorchester London

2014 James Fleming, front of house manager, NoMad London

2015 Daniele Quattromini, director of food and beverage, Corinthia London

2016 Jennifer Santorini, general manager, the Grill at the Dorchester, London

2017 Stephanie Beresforde, restaurant manager, the Pig at Harlyn Bay, Cornwall

2018 Michael Staub, most recently food and beverage manager, Rosewood Sand Hill, San Francisco, US

2019 Karen Cross, assistant restaurant manager, Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Great Milton, Oxfordshire



"It was nice to be able to share my experience with young students and for them to know that I actually started where they are"

Heart of gold

Forkuoh was declared the winner of the Gold Service Scholarship at a glittering ceremony at the Berkeley hotel in London on 12 February 2020 – just one month before the world went into lockdown.

"It was very challenging, I'm not going to lie, especially during the first lockdown. We were all furloughed and there was so much uncertainty, we were not sure what was going to happen," she remembers.

However, she has used the various lockdowns over the last two years to invest in her own development including taking part in a 10-week management course as well as an intensive cognitive course to support information retention, memory and effective communication. She also hosted an online masterclass for hospitality students at three colleges across south Wales.

"It was nice to be able to share my experience with young students and for them to know that I actually started where they are," she says. "Thanks to my tutors, I was able to progress in my career and now work in a five-star hotel. But I think it's really important for them to have an example of somebody who went to that college and progressed because it's something that they can be inspired by."

Promoting the industry in colleges and schools is something she feels strongly is a way to attract young talent to the industry and to sell the different opportunities a career in hospitality can offer.

In fact, she'd love to see a television programme focused on the front-of-house profession: "People see *MasterChef*, they see *Great British Menu* and they see how well the chefs do and the recognition they receive, but what about front of house? What is there for us to be able to watch and be inspired by and be encouraged to enter? I think that's what's lacking and I would love to see it. I would love for somebody like maybe Fred Sirieix to do that.

"And who knows, a student in hospitality might see it and think, 'oh wow, I want to work there'... Maybe it's not as simple as that, but I do think that if we are showing what we do, we would attract more people to enter the industry because they would see it with their own eyes."

She suggests that the industry being classed as 'low-skilled' isn't helping and is discouraging people from hospitalityy. She would also like to see more female front-of-house leaders visible in the industry, quoting Clare Smyth and Anneka Brooks as women that she looks up to.

"Maybe because I haven't looked hard enough or I'm not following the right links to be connected to these people, but from what I've seen, I don't really see many female managers or leaders in front of house in the UK... I would like to dig deep and find out the real reason why the hospitality industry is mainly led by males," she adds.

What next?

Forkuoh has plenty of ambitions for the future – she would like to progress to deputy restaurant manager of the Strathearn and even restaurant manager, perhaps managing a hotel or owning her own business one day, although feels that she needs to gain more experience abroad first and hopes to do a placement in France at some point to improve her language skills and learn more about French cuisine.

The next competitions she has her sights set on are Restaurant Manager of the Year and the Master of Culinary Arts (MCA), "but I know how difficult that one is, and I think I would need a few more years of experience to be able to do that", she says. "I'm the kind of person that if I want to enter a competition, I want to get it right the first time."

This was certainly the case with her entry to the Gold Service Scholarship, but despite this, her advice to future potential entrants is clear: "Go for it. Don't even think about it. I hesitated so much, and I wish I didn't, I wish I had just gone for it with confidence. My advice would be just to apply. There's nothing to lose, you're going to get so much out of it, whether you only get to the quarter-final or the semi-final. If you get to the final, it's a bonus, and if you win it, that's an extra bonus. Just being part of Team Gold, it's extraordinary."

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Planting change

The Caterer's Plant-Based Summit saw operators leading the charge give their advice on creating a modern vegan offering. *Kathleen Hall* reports

Gone are the days when vegan cuisine was seen as a lifestyle choice for a tiny minority. The explosion in plant-based eating is being driven by a growing appetite among consumers to reduce their meat intake.

Currently, 1% of the population are vegans, 7% are vegetarians and 42% are flexitarians, says Nigel White, plant-based marketing expert and chief executive of The Marketing Place.

"The key and what's attracting the VC money at the moment, is that last number. In terms of the flexitarians, that's growing the most rapidly."

And although vegans represent a small but growing minority, they hold a huge amount of sway when it comes to group bookings, meaning operators can't afford to treat their dietary requirements as an afterthought.

"Always remember that the vegan in the group can hold a disproportionate amount of influence over where everybody gets to eat," says White. "They're going to check the menu first and if the vegan offering just isn't up to scratch they're going to take the whole group somewhere else."

Jack Read, UK sales director at Future Farm, agrees it is important everyone feels included. "We want to encourage more people to [eat less meat] because that is essentially how we're going to create mass change here."

Claire Roper, head of marketing and innovation foodservice, Quorn Professionals, notes for many people the humble meat-alternative patty has acted as a gateway product: "The burger opened the market into meat free because it was a format people knew from their meat days and experience." However, she notes there is now lot more to the meat-free menu.

"The vegan in the group can hold a disproportionate amount of influence over where everybody gets to eat,"
Nigel White



Marketing plant-based

In an increasingly crowded marketplace, it's more important than ever for operators to shout about their plant-based offerings, says

More online
www.thecaterer.com



Juliane Caillouette-Noble





PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK/PHOTOGRAPHEE.EU

Patrick O'Shea, co-founder of Temple of Seitan – London's first vegan fried chicken shop.

"Having a USP is incredibly important because if you are simply selling a burger that you can get from any other restaurant, including McDonald's or KFC, you're going to have a lot of trouble standing out."

However, there is a danger of appearing faddy. Pizza Express recently had the initiative to play only plant-based pop music throughout 'Veganuary' – (only vegan artists and no carnivorous references, so presumably no Meat Loaf).

"It screams hollow gimmick to me. I don't think that is anything that's high on the list of vegan priorities. And I think it actually reinforces a bit of a negative stereotype: that vegans are overly sensitive or overly nit-picking," he says.

The watchword here is inclusivity. O'Shea previously made a point of allowing customers into Temple of Seitan who were wearing fur, despite some complaints. "Those people had taken a positive step to walk in here and to try vegan. So you don't want to create a barrier at the first opportunity. It's really about lowering those barriers and making it accessible. That's one of the reasons why we use the terminology of the real animal products."

Juliane Caillouette-Noble, managing director of the Sustainable Restaurant Association, agrees. "To create this cultural shift, it's not [having] 1,000 people go vegan. We need a billion people to reduce their meat consumption."

She cites the example of Wahaca, which shifted its menu to small plates with increased vegetarian options. "They found that reduced their sales of meat and increased sales of vegetable-led dishes" through "sharing loads of things and being able to try lots of things at once" without sectioning off the menu. "If it's part of the whole experience, then everybody can come and enjoy that together."


Wahaca in Bluewater


Hilton Bankside's vegan suite

PICTURE: MARK WEEKS

Future Farm's Jack Read echoes the point. "It's about creating that all round experience: the colours and the texture on the plate and making sure that everyone feels incorporated," he says.

"You want your plant-based or your vegan options to be competitive with your meat options. For example, if you've got a meat burger that looks like it's a fantastic build with sauces, salads... you want the vegan alternative to look as appealing. Otherwise, you're not giving plant-based a fighting chance."

Andrew Aston, head of wellness and nutrition at food service provider Baxterstorey, believes it's important to go on the journey with your customers. "Put on a show and get to know the customers. That comes from things like master classes in an evening or webinars."

"You want your plant-based or your vegan options to be competitive with your meat options"
Jack Read


James Clarke

James Clarke, general manager at Hilton London Bankside, has certainly been on a discovery process with his customers. The hotel was one of the first to launch a vegan suite, using vegan materials including Piñatex, a leather alternative made from pineapple leaves.

"We partnered with a local designer to develop [the concept] from arrival, all the way through to the experience of sleeping in the suite, to breakfast...it's about [hosting] that person who wants to enjoy that lifestyle and not distinguishing them, not excluding them, but embracing it," he says. "It's gone from strength to strength. I didn't think it would be the success it has today."

The vegan kitchen

When it comes to meat-free cooking, some chefs have historically lacked imagination,

How to boost your menu

Kirsty Matthews, insights and marketing manager at Macphie, discusses some simple solutions to grow your menu

Cater across all parts
Look at how the menu can provide a range of options for customers throughout the day, says Matthews. For example, breakfast pancakes could easily remain a staple for lunch or dinner.

For lunch, it's also useful to think of items that could be eaten on the go. "Toasties are very popular at the moment – they can also be eaten both on and off premise facilitating the ability for takeaway."

Many operators are also capitalising on a more casual 'coffee culture' food and beverage options. "This is quite a low-risk way of getting new customers to come into your business. But at the same time, it's important to make sure that these areas of your menu are able to satisfy people's plant-based choices as well."

Offer customisable options
This enables a smaller menu that can also cater to a range of customers. The most obvious dishes that lend themselves to customisation are burgers, pizza, burritos and wraps. "We know that plant-based consumers are more likely to visit independent restaurants and coffee shops. Because there's a belief from them that they are more flexible with menu alterations, and they're appealing to customers with those dietary requirements."

But side dishes also shouldn't be overlooked. "As well as enabling your customers to customise the meal, they're a great option to allow people to try new things. So, taking a step into plant-based and just try something new on the menu."

Use multi-use products
"Having a versatile building block sauce that can multitask across your menu is something that can take your menu a step forward. A sauce that pairs both plant-based and meat-based products is ideal and also a time saver."

It can also liven up dishes quickly. "So taking your customers on a journey of flavour around the world is something that you can do using a base sauce that you can customise. You can take them to any destination and customise your menu at a drop of a hat."



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says Andrew Dargue, owner of vegetarian fine-dining restaurant Vanilla Black. "The assumption is that when you're vegetarian, you love lots and lots of vegetables," he says. He has first-hand experience of how boring it can be to, simply "ploughing through" lots of greens. The key is to have a focal point on the plate. For example, one of his many innovations has been to emulate a steak tartar dish using tomatoes and a mustard yolk on top.

French fine dining isn't typically associated with vegan food. But Alexis Gauthier, chef-patron of Gauthier Soho Restaurant – turned his restaurant entirely vegan in 2021. Like Dargue, he also has a reputation for innovation.

"When I think about a dish, I do think about the final product.... So it's all about a balance of flavour: the perfect structure of a dish with good consistency, texture and reflecting the season and also the mood of the chef," he says.

If anything, going vegan amplifies creativity: "You're not going to be able to hide behind that beautiful loin of beef or beautiful scallops. What's on the plate is what comes from the ▶

"The assumption is that when you're vegetarian, you love lots and lots of vegetables"

Andrew Dargue

Five ways to sell plant-based



Nigel White, plant-based marketing expert and chief executive of the Marketing Place, shares his top tips on how operators can make the most of their vegan and flexitarian offering

Go plant-first
Given the numbers, growth and motivations this has to be the default position when menu planning, says White. However, it's important to avoid using words such as 'option' 'substitute' or 'alternative'. "We still see a lot of talk, especially in retail, about dairy alternatives or meat substitutes. It's not really the language of food," he says.

Recognise difference
Plant-based is a new, catch-all term but there's a danger of everything being lumped under it. "We're seeing a lot of evidence that vegetarians are actually getting annoyed by the amount of pure vegan offerings, because they're not looking to cut out dairy and they feel that that their options are being limited. Equally I've seen gluten-free people being offered a vegan alternative, as if as if they are the same thing. Recognise there are many different needs going on here."

Think timing
Research shows people are more likely to opt for plant-based earlier in the day and earlier in the week. By the time it gets to the weekend, flexitarian customers are more likely to choose meat dishes. Being aware of the day and time ought to go into planning.

Get the tone right
"Many of these consumers consider themselves better informed or educated on food than the general population.. What they don't want is to be looked down upon, pitied or worst-case scenario, seen as a bit of a nuisance."

Market to motivations
White notes there are a number of reasons people might choose to eat plant free, such as health and environmental considerations. "Some are lifestyle choices, others are a matter of life and death," he says. "There's no one reason why people might be choosing plant-based alternatives. It's important operators appreciate the different reasons for being meat-free."

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creativity of the chef and I think as a reward for chefs, it's going to be immense."

Sarah Wasserman, development chef at Mildreds, something of a vegetarian institution, having opened in Soho 35 years ago, points out that the same culinary toolkit applies. "You get much more interesting results if you stop thinking about how plant-based food is different," she says. "All those processes that you rely on as a chef to add depth of flavour: caramelizing, braising, confiting, sealing, salting, charring – it all still applies."

She says what their customers want is food they can't get anywhere else, particularly vegan or vegetarian versions of conventional dishes. Their croque-monsieur and tiramisu have been huge hits. "People get really excited [about] being able to eat something again that they loved in the past. Because food is such an emotional thing for people, it's so tied up with all the experiences in your life and all of your history."



Neil Rankin

"Food is such an emotional thing for people, it's so tied up with the all your experiences in your life and all of your history"

Sarah Wasserman



Neil Rankin, chef-founder of Temper restaurants and Symplicity Food, points out that working with vegetables instead of meat can actually create more depth of flavour.

"They soak up spices and flavours much better than meat does. Marination is much better with vegetables. The intensity you get is different," he says. "It can be much more ummani based."

He believes the explosion in plant-based eating is being driven by the creativity of chefs and restaurants. "Then it sneaks into the supermarkets, then it goes into sort of more the chain... it is happening at an extremely fast rate and I think it's a clear path ahead."

There is palpable excitement among all the panellists when discussing the potential for growth in this sector. "It's just going to get bigger and better and more people are going to come through showcasing lots of exciting food, so that actually maybe the tide will change," concludes Quorn Professional's Claire Roper.

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Shaking up the pub

New pubs with stellar cocktail menus are quenching the thirst of more discerning drinkers. *Millie Milliken* asks how to combine quality cocktails with a classic pub feel



Serving cocktails in pubs is nothing new. Punch, cups and plenty of gin have soaked British public houses for a couple of hundred years, and some pubs have been flying the quality cocktail flag for a few years now – places like London's the Wigmore and the Gate in Glasgow.

Yet a lot of pubs across the UK, while providing guests with a well-thought-out beer offering, are still lacking when it comes to spirits and cocktails. Optics and soda guns are commonplace but anyone after something more complex and exciting than a G&T hedges their bets every time they walk through the doors of a pub.

"What is unfortunate with pubs in the UK is they have that reputation," says Tyvian Vigrass, co-founder of modern pub the Racketeer in King's Cross in London. "Bar culture in the UK is at the forefront, so nowadays I want to go into a pub and I want them to know what they're doing... I think America does it really well – the bars are bog-standard but they know what they're doing and the level of service is pukka."

However, the past six months have seen a slew of 'traditional' pubs that have launched with a dedicated cocktail menu: places like London-based Urban Pubs & Bars' the Black Horse in Fitzrovia, the revamped Jolly Gardeners in Vauxhall and JKS Restaurants' two new ventures, the Cadogan Arms in Chelsea and the George in Fitzrovia. Is this the future of pubs in the UK?


Dominic Jacobs

New kids

"When we started with the cocktail menu there were so many reference points within the history of pubs to start from," says Dominic Jacobs, managing director of the Cadogan Arms and the George pubs, both with James Knappett giving oversight of the kitchen. Both pubs occupy historic sites and launched with not only stellar cask and keg beer offerings and refreshingly strong wine lists – but cocktail-bar-level cocktails.

At the Cadogan, alongside bellinis, negronis and old fashioneds, you'll find a Rah Rah martini (vodka, olive oil, vermouth) served with an optional side of Exmoor caviar, as well as a dedicated boilermaker section (small frozen cocktails designed to drink with beer), from a Sazerac to a baby Guinness. Head to the George and among a selection of classics, lowballs, highballs and boilermakers again, standouts include the Gibson martini (with a side of pickled onion Monster Munch) and a Salty Dog (vodka, grapefruit sherbet, sea salt and sparkling oolong tea).

Their main goal: to make sure nobody compromised on their favourite drink. "The brief, having operated pubs myself was to be a zero-compromise venue," says Jacobs. "Our vision was to have a family table where you had your grandad, your uncle and your millennial cousin and everybody has a different idea of what a pub should be. Someone could have a cask ale, your cousin might want a non-alcoholic drink, you might have a wine drinker, a craft beer drinker... nobody misses out."

"Our vision was to have a family table where you had your grandad, your uncle and your millennial cousin, and everybody has a different idea of what a pub should be"

Dominic Jacobs, the Cadogan Arms and the George





Boilermaker cocktails from the George



'Under Milk Wood' from the George

For James Stevenson, beverage director at JKS, the format of the drink was important at the get-go too, using familiar styles like spritzes and highballs to 'trojan horse' them into the offering.

All change?

When the Jolly Gardeners pub in Vauxhall was bought and opened over lockdown by a group of hospitality industry friends, co-founder Nick Blucert realised the style of service and the drinks order that came with it were not what they had expected.

"A lot of younger people who don't have that experience of going to pubs now go to pubs and are used to table service," he says, recalling the rules of drinking enforced during Covid-19.

"These people now like to be served at the table and that demographic is where cocktails and premium spirits get sold... There's been such a turn in the tide of what people think a pub is – it is really crossing over into more of a bar."

Cocktails that Blucert says are most popular are boulevardiers, negronis and, of course, espresso martinis – "they fly through them, sometimes people order five pints, three gin and tonics and eight espresso martinis".

Perhaps the cocktail-savvy pub is the ideal step for customers looking for something more than a spirit and mixer, but in the casual surrounds of a pub. So thinks Vigrass: "It's accessible. Some cocktail bars freak people out and they worry people might sneer at them if they order the wrong thing. That's where the pub vibe comes in – everyone is equal in the pub."

Even the grande dame of cocktail pubs, the Wigmore, which opened five years ago as part of the luxury Langham London hotel, is overhauling its cocktail menu with the arrival of new head bartender Marco Fante.

"With Marco's experience and background we're going to be using the lab from the Artesian [the hotel's flagship, award-winning cocktail bar] which is going to take us to another level," explains bar manager Andre Ferreira.

The soon to be released new menu will use techniques like vacuums, rotavaps and centrifuges, and drinks will be matched to the Wigmore's food menu (overseen by Michel Roux Jr), including a drink using clarified tomatoes to pair with its famous cheese toastie.

Key to success

Balancing the style of the drinks to the style of the pubs was an important factor for Stevenson at JKS: "It was very important that across the breadth of the offering it felt like someone's living room, so we wanted to make sure the cocktails fit within the concept of what a pub is."

A large part of achieving that is down to service. "If I come into the pub and I'm waiting after a guy who wants a pornstar martini, a pint and some pork scratchings, the timings don't fit into the pub mode, so we were focused on efficiency and speed – everything should be able to come out at the same time."

To achieve this, ingredients are made offsite, delivered to the pub and pre-batched, pre-diluted and ready to serve to guests on ordering. "We designed the menu around that execution. Regardless of how good you are at bartending, if you have four people ordering margaritas and one person waiting for a cask ale, it then doesn't become an issue."

That's not to say that the team has it all figured out – Jacobs admits that the menu in the pub environment till needs to be finessed, with customers more used to ordering their usual in a pub rather than being given a menu to peruse. But with the Jolly Gardeners' team already viewing properties for a second site, it looks like the cocktail pub might just be here to stay.

Rah Rah martini cocktail recipe

Recreate this cocktail from the Cadogan Arms



Ingredients

50ml olive oil vodka*
15ml Noilly Prat Dry Vermouth

Method

- Stir with ice and strain in to a frozen martini glass
- Serve with a nocellara olive and a spoon of Exmoor Caviar

***To make the olive oil vodka**
Ingredients Olive oil Argali Messinia, vodka.
Method Thermomix Speed 4, 15 minutes, 50°C. Rest in the freezer overnight or until oil has frozen. Filter off the solids using a superbag. Distill at 42°C.

Tips from the landlords

"The key thing for me would be to think of how efficiently you can serve. Make sure you're meeting the expectations of your customer."
James Stevenson

"If you're going to open a new place, hire bartenders who have a passion for cocktails, but also know their beer and wine."
Andre Ferreira

"The new demographic is after premium spirts and local produce. People want these brands and go out and pay a little bit more if there is a story behind what they're drinking."
Nick Blucert

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This year's People Summit, taking place on 12 May at 30 Euston Square in London, will be an in-person event with talks from experts in the industry who have adapted the way they support and engage with their staff.

Our headline speakers, Laura Christie and Selin Kiazim, co-owners of Shoreditch's Oklava, will talk about embracing change and developing their team for the future, as well as sharing their modern philosophy of retaining engaged and happy people.

Leadership coach Lanre Sulola, founder and chief executive of talent development company Inner Ambitions, will share his knowledge of inspiring role models and tips on individualising career pathways. Motivational speaker Sulola is passionate about empowering individuals to fulfil their aspirations. His coaching and facilitation expertise has been founded on his experience working at global firms PricewaterhouseCoopers and Accenture, where he had a record of designing and delivering people development programmes and managing organisational structure and people changes.

At the summit we will ask our experts what new skills are essential in today's world and how teams have responded to acquiring these skills. Anita Bower, people and culture director at Iconic Luxury Hotels, will join a panel to discuss what new management tools are being encouraged and how empathy and listening skills are top of the agenda.

Operators affected by the pandemic will share how they retained their staff and changed their processes to ensure their teams are making time for themselves and practising self-care to avoid stress, burn-out and mental health issues.

Greg Hegarty, deputy chief executive officer and chief operating officer of PPHE Hotel Group, is well-placed to relate successful retention practices having won *The Caterer*'s Best Places to Work in Hospitality in 2021. He will join us and other panellists detailing the companies that are retaining and attracting the best people.

Jane Sunley, founder of recruitment firm Purple Cubed, will host a Q&A session with Jon Dawson and Giorgia Ferrara of hospitality design company Lore Group on generation Z engagement, and Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UKHospitality, joins the line-up, representing collaborative movement Hospitality Rising alongside ambassadors from Hospitality Action.

Lisa Jenkins, managing editor of *The Caterer*, said: "Our 2021 virtual People Summit was a great success, but we are delighted to be returning to a live event with a full day's agenda that includes an exciting line-up of speakers. The enthusiasm and development advice we will all be able to take away from this event will be inspirational."

Other topics covered will include employing apprentices, using the right language (verbally and visually) to inspire confidence, making time for yourself in a busy industry, and how to use technology to support your business and teams. The People Summit is a must-attend event for hospitality HR professionals and any leader who wants to harness the power of their people.

The event will also celebrate the Best Places to Work in Hospitality awards, organised in association with our partners, employee engagement consultancy and people technology specialists Purple Cubed and sponsored by training and apprenticeship provider Umbrella Training.

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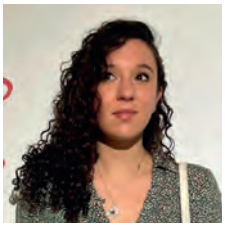
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HR director,
Iconic Luxury Hotels



Laura Christie
Co-owner, Oklava, London



Jon Dawson
Group director of people development, Lore Group



Giorgia Ferrara
Human resources co-ordinator, Sea Containers London



Greg Hegarty
Deputy CEO and COO, PPHE Hotel Group



Selin Kiazim
Chef owner, Oklava



Kate Nicholls
Chief executive officer, UKHospitality



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Michelin star predictions 2022

It's hard to predict which establishments will gain Michelin stars and accolades each year. Nevertheless industry experts have shared what they would like to see happen at next week's ceremony

Michelin is unpredictable, a law unto itself. A mysterious arbiter of taste, which each year has the industry on tenterhooks waiting to see on who its spotlight will settle.

Musings on its mercurial nature preceded many of the predictions sent to us ahead of next week's ceremony, which promises fireworks despite being held virtually once again. Indeed, Michelin has upped the trailing of its annual revelations by releasing monthly updates to its listings, sparking intrigue as to which of those named will go on be adorned with stars and Bib Gourmands.

Many will be wondering if any jackets embroidered with three Michelin stars will be sent out. For years no one managed to join the ranks of the Fat Duck, Restaurant Gordan Ramsay, Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester and, of course, the Waterside Inn; but in 2020 Sketch Lecture House and Library was the surprise addition to the upper echelon, followed last year by Hélène Darroze at the Connaught and Core by Clare Smyth.

This year Claude Bosi at Bibendum in London and Simon Rogan's L'Enclume in Cumbria were both repeatedly cited as possible recipients of the highest award by those who shared their thoughts with *The Caterer*.

Many are also hoping that 2022 will be the year that the Ritz London, headed by John Williams, finally receives a second star.

Restaurant critic Richard Vines said: "I cannot think of a better restaurant in the UK for classic French cooking. I've had worse at a famous three-star in Paris, and the consistency of John's high standards over the years is remarkable."

The predictions for restaurants receiving their first star are varied in both cuisine and geographical locations, with many hoping Michelin will be similarly diverse in where it sprinkles its stars.

Restaurant critic Eileen Twum is hoping to see more stars distributed to restaurants serving cuisines from outside Europe and Asia; with modern African restaurant Chishuru in Brixton, London, topping her wish list.

Meanwhile, Thom Hetherington, chief executive of Holden Media and Northern Restaurant and Bar, would like to see Manchester get its first two-star restaurant, while also hoping those elusive three stars will make their way to the north of the country.

The release of the *Michelin Guide* has always captivated the culinary world but, following the two most difficult years many operators will be able to remember, even more restaurateurs may be on the edge of their seats next week.

Peter Sanchez-Iglesias, chef-patron of Casamia, Decimo and Paco Tapas, said: "Chefs get giddy when they hear the word Michelin; they get nervous, they get palpitations. You never know what Michelin are going to do and I wish I had a crystal ball to understand. If you get a star it can change your restaurant and Michelin does give you a voice. Without a star Casamia or Paco Tapas might not be as successful as they are now, but at the same time it's not necessary for every chef. Not having a star doesn't mean you're not a great chef or that you don't have a great restaurant."

THE PREDICTIONS



Judy Joo, chef and author

"I recently discovered Junsei in Marylebone for yakitori and think it's fantastic. The skewers are delicious and there's always such a great vibe to the place – it really reminds me of Birdland in Tokyo."

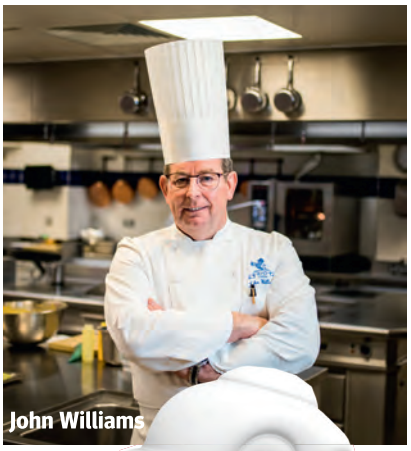


Junsei

Chris Galvin, Galvin Restaurants



"John Williams to get two stars at the Ritz London would be special. I would also love to see Brawn in east London receive a star – Ed Wilson cooks in a marvellous style, working closely with each season's produce. Every plate is harmonious and effortless, which belies the hard work and passion Ed and his team put into their cooking. His menus have the knack of making you want to order everything, the food is super-consistent and, in my view, it's one of the best restaurants in the country"



John Williams



Hrishikesh Desai, executive chef, the Gilpin, Windermere
"Three stars for Claude Bosi at Bibendum and L'Enclume; two stars for Ynyshir in Eglwys Fach in Wales and one star for Rothay Manor."

Peter Sanchez-Iglesias, Casamia, Decimo and Paco Tapas
"Gareth Ward at Ynyshir – he should be a two-star chef already, it's almost like they're playing games with him to see how good he can get. His puts his life and soul and every single bit of his body into that place."

Richard Vines, restaurant critic, Koffmann & Vines


Fallow

"Michelin is highly unpredictable, so this is a wish list, not predictions. Launceston Place is overdue for a star. Ben Murphy is a talented chef and he has upped his game in the past year. I'd also like to see stars for Bibi, Fallow, the Frog, the Grill at the Dorchester, Kol, Mere, Maison Francois, Otto's and Pali Hill. John Williams at the Ritz London deserves a second star and Claude Bosi at Bibendum a third. It would be good if Jamavar won back its star. Outside London, Crockers (Henley); the Vineyard at Stockcross (Berkshire) and Pompette (Oxford) are all deserving."

Thom Hetherington, chief executive, Holden Media and Northern Restaurant and Bar



"Keeping my thoughts focused on the North there are some real talents that must be in Michelin's thinking. York's Le Couchon Aveugle is superb – on a recent visit a scallop dish, roasted in the shell with sea urchin butter, was exceptional – and it feels like it has kicked on. Equally, Jöro in Sheffield is exciting, technical and delicious, and positively fizzes with ambition. Also the Moorcock Inn in Sowerby Bridge is a glorious and fiercely contemporary gastropub, underpinned with fine cooking.

"The Barn at Moor Hall must surely be in line for a first star. Michelin often looks favourably on offshoots to existing starred operations, but chef Nathan Cornwell has made the Barn a destination in its own right, with immaculate cooking framed in an beautiful but accessible setting. It will also be interesting to see if Mana in Manchester will set a new precedent by becoming the first two-starred restaurant my city has ever seen, and the only 'core city' two-star in the country.

"If Michelin is in the mood to shake-up the status quo, then surely it is time, finally, to award three stars outside of the south-east-London-Bray axis. Having eaten in three stars in the UK and abroad, I am slightly at a loss as to what more Moor Hall and L'Enclume could do to elevate themselves to that level. I can understand that Michelin will be looking for impeccable consistency at the highest level, but surely both restaurants have now proven themselves worthy?"



Eileen Twum, restaurant critic



"I think Pine in Northumberland should get some well-deserved recognition. I spent a lot of the pandemic with chef Ian and Vanessa, the head sommelier so I have experienced first-hand the cleverness of their food and their thoughtfulness when it comes to wine pairing.

"The restaurant most likely to be missed is Chishuru, which I think is the best restaurant in London and possibly in the country at the moment. I feel Michelin is allergic to African cuisine unless it is a 'fusion' restaurant like Ikoyi (which is a wonderful restaurant in its own right). I would say that Chishuru's food has the precision of storytelling and layered delicateness of flavour and texture at the same standard as Core by Clare Smyth. Really. But of course, Chishuru is not a white tablecloth restaurant and didn't have a £200,000 interior design budget.

"Maybe we will see some truly representative restaurants that are not heavily European- or Japanese-biased."

Stuart Gillies, the Bank House in Chislehurst and Number Eight, Sevenoaks


Luca

"My best, most recent experience was at Luca in St John Street in London's Clerkenwell and they are certainly deserving of a star. Excellent, well-executed classic cooking with a twist... intense flavours and a light touch, delicious."

Gareth Ward, Ynyshir, Eglwys Fach, Wales
"Three stars for Claude Bosi at Bibendum; two stars for Carters of Moseley in Birmingham, the Man Behind the Curtain in Leeds, Alchemilla in Nottingham, Tony Parkin at the Tudor Room in Egham and us... One star for Jöro and Akoko, both in London. But who knows, really Michelin is a law unto themselves."

Vivek Singh, chef-patron, Cinnamon Club
"After following Adam Handling and Asma Khan's careers for years and having eaten at both of their restaurants recently, I think both will be recognised with a star. Adam Handling's food at the Frog in London is delicate, creative and memorable, while Asma has really pushed the boundaries since relocating Darjeeling Express to Covent Garden. They would both be very deserving of this accolade. I also think Sameer Taneja, executive chef of Benares in Mayfair, will retain his star."

Galton Blackiston, chef-patron, Morston Hall, Holt, Norfolk
"Three stars for L'Enclume; two stars at least for Chapter One in Orpington; one star for Meadowsweet in Holt and Restaurant 22 in Cambridge."

Tom Swaby, National Chef of the Year 2022

"Three stars for L'Enclume and Claude Bosi at Bibendum. Two stars for the Ritz London, Paul Ainsworth at Number 6 in Padstow and Chapter One by Mickael Viljanen in Dublin. In London, one star for Luke Selby's Evelyn's Table, Ruth Hansom's Princess of Shoreditch, Tom Booton at the Grill at the Dorchester, Ormer Mayfair by Sofian Msetfi, and a Bib Gourmand for Robert Taylor at Tallow in Tunbridge Wells."



When the stars lose their sparkle

It's an honour that chefs across the globe work hard to achieve, but for some the burden of the Michelin star is too heavy. *Sophie Witts* looks at the restaurants who handed their stars back and why they did it

When brothers André and Édouard Michelin created a guidebook for the motorists who purchased their tyres 123 years ago, they could never have imagined the controversy its publication would create more than a century later.

For many chefs, winning a star is still seen as the ultimate badge of honour, and a chance to join the ranks of the industry's most famous names. But not all agree, and over the years many have sought to have their restaurants removed from the red book. We look back at some of the most notorious cases where chefs and owners decided to hang up their jackets.



Louis Vaudable

One of the earliest cases of a restaurant returning its stars was the original Maxim's in Paris. Founded by former waiter Maxime Gaillard in 1893, by the mid-20th century it had become one of the most famous restaurants in the world and held the maximum three Michelin stars for years – until it disappeared completely from the 1978 guide.

Michelin announced that Maxim's was dropped at the request of owner, Louis Vaudable, who claimed the red book had refused his request to create a special category for the restaurant's "unique" atmosphere. However, there were rumours Maxim's was about to be demoted, and according to *The New York Times*, some industry experts saw its withdrawal as a tactic to save face.

Marco Pierre White

In 1994 Marco Pierre White became the youngest chef ever to win three Michelin stars at the age of 32, but just five years later he retired and announced he was handing them back.

In the years since he has given numerous reasons for his decision. Speaking to *The Caterer* in 2007, White was scathing of the red book's inspectors: "I was being judged by people who had less knowledge than me, so what was it truly worth? I gave Michelin inspectors too much respect, and I belittle myself."

A decade later, White was still dismissive of the guide. When he opened the English House hotel and restaurant in Singapore, the chef told Channel News Asia he declined to be included in its listings, "because I don't need Michelin and they don't need me. They sell tyres, I sell food".

"I was being judged by people who had less knowledge than me, so what was it truly worth?"

Marco Pierre White



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACKY D; MATT AUSTIN

Sébastien Bras

French chef Sébastien Bras learned the hard way that it was up to Michelin, not the chef,

whether a restaurant was removed. Bras took over his father's three-star restaurant Le Suquet in the south of France in 2009, but in 2017 publicly asked to be removed from the guide, citing the "huge pressure" of knowing an inspector could appear at any time.

His request was initially granted and Le Suquet was left out of the 2018 *Michelin Guide France*, but the following year Bras was reportedly surprised to find it had returned with two stars. In an interview with *Centre Presse Aveyron*, Bras said he felt Michelin had sent a message that a restaurant had no choice but to live under pressure.

"I will work hard to safeguard the integrity of our industry against garbage critics like Michelin"

Eo Yung-gwon

Marc Veyrat

In 2019 the knives came out in the world of French gastronomy when chef Marc Veyrat demanded his restaurant, La Maison des Bois in the French Alps, be withdrawn from the red book after being demoted to two stars.

He said the move left him depressed and denounced the "profound incompetence" of the guide's inspectors, who he claimed identified the wrong cheese in a soufflé. "They dared to say that we put Cheddar in our soufflé of Reblochon, Beaufort and Tomme! They have insulted our region; my employees were furious," he said, according to *Le Monde*.

Veyrat later took Michelin to court to try to force the guide to share notes about its inspections of his restaurant, but lost the case.

There was no love lost on either side. Michelin's lawyer, Richard Malka, told AFP news agency that Veyrat was a "narcissistic diva" whose grievances were "imaginary and unfounded". La Maison des Bois still holds two stars in the *Michelin Guide France*, which states Veyrat is "as great a chef as ever".



La Maison des Bois

Eo Yung-gwon

In 2019 Seoul chef Eo Yung-gwon announced he had lodged a criminal complaint against Michelin for including his restaurant in its ratings, despite him asking them not to.

In a post on his Facebook page, he accused the "corrupt book" of "defamation". Eo told *CNN* Michelin was a "cruel system" which "forces chefs to work around a year waiting for a test [and] they don't know when it's coming". Although experts said the chef's complaint was unlikely to stick, he did not back down from criticising the guide. "I will work hard to safeguard the integrity of our industry against garbage critics like Michelin or influencers or the media," he wrote on Facebook. "I will continue my campaign against Michelin."

What does Michelin say?

Despite the turbulent history of star removal, Michelin states that stars are not forced on restaurants if the chef objects. According to an interview with an anonymous inspector posted on its website: "If a chef, for whatever reason, doesn't want his or her cooking highlighted, then we simply won't re-award the star the following year."

And, naming no names, the inspector said the idea of chefs 'returning' stars by closing a restaurant was a "specious argument", adding: "It's like a theatre 'giving back' a newspaper review when the play's run has ended."



Selling like hot cakes

The quiet town of Tenterden in Kent has been hit by the double act of pâtissier professional Chris Underwood and local boy done good Graham Garrett with their first and hugely popular bakery ârtisserie. *Fiona Sims* joins the queue

It's 7.30am and there's already a sizeable queue forming outside new patisserie ârtisserie in the quaint country town of Tenterden in Kent.

It's the first day of opening (not until 9am) and noses are pressed up against the window. Their gaze is directed at the neat lines of cakes filling up the glass-fronted display cabinet, with names such as Snickers chocolate choux and blood orange cheesecake, with two different kinds of madeleines – today there's one made with lemon, the other with ginger – as well as all-butter brioche, small wooden crates filled with crunchy-crusted beer bread, made with IPA from the local microbrewery, hazelnut and raisin bread, and proper French baguettes, with artisanal coffee to wash it all down

The bakery is the brainchild of Kent chef Graham Garrett of the West House restaurant with rooms in nearby Biddenden, and executive pastry chef Chris Underwood, formerly of the Cadogan hotel in London's Chelsea, and it is a French pâtisserie with British attitude that has been going down a storm with the locals. The pair had to close four hours early on the first day of trading as they had sold out. The second day was even more frantic, reports Garrett. "We tripled production, but we were done by 11.30am – it was a frenzy in here," he grins.

Kent folk know all about Garrett. After a successful career as the drummer with 1980s rock bands such as Dumb Blondes, he started cooking at 31 years old, working for, among others, Nico Ladenis and Richard Corrigan. In 2002 he opened his own place in Biddenden, winning a Michelin star two years later, only to have it taken away unceremoniously in the 2020 guidebook. It prompted outrage from his many loyal regulars, who contacted the guide to complain in their droves. Not that this affected his business – the restaurant remained busy. Garrett had put a head chef and sous chef in place so he could take a step back, so he wasn't actually cooking during the guide inspections, but it clearly didn't work out, and in fact, after returning to the kitchen his business is now better than ever, he reports.

Underwood, on the other hand, is not known around these parts. The Luton-born chef might be a big noise in the pastry world, having worked with some illustrious names, among them Tom Aikens and Simon Rogan, mostly in the capital, but he's yet to make his mark in Kent. Though that's soon to change,



“I keep the names of the cakes simple, so I can exceed expectation”
Chris Underwood

Rhubarb and custard choux

judging by the attention the pair are already getting on social media, from local press and even the national networks (the BBC news team has already come knocking), such is the power of Underwood’s pretty petits gâteaux.

Bread brothers

So, how did the pair meet? And how did Garrett persuade this top-notch baker to leave the bright city lights and set up camp with him in this genteel corner of Kent?

“Actually, we only met a year or so ago when Chris came to eat at the restaurant, as his in-laws live up the road,” says Garrett. “I knew of his reputation, of course, but we chatted and that was that. First, we became Instagram buddies, then he messaged me saying he was looking to open a pâtisserie in the area, asking if I knew any backers that might want to get involved, so I started giving him advice.

“Then lockdown happened, and he moved in with his in-laws, and we got chatting some more. Chris started looking at a couple of sites, and I went with him as I had nothing better to do as we were in lockdown. But when we started talking about the financials and what he had to put in and what he needed, I said, well, perhaps I could get involved?”

Underwood has never run a business before, so Garrett’s input is invaluable. “I now have that inside information. I can learn so much from him – Graham is so much better than a silent partner, he can assist me with running the business, he’s there for advice and for support, both physically and mentally, and it’s great bouncing ideas of each other. And while Graham just lets

On the menu

- **Snickers choux** (salted caramel cremeaux, salted caramel, peanuts, peanut butter cream)
- **Rhubarb and custard choux** (crème pâtisserie, rhubarb compote, spiced crumble)
- **Lemon and passion fruit** (lemon curd, genoise sponge, passion fruit glaze and white chocolate)
- **Blood orange and yogurt cheesecake**
- **Rose and raspberry tart**
- **Hazelnut and raisin bread**
- **Old Dairy IPA bread**
- **Baguettes**
- **Brioche au chocolate** (mini brioche buns with a hazelnut and 72% chocolate filling)

PICTURES: ADRIAN FRANKLIN





Chris Underwood (left) and Graham Garrett

me crack on as he has his own business to run, I know he's always there when I need him. The bakery is a 50:50 split, straight down the middle," explains Underwood.

Garrett leaves the cakes to Underwood, who stamps his luxury hotel pastry section signature all over them. "I keep the names of the cakes simple, so I can exceed expectation," he says, which can be seen in the lemon, passion fruit and white chocolate (£4.25). However, there is plenty of collaboration on other items, such as the hazelnut and raisin bread (£3.95), an old West House favourite, and the granola that Garrett provides for breakfast in his four bedrooms.

Once Underwood gets another pastry chef on board (he's still looking – ideally for a baker, he says), he'll get the popular West House sourdough going, too, and the croissants, both of which have already had lots of requests. Three months working together at the restaurant whilst hatching plans for ârtisserie have clearly reinforced the bond the pair have, bouncing ideas off each other daily.

"We only want to sell what we make, otherwise what's the point? It's the same ethos at the restaurant. Our range is limited for now – around 10 different items – but as we build the business and it continues to be a success, we can afford more staff and make more products," explains Garrett, promising macarons and handmade chocolates.

In addition to Underwood's glass-fronted kitchen on the shop floor, which is causing a stir locally and connecting him with his cake-eating public, he adds that they also have a basement area in which to expand. "We've been chatting to people about what they want and building relationships, and people are very excited. The town was crying out for something like this," says Underwood, who has moved to the area permanently. "My wife grew up here. It's such a beautiful place. It's a different way of life – a slower pace – but there's time to enjoy things and plenty of space for the kids to grow up."

"Graham can assist me with running the business, he's there for advice and for support, both physically and mentally, and it's great bouncing ideas of each other"

Chris Underwood



Lemon and passionfruit

Chain reaction

Locals will be pleased to know that Underwood will be extending the cake range as a next step. "And we will change the items seasonally, just like you do in a restaurant," says Underwood, who is also planning on offering baking classes and chocolate workshops once he has employed a number two. "I want to bring something to Tenterden that people haven't seen before," he promises.

"And if ârtisserie is a success, we could replicate this in a similar location," reveals Garrett. "I like the idea of two or three ârtisseries, with one big production kitchen. The original idea was always to offer a wholesale side – we've already got a few businesses around here asking for our bread. But we need to get this one settled first," he adds.

Not bad for a lockdown project, then? Says Garrett: "It gave me something to focus on at a point when I was probably losing the plot. In my mind, I was thinking I didn't know if a small restaurant like mine would ever be a viable thing again. Then every time I went into Tenterden High Street I saw all these people queuing for sausage rolls and coffee, and that's what did it for me. I thought, at least this would give me something to do, and I could still trade in some way. Now I've never been so busy."

While Garrett says Kent doesn't have a proper French pâtisserie, the county does have a few artisanal bakeries, such as the Bicycle Bakery in Tunbridge Wells and Grain & Hearth Bakery in Whitstable. "We purposely didn't want to go the cool bakery route," explains Garrett. "Tenterden isn't like that – it's a bit blue rinse brigade, although they do love France and French food. Plus, 300 new homes have just been built here, which has brought an influx of younger people and relocating Londoners, so the demographic is changing."

That said, many of ârtisserie's initial wave of customers are West House regulars, confirms Garrett. "I didn't realise my reputation was quite that big here. Whether this is just the initial excitement, and it will start to die down a bit now, we just don't know. I always panic. It is fantastic though. But really, I don't want ârtisserie to be about either of us, it's about building the brand," he insists.

Could winning the star back help them on that brand-building journey? Is Garrett on a mission to get it back? "You know what, I'm not bothered. Sure, I was very upset at the time – it was pretty devastating for everybody. And then Covid happened, and we closed. But when we reopened, not only were we consistent, but we were better than we had ever been. And if you are as good as you can be, and happy with what you're doing, and you're packed, and customers love it – Michelin can go and do one," shrugs Garrett, with typical insouciance.

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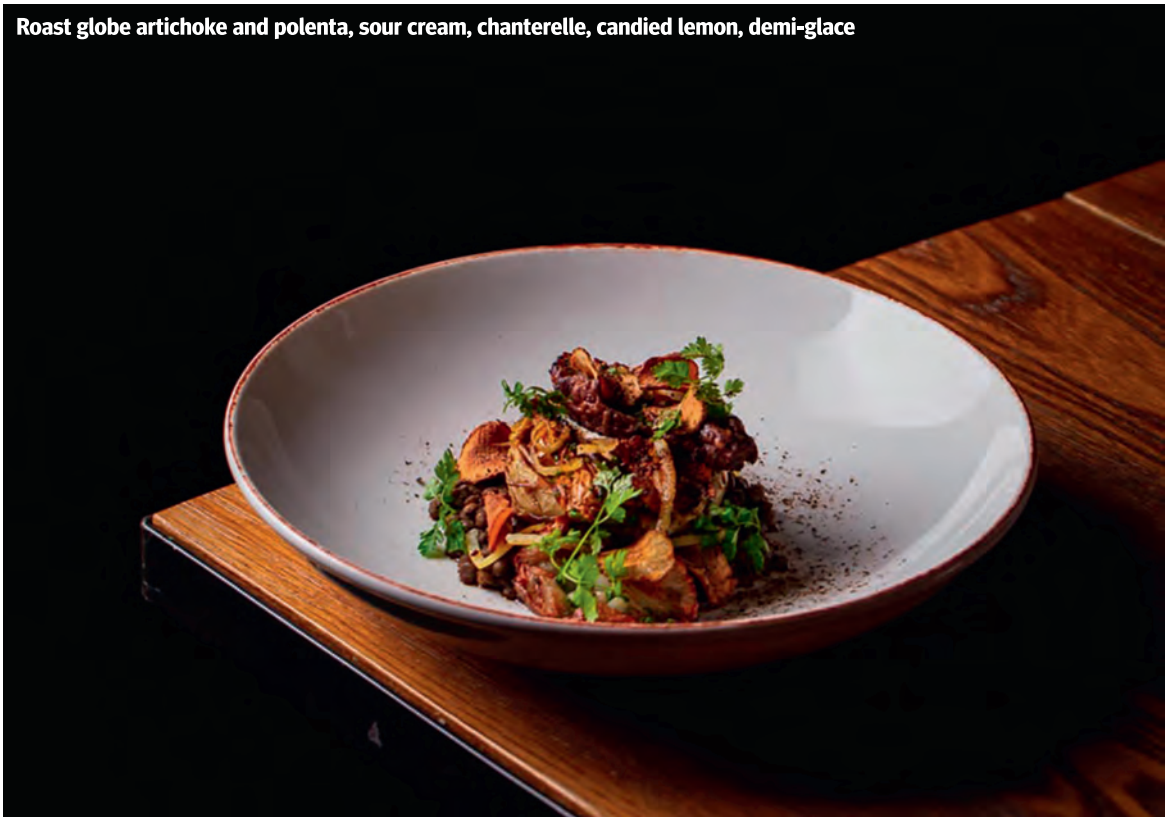
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Roast globe artichoke and polenta, sour cream, chanterelle, candied lemon, demi-glace

The Pumproom

Taking inspiration from the old pumphouse and new distillery, head chef Will Freeman pays homage to historic foundations with a seasonal menu. *Lisa Jenkins* pays a visit

The location for the Pumproom restaurant at the Copper Rivet Distillery is the newly developed Chatham Dockyard in Kent, where head chef Will Freeman and his team are making the most of the beautifully restored and historic pumproom as a backdrop for some creative cooking.

Pumphouse number five, in which the Pumproom restaurant is housed, sat empty from March 1984, when the dockyard closed. Now in the hands of the Russell family, the Copper Rivet Distillery and the Pumproom form an historic and attractive addition to the site.

Here Freeman incorporates the ingredients used in the distillery to make marmite from yeast slurry, a byproduct of gin production, and the spent grain (normally used as cattle feed) is sent to a local baker, who ferments this into a starter to make the restaurant's spent grain loaf.

The barrel-smoked salmon, Masthouse whisky, pickled kolrabhi and barley miso dish (£10) is based on each stage of the production of the Copper Rivet Distillery's Masthouse whisky. The salmon, green apple, rosemary and citrus are lightly smoked using chips from Masthouse barrels and are then served alongside a barley koji, used as a base for the miso.

"I think there is a little something for everyone here"
Will Freeman

Freeman previously worked for Scott Goss at the Swan in West Malling in Kent, and fosters an environment of collaboration at the Pumproom, where he says the Russells have allowed him the freedom to "cook what he enjoys, without a template to follow."

He feels fortunate to be able to "adapt the business rather than adapting to the business," and is relishing the opportunity to create dishes such as the bone marrow fondue, chicken crackling, smoked eel and pickled cockles (£12), which evokes memories of visits to Whitstable as a child. He describes "walking on the beach, getting a pot of cockles, with the smell of smoky beef dripping from the chip shop fogging the air. My dish is served in a bowl with toasted spent grain sourdough, like a fondue."

The best-selling dishes include the salmon and a main called 'All of the pig', with pork belly, black pudding, brawn, sage mash and burnt apple (£23), and the 'Golden Delicious' dessert of Ray's apples (from a local allotment owner) and crumble (£8). Set spheres

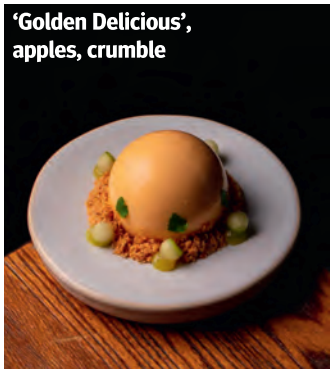



'All of the pig'


Halibut and a flash of lightning


Salt-baked celeriac


Bone marrow fondue


'Golden Delicious', apples, crumble


Will Freeman (front, centre) and his team

of apple mousse are set with salted caramel inside, and then glazed with a white chocolate, served on top of a biscuit crumb. "It tastes like my Nan's apple crumble, but with a change of texture and temperature. Sous chef Lily Stock (who was the back of house student winner of Nestlé Professional's Toque d'Or competition in 2020) is the brains behind the desserts. Suppliers include TH Brown for vegetables, Linton Seafoods and Chart Farm is supplying "top-drawer venison," as well as "sourcing and supplying some fantastic beef."

The menu will change with the seasons and Freeman and his team have set themselves the task of sourcing as much produce as possible from farms local to the area. The kitchen is working hard to minimise waste, and using discards from the distillery "makes sense".

There are plans to design an outside kitchen based around fire to feed guests on the terrace, and to separate the fine dining side of the restaurant. His goal is to give Medway somewhere to shout about, and to be the restaurant people go to without the hour-long train journey and £40 travel card to London.

From the menu

Starters

- Salt-baked celeriac, ricotta, egg, cep, apple, tarragon, truffle **£9.50**
- Chart Farm venison tartare, mignonette, fig, Maldon oyster, crumpet **£11**

Mains

- Roast globe artichoke and polenta, sour cream, chanterelle, candied lemon, demi-glace **£20**
- Halibut and a flash of lightning, mussel beurre monte, aubergine, portobello, nori, thyme **£28.50**

Desserts

- Parsnip parfait, banana ice-cream, bacon, walnut **£7**
- Vanilla Vela vodka cheesecake, blackberry, lavender, beetroot, pecan **£7**
- Celeriac and apple tart tatin, burnt leek, Tunworth **£12**

"We are aiming for the young professionals and any foodie in Medway who wants a good meal. I think there is a little something for everyone here and we offer a tapas menu for people looking for something lighter – just a drink and a relaxed meal, as well as our à la carte."

The distillery is a draw, and the restaurant has kept its industrial feel with old equipment and machinery left as features and the bar is sympathetically designed with materials including wood and iron to complement the original features.

With an average spend of £40-£50 per head (for the à la carte) and healthy bookings of 45 for lunch and dinner, plus more diners in for tapas and drinks in the bar, Freeman's latest role has deposited him in safe moorings and with an excellent crew.

Copper Rivet Distillery, Pumphouse No.5, Leviathan Way, Chatham Maritime, Kent ME4 4LP
01634 931 121
crdpumproom.com



Violations On Good Judgement
By Michael O'Hare
Away With Media, £135

This review started off as a lighthearted 400 words describing this 'coffee table book' – which at 48cm by 33cm and weighing in at 5.2kgs, is it definitely more table than book. *Violations On Good Judgement* makes a big impression, but its scale also makes it very difficult for the average human to comfortably read and take in the stunning photography, which represents O'Hare's creative vision.

Besides its colossal size, what is immediately obvious is that it is all about the photography. Beautiful black and white shots of his Michelin-starred Leeds restaurant the Man Behind the Curtain showcase the artistic flare O'Hare is known for on an XL scale.

The recipe for octopus hot dog with char siu and burnt leek sits on page 64 (out of 348 – there's no contents or index, so I thought I'd help you out there). The recipe describes how to squeeze the octopus legs before boiling, how to create the iconic black bao 'hot dog' bun with powdered squid ink, and to add "shitty hot dog onions" before placing the char siu-coated octopus leg, dotted with leek emulsion and more mayonnaise, on top.

The plates printed in the book are even larger than those you would eat off at the restaurant with their vivid colours and textured tableware almost jumping off the page. I turn to page 183 and I'm immersed in O'Hare's famous squid ink-splattered salt-cured cod from *Great British Menu* – Emancipation (opposite). And then I turn to Gulguk – Korean oyster soup with strawberry and kimchi – and the feminine blush-pink styling, so different from the other dark and moody pages, takes my breath away. Until I read the recipe and my blood runs cold as I stumble across a sentence that becomes worse with each subsequent reading. Anyone who has ever heard O'Hare on TV is aware he thrives on being outspoken, but his words make me wonder if he and his publishing team are completely tone deaf.

I don't want to reprint the statement, but let's just say if we give him the benefit of the doubt it was a misjudged "joke" around oysters and the female anatomy, but this "joke" alludes to women undergoing a particular procedure, which, in my opinion, no man should ever have any say in.

Is it surprising that kitchens are lacking female chefs if this is the 'locker room talk' they have to put up with? I'm writing this as someone who has visited the Man Behind the Curtain, and, at first, this book encapsulated similar feelings from when I sat in the restaurant. And, like his restaurant, I can only imagine, it also encapsulates O'Hare and his favourite things –Ducati motorbikes, snowboards and Asian-influenced dishes.

It's just such a disappointment it is also a weighty record of his own violations on good judgement.

By Caroline Baldwin

Emancipation

Pickled onion juice

250g pearl onions
500ml malt vinegar
150g sugar
1 bay leaf
10g black peppercorns

Peel the onions, leaving them whole. In a large bowl, cover with sea salt. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Wash the onions under running water and transfer to a sterilised air-tight container.

In a saucepan, combine all of the remaining ingredients and heat to dissolve the sugar. Allow to cool. Cover the onions with the pickling liquid and seal. Store in a cool area for six weeks.

Pass through a fine sieve to obtain the pickled onion juice when required.

Parsley oil

150g flat leaf parsley
200ml vegetable oil

Wash the parsley and remove the leaves from their stalks. Blanch the parsley in boiling water for 10 seconds and submerge immediately into an ice bath for 10 seconds.

Wrap the leaves in cloth and squeeze to remove moisture. Blend the parsley on full power with 50ml of the oil, slowly adding the rest of the oil to form a smooth green pulp. Drip the pulp through muslin cloth directly over a chilled bowl.

Cod

1 side Skrei cod
150g sea salt
150g sugar
Peanut oil

Remove the skin from the cod and set aside. Trim the belly and remove any silverskin. Split into two fillets from either side of the bloodline and portion into 80g pieces.

Combine the sugar and salt in a large bowl and mix until even. Coat the cod portions in the cure gently and refrigerate for 22 minutes. Wash the cure from the cod portions carefully under cold running water and drain well. Seal into vacuum bags with a dash of peanut oil.

Cook at 56°C for 8 minutes in a water bath.



Cod skin dashi

Skin from one side of Skrei cod
12 chicken wings
30g kombu
35g katsuobushi
80g shiitake mushroom
15g sea salt
2l water

Trim any flesh away from the skin. Roast at 140°C for 45 minutes or until completely dry. Char briefly on a plancha, allow to cool.

Roast the chicken wings heavily at 200°C until dark golden brown. In a pot, cover the chicken wings with the water and bring up to a simmer. Cook for 45 minutes, skimming regularly. Carefully clean the shiitake mushrooms and add to the pot with the kombu. Continue to simmer for 15 minutes. Ensure you do not bring to the boil. Remove from the heat, cover and steep for 25 minutes.

Pass through a fine sieve and stir in the katsuobushi. Cover and refrigerate for 12 hours to cold infuse. Strain through a fine sieve.

Crispy potatoes and shallots

2 banana shallots
1kg Maris Piper potatoes
Vegetable oil
Olive oil
Sea salt



PHOTOGRAPHY ALLEN MARKEY

Prepare the shallots by peeling and slicing into a fine julienne.

In a saucepan, completely cover the shallots with olive oil. Increase the cooking temperature gradually until the shallots start to bubble. Continue to fry until completely crisp, stirring occasionally to ensure even colouration.

Drain well on paper towels and season with salt.

Peel the potatoes and rinse under cold running water. Using a mandolin, slice the potatoes into a super fine julienne, Wash the excess starch from the potatoes under cold running water and drain.

Deep-fry the potatoes in vegetable oil at 160°C until completely crisp. Drain well on a paper towel.

Gently combine the shallots with potatoes, taking care not to break them.

Gem lettuce

4 baby gem lettuce
150ml parsley oil
7g sea salt

Wash the gem lettuce and remove the first layer of outer leaves. Trim the root of the lettuces and transfer each lettuce to a vacuum bag with sea salt and parsley oil. Fully seal.

Steam for 4 minutes and refresh in an ice bath.

Squid ink vinegar powder

50g squid ink powder
50g malt vinegar powder

Combine the two powders evenly and transfer to a fine hand sifter.

To finish

Baby crevettes
Bronze spray
Koji
Vegetable oil

Quarter the gem lettuces and char on the barbecue for 2 minutes.

In a saucepan, heat the cod skin dashi and add some of the crispy potato shallot mixture to make a ragu.

Season with koji and pickled onion juice. Add some of the additional potato and shallot at the very end to add texture.

Deep-fry the crevettes until crisp. Drain and spray bronze.

Top the cod with potato ragu then cover with a layer of crispy potato and shallot.

Dust with an even, solid layer of squid ink and vinegar powder. Sauce the squid ink dashi and add the baby crevettes.

Revelations

Jonas Karlsson, head chef, Aquavit London



What was your best subject at school?
I always really enjoyed music

What was your first job?
I secured my first job after a week's work placement. It was at Toftaholms Herrgård in Sweden

What do you normally have for breakfast?
Toasted sourdough with Swedish set honey and mature Cheddar

What do you do to relax?
Listen to music – I'm particularly enjoying Ludovico Einaudi

Which is your favourite restaurant?
So many, but if I had to pick one, I would say Le Pré Catalan in Paris

What's your favourite hotel?
I had a great stay in Hotel Kempinski in Moscow

What is your favourite drink?
Red or white wine and bubbles too

What is your favourite food?
You can't beat a warm open sandwich topped with freshly picked and sautéed girolle mushrooms, finished with little diced shallot onions, a splash of white wine and crème fraîche



Which ingredient do you hate the most?
Garlic, it's a love-hate relationship

What flavour combinations do you detest?
Chilli and chocolate



Which person in catering have you most admired?
Philip Howard



Which person gave you the greatest inspiration?
My grandparents

Describe your ultimate nightmare?
Another pandemic

What irritates you most about the industry?
The costs of running a business are high with a small profit margin. You don't go into hospitality for money – it has to be a passion – but I would like to offer higher salaries to attract more people and combat the staffing crisis

What's your favourite film?
Midnight Express

Who would play "you" in a film about your life?
Ricky Gervais

What's your favourite book?
It has to be a cookbook, perhaps *Eleven Madison Park* by Daniel Humm, very inspiring



What is your favourite prepared product?
I can tell you my least favourite prepared product – baked beans

Who would be in your "fantasy" brigade?
Anyone hungry for success, willing to learn, with a good attitude, a good palate and, most importantly, a smile on their face

IMAGES: LIESEL FUCHS, GSDESIGN, BOTH SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Flava agave

Maxim Schulte, manager of Kol restaurant's Mezcaleria bar, talks to *Millie Milliken* about pairing mezcal with food and how to incorporate agave spirits into your cocktails

What drew you to the agave category?
I had a very bad experience with tequila when I was young and I tried to avoid the category when I could. But slowly I thought, "I can't be an all-round bartender if I don't try", so I got a bit more into it. I tried some amazing tequilas and, as I always liked peated whiskies, mezcal agreed with me very early on.

In retrospect, before I went to Kol, I didn't really know anything, so when I accepted the role I had a lot of research to do. I bought five books, read them all and started trying and learning and reading even more.

How do you build a bar concept mainly around one category?
Our menu is not just mezcal – 50% of our cocktails feature an agave spirit, the other 50% are spirits from all over the world. We also have Mexican whisky, Mexican rum – we want to highlight the diversity of Mexican spirit production.

I do, however, find it easy to work with mezcal because it is such a versatile spirit – it has so many flavours, unlike tequila, which has a simpler structure. Mezcal is like wine: it has a sense of terroir, there are over 50 types of agave you can make it from. We really want to have the most versatile and curated selection, trying to have as many varieties as possible to give guests the best experience.

How does mezcal work with food?
Fantastically – especially with the food we do in the restaurant and on the bar's Antojitos ('little cravings') menu. Mezcals have different levels of dryness and alcohol sharpness and all the flavour notes are very versatile, so it's easy to pair and people love it. You can pair mezcal like you pair wine and that's exactly what we do in the restaurant, where we have a full pairing menu with mezcal.

Tell me more about the cocktails at the Mezcaleria
Our tequila martini is really popular and, in fact, we haven't removed that from the menu since the reopening because it was so popular – it's made with Blanco tequila but with freshness of cucumbers and Douglas Fir pine.

Another one is our Batanga with our own fig-leaf mezcal, which has been really popular. Soon we're going to be launching a Mezcaleria Classics selection, so without ignoring seasonality we can have them on the menu for a full year.

"Mezcals have different levels of dryness, alcohol sharpness, all the flavour notes go from very versatile to sweet, so it's easy to pair"
Maxim Schulte

We've invested the time to do a lot of pine distillate and a lot of fig-leaf mezcal, so we have enough to run these drinks for a whole year. Otherwise, some drinks disappear really swiftly – last year one of the drinks was only on for 10 days because the bad weather meant we ran out of the ingredients.

How did making your own Kol-branded mezcals come about?
The idea was to have something 'Kol' that is ours, so we selected four different agave varieties for four mezcals to have a nice selection of different tastes. We then bought entire batches of it, got it imported in massive jerry cans and then we bottle and label it here – the branding is based on a Mexican card game.

How can restaurants use mezcal spirits cleverly in their drinks menu?
There are a lot of tequila cocktails that are really popular: margaritas, palomas and some which are a bit less known, like a toreador. Try these drinks with mezcal and you can see how different it is. I think you find a different complexity in the drink; a different layer added to it.

You can also replace the gin in a lot of cocktails, which works really well – you could even try it in a pornstar martini!



PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK/MAXIMILIA

Seasonal food and drink pairing
Simonnet-Febre Cremant de Bourgogne Brut P100 Blanc de Noir and scallops

This beautiful crémant from the north of Burgundy is made using 100% Pinot Noir and shows lovely fresh citrus notes on the nose before moving into something more rich with excellent structure. Its light bubbles and sharp grapefruit notes will match perfectly with some buttery, sweet scallops.





Raise a glass with...



Bruno Pelletier, general manager at St Pancras Brasserie and Champagne Bar by Searcys, discusses unusual and atypical wines

Atypical wines are becoming more and more popular around the world and there is no sign of this slowing down, which offers a great opportunity to put the spotlight on new and exciting bottles. We have already seen orange wine, which is made by leaving the grape skins and seeds in contact with the juice, surge in popularity. Wines like Vin Jaune (yellow wine), alongside the likes of Jura's Vin de Paille or Vin de Voile, produced in the Gaillac region in the South of France, are also becoming more commonplace.

But in my opinion, the most exciting atypical wines are those produced in unusual conditions. Some examples include Rangiroa, a wine produced in Tahiti with grapes grown in the coral atoll, with two harvests a year; or the wines produced in Bali, where the local grapevine grows on a pergola; or in the Gobi Desert, where grapes are free of diseases due to the absence of humidity.

Here are my top four atypical wine recommendations:

Vidal Blanc Icewine, Signature Series Oak Aged, Peller Estates, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Canada
As the name suggests, this wine is made from frozen white or red grapes in countries with a particularly cold climate. Canada is the number one country producing ice wine, with harvest taking place at night in mid-December. To ensure the grapes reach the right temperature, harvest can only happen with the temperature between -8°C and -12°C, and the wine is only made from humble grapes, such as Gewurztraminer, Riesling and Grüner Veltliner.

Chateau La Mondotte, Saint-Émilion Grand Cru, Vignoble Comte Von Neipperg, Bordeaux, France
Born in the 1990s in Bordeaux, France, garage wine describes a small wine production originally planned for estate château. These micro-cuvées are extremely tannic as they are aged in new oak barrels and have been a big hit with wine critics. Bottles are sold at a very expensive price for an exclusive clientele.

Villa Dei Misteri, Rosso Pompeiano IGT, Mastroberardino, Campania, Italy
From the outskirts of Pompeii comes the Villa dei Misteri wine, a relatively young bottle with a bitter taste and 13.5% ABV. As part of a project to recreate the wines of the ancient city of Pompeii (where the Romans used to mix their wines with seawater to cut the sweetness), Mastroberardino was selected by the Italian government to unearth sites and testing to piece together the ancient winemaking region, the result being a ruby red wine.

Dena Dela White, Emmanuel Poirmeur, Egiategia, Southwest, Vin de France, France
The history of southern France region Egiategia (which means 'the workshop of truths' in Basque) is based on a strong belief: to create from a blank page, with the freedom of the pioneers of the new wine-growing worlds. With this in mind, Emmanuel Poirmeur, winegrower from Egiategia, came up with a very surprising way to produce wine. In 2007, he filed the patent for immersion and maturing wines underwater. Some of his wines undergo a second alcoholic fermentation in vats immersed 15 metres deep in the middle of the Bay of Saint-Jean-de-Luz.

Cocktail of the week: the Frontier

The Stafford London
Director of mixology:
Salvatore Megna



30ml Corte Vetusto Mexcal Espadin
25ml Hendrick's gin, infused with jalapeño
15ml pomegranate shrub
15ml clarified lime juice

- Pour ingredients into a shaker with ice
- Shake for 10-12 seconds
- Double strain into a Mezcal glass
- Garnish with an ear of corn



Thrill

Inject a bit of theatre into your barbecue, with a sleek front of house oven serving up smashed burgers, corn dogs and burgeritos with all the trimmings. *Anne Bruce* rounds up what's hot

The great outdoors was back on the menu last year as the coronavirus pandemic gave everyone an appetite for alfresco and many operators decided to reboot their outdoor space and look again at their menus.

A barbecue area, either front of house or outdoors, proved a great way to comply with restrictions, add a bit of novelty and theatre and pull in profits in uncertain times. But now that life is returning to normal, how can operators ensure customers won't get bored of the barbecue? And what are the latest must-have menu ideas to make sure your barbecue is firing on all cylinders?

First up: make sure the menu basics tick the right boxes. Burgers are an undisputed favourite when it comes to barbecue, and one of the most regularly ordered meals when eating out, Lantmännen Unibake's Americana data suggests. But the days of boring burgers are over and chefs have to up their game, according to Lantmännen Unibake's Americana ambassador, DJ BBQ, also known as Christian Stevenson, which can be seen through the proliferation of chains such as Honest Burgers and Bleecker Burger, he says.

"I'm seeing more demand for homemade-style burgers. Rather than buying the patties pre-made, chefs are buying the best quality meat and then smashing it on the plancha. It's just as quick, if not quicker, and you know you're serving customers top-quality ingredients. But keep it simple."

of the grill


Mission wraps


Funnybones Foodservice kale and hemp burger


Synergy outdoor cook station

"Rather than buying the patties pre-made, chefs are buying the best quality meat"
Christian Stevenson

Suppliers

Bertha
www.berthaoven.co.uk

Funnybones Foodservice
www.funnybones.co.uk

Gold & Green Foods
www.goldandgreenfoods.com/uk

Jestic Foodservice Solutions
www.jestic.co.uk

Lantmännen Unibake
www.lantmannen-unibake.co.uk

Mars Foodservice
www.aimiafoods.com

McCormick Flavour Solutions
www.mccormickflavoursolutions.co.uk

Mission Foodservice
www.missionfoodservice.co.uk

St Pierre Groupe
www.stpierregroupe.com

Synergy Grill Technology
www.synergygrill.com

Tilda
www.tildafoodservice.com

Vadasz Pickles & Ferments
www.vadaszdeli.co.uk

Double trouble

Tom Styman-Heighton, development chef at Funnybones Foodservice, comments that while burgers, hot dogs, ribs and wings are crowd-pleasers, they can require original thinking to make them really appealing to customers. 'Lucy'-style burgers – two thin patties moulded together, sealing in a filling – are a hot trend, he says. Fillings include cheeses, bacon, mushrooms and even mac 'n' cheese.

Funnybones is also seeing an increase in interest in its corn dogs, which are hot dogs dipped in a cornmeal batter, fried and served on a stick. Burgers are also being dipped in cornmeal batter and fried. In fact, anything from pickles to wings is getting the cornmeal batter treatment, Styman-Heighton reports.

Mission Foods' range of tortillas, flatbreads, pittas and naans also provide a flexible foundation to a barbecue dish, suggests Kim Hartley, executive business development chef: "From these base elements you can tap into consumer trends and offer some incredibly diverse and exciting meals that can be perfectly cooked on a barbecue, whether it be a hunter's barbecue pulled pork wrap or a burgerito [minced beef, fries and all the burger accompaniments piled into a tortilla]."

All right jack

While the barbecue is traditionally a meat-eater's milieu, operators also need to make sure their plant-based options are on-point. It's the second secret of barbecue success.

As vegetarian and vegan diets become more mainstream, operators need to make sure menus are primed with good quality options, says Styman-Heighton at Funnybones. Jackfruit has become one of the most popular meat alternatives in vegetarian and vegan dishes, he says.

Operators looking for the latest ingredient for their barbecue offering could benefit from Gold & Green Foods' plant-based Protein Ingredients range, according to Simon Solway, country manager, out of home/retail for UK and Ireland. The range is made up of oat bran, pea and faba bean protein and the products neutral in flavour. The range offers sweet and savoury applications for caterers, including burgers and veggie patties which are perfect for the grill. ▶



Lantmännen DJ BBQ's vegan mushroom kimchi burger



St Pierre Groupe



The Toll Bridge

Spice is right

Rule three of a great barbecue is to ensure that flavour is prioritised, particularly while creating meat-free options. Chris Cannon, commercial controller at McCormick, suggests its range of seasonings, from sriracha and blackened Cajun to Italian allow chefs to elevate their offering, vegan or otherwise.

"They work as a marinade or as a flavour boost throughout cooking, or to stir into sauces to add a point of difference and charge a premium price point," he says.

When it comes to creating dishes to fire up on the barbecue, caterers must offer more than what can be cooked at home, adds Alison Smith, product developer for Mars Food Europe. A simple way to achieve this is with toppings, sauces and marinades. For example, Ben's Original Professional Katsu Curry sauce works as a marinade for chargrilled chicken burgers, providing an exotic Japanese spin.

Caribbean food has also grown hugely in popularity over recent years, with jerk seasoning the standout success and a certain seller, Styman-Heighton adds.

Much inspiration for toppings can also be taken from the US, he suggests. The different American states have favourite hot dog toppings. For example, in Alaska, reindeer hot dog is served with onions and spicy sauce, while in Alabama the bun is smeared with peanut butter and the dog topped with chopped peanuts.

Another secret of the great barbecue is to get your breads right. Lantmännen Unibake's DJ BBQ says 70% of its consumers consider a gourmet bun to be a key characteristic of the burger (Opeepl 12/02/2021 for Lantmännen Unibake UK). A superior bun can make a burger taste great and look good on Instagram.

Research has also shown that consumers are willing to pay more for a gourmet bun, he says.

Scott Oakes, commercial manager for St Pierre, agrees that premiumisation is a thriving trend in barbecue breads, which are shifting towards higher-quality bases such as brioche. The rich and buttery flavour of brioche complements flavours from Korean barbecue chicken burgers to loaded hot dogs. St Pierre's ambient range also frees up freezer space, he adds.



"Updating the serve with sauces, relishes, mustards and side dishes will help to keep the menu current"
Tom Styman-Heighton

Barbecue bosses

Hernan Palacios, founder of Moo Steakhouse, London
"At Moo, we have always drawn in locals, South American natives and meat enthusiasts to our large grill on our terrace, and subsequently we have placed one front and centre in our new Soho branch, Moo Steakhouse. We love sharing the simple way we cook with our customers."

Shane Hughes, head chef, the Toll Bridge, Sandwich, Kent
"Sandwich already has some great pubs offering traditional pub food, so we wanted something a little different at the Toll Bridge. We created a menu inspired by the American smokehouse and Korean barbecue, exploring smoking, barbecuing and grilling, with cuts of meat, fresh local seafood and marinated vegetables. Diners can choose from tender five-hour smoked pork ribs, grilled fish, chicken slowly smoked over beer and more."

Mike Robinson, owner, the Woodsman, Stratford-upon-Avon, and co-owner, the Harwood Arms, Fulham, London
"We have a covered garden at the Woodsman with a barbecue area surrounded by rosemary, sage and thyme. This week I'm cooking half a young wild boar whole. In the winter months we cook a lot of wild food, particularly venison that we harvest ourselves, as well as spatchcock partridge, quail and wild mallard."

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Tilda rice

A bit on the side

Another secret of a great barbecue is to make sure you're serving great sides, and Annette Coggins, head of foodservice at Tilda UK, says that rice can complement the flavours from the grill. "Our professional speciality range means there is a rice for every dish, making it the perfect ingredient for barbecues."

Smaller bites are showing a rise of 18% in popularity, says Kim Hartley at Mission Foods. Options such as nachos can provide a perfect side dish to elevate your barbecue menu while tapping into global trends.

"Here is a rice for every dish, making it the perfect ingredient for barbecues"
Annette Coggins



Jestic Mibrasa oven

Nick Vadasz, founder of Vadasz Ferments & Pickles, comments that whether it's a bratwurst or a tofu teriyaki brochette, adding a portion of Vadasz raw kimchi or raw sauerkraut gives a gut-friendly health message.

Vadasz says: "I recommend stirring either through potato salads, rice, pasta and slaws and blending into mayonnaise, dips and hummus. The brine is also ideal for marinades and dressings, so there's no need to waste a drop."

Another top tip for a great barbecue is keep things interesting, which is key to customer satisfaction and repeat orders, says Styman-Heighton at Funnybones: "These products are so familiar that it is easy to keep serving the same trusted garnish and sides. However, updating the serve with sauces, relishes, mustards and side dishes will help to keep the menu current."

And for one final must-have for a great barbecue is a great oven. Choosing the right oven can allow venues to differentiate themselves from contending outlets, says Justin Cadbury, chairman and chief executive of Synergy Grill Technology.

Synergy's outdoor cook station uses a natural ceramic heat bed. The fat is atomised, avoiding the "black smoke" flavour often associated with barbecues. Thermal shock resistant bars enable chefs to cook a higher volume of food, as the temperature of the grill will remain consistent, even with a sudden influx of orders.

Steve Morris, sales director at Jestic Foodservice Solutions, suggests that for theatre, the Parrilla Fire Series from Mibrasa combines charcoal and firewood cooking to create a live fire grilling appliance.

With a general move towards multi-functional cooking equipment, charcoal ovens such as the Bertha range, have become very popular, says Kenan Koymen, head of sales at Bertha Ovens. These are perfect for barbecuing, with faster cooking times than a traditional open grill they offer speedy turnaround.

Chefs can then premiumise their dishes using menu descriptors to highlight that the item has been cooked in a charcoal oven, and the variety of wood chips used, such as apple or beech.

As we come out of the pandemic, with kitchens having invested in cooking with fire, and diners looking for excitement, barbecue is well on track to become an all year-round cuisine.

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Country Range Student Chef Challenge finalists announced

The final eight college teams in the Country Range Student Chef Challenge have been announced and will now go on to compete in the grand final at the HRC show at Excel in London on 22 March.

The teams, each made up of three young chefs from colleges around the UK and Northern Ireland, had to devise a paper-based (due to Covid restrictions) three-course menu consisting of smoked fish canapés, a guinea fowl main course and a tart with a crumble topping for dessert.

The applications had to include the full menus with recipes and costings, methodology showing menu development and images of the dishes they devised.



The 2020 Country Range Student Chef Challenge winners from City of Liverpool College

The final eight will now face off in the live final, where they will have to create their menus and present them within 90 minutes in front of a live audience.

Craft Guild of Chefs chairman of judges Chris Basten explained the process: "The cancellation of last year's competition has obviously focused the minds of students as the number and quality of applications has never been so high. It's therefore an even bigger shame that we have had to cancel the regional practical heats and solely judge teams on their paper applications.

"The challenge is as much about final flavours, teamwork and performance in the kitchen on the day, so I'm sorry to all the colleges who haven't made it through. To the eight finalists – congratulations, your menus impressed us greatly and we look forward to tasting the dishes."

Country Range group marketing manager, Kate Bancroft, added: "It was incredibly difficult decision for our judges without the practical heats, as the quality of menus submitted was phenomenal. The eight winning menus all sound incredible so it's shaping up to be an exciting final and cook-off."

The finalists

- Cambridge Regional College
- Coleg Llandrillo
- City of Glasgow
- New City College
- Loughborough College
- Moray College
- Hertford Regional College
- West Suffolk College.

NACC and HCA join forces on Health and Care Bill

The National Association of Care Catering (NACC) and the Hospital Caterers Association (HCA) have announced a joint meeting with Lord Kamall at the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure the key challenges facing health and social care catering are understood as part of the Health & Care Bill.

Sue Cawthray, national chair of the NACC, and Brian Robb, chair of the HCA, will attend a meeting with Lord Kamall, the parliamentary under-secretary of state for technology, innovation and life sciences at the Department of Health and Social Care.

The invitation was made by Lord Kamall following a debate in the House of Lords in which Lord Hunt, president of the HCA, and Baroness Barker, patron of the NACC, spoke in support of an amendment to the Health & Care Bill, calling for better funding, training, pay and recognition across health and social care catering.





Sue Cawthray, national chair of the NACC, and Baroness Barker, patron

Cawthray said: "We're delighted to have the opportunity to work with the HCA and provide a voice for health and social care caterers at this landmark meeting. This is a major step forward for us to be heard at this critical time, and to make a real difference to the future of care catering and its dedicated workforce.

"Our aim is to secure greater recognition of the essential role care caterers play through the introduction of professional standards and an agreed framework, recognised by the CQC and ICGs, that give chefs in care catering real credibility. Training has to be mandatory, properly funded and regularly updated and refreshed, to ensure that it is accessed by all chefs across the sector.

"By training care chefs to a high standard so that they confidently cater for the many food-related challenges within older people – from dysphagia, food allergies and intolerances, and loss of appetite, to dementia and oral issues – and supporting them in working directly with care staff, we will ultimately reduce hospital admissions and improve the health and lives of those in care environments."

North Wales Food Expo returns as caterers gear up for busy 2022

One of Wales' showcase events is back on the calendar with the return of the Harlech Foodservice Expo. More than 70 food and drink producers will exhibit at the free event for trade customers at Venue Cymru in Llandudno on 2-3 March.

Suppliers including Wall's, Hellman's, Weetabix, McCain's and Young's Seafood will all take stands, as well as Quorn, with increasing interest in vegetarian and vegan options on menus.

Welsh suppliers include Village Bakery, Snowdonia Cheese, butchers Edwards of Conwy, Tŷ Nant mineral water, distillery Aber Falls, Snowdon Lager and Harlech's own Bwydlyn Butchery. Welsh food wholesaler Harlech is expecting more than 2,000 visitors to the 43rd expo after it had to be called off last year due to the pandemic.

Expo 2022 organiser Matt Flynn, Harlech's head of purchasing and marketing, said: "Everyone wants to get back to business and the feeling is very positive with people back out and about and tasting food and drink. This is the start of the season for the catering and hospitality trade and we are focusing on the quality of our suppliers rather than sheer quantity and on major suppliers.



PHOTO: MANDY JONES



"There will be plenty to see as well with TV screens on stands and chefs doing live cookery demonstrations, including our own development chef manager Stephen Griffiths."

Griffiths added: "We'll be featuring our new Bwydlyn Select range along with our premium quality Brongain range, but we'll also be explaining what you can do with different cuts of meat, from nose to tail. I'll be demonstrating different recipes and styles from around the world using our products and I've also invited Essential Cuisine to provide its range of speciality sauces, rubs and seasonings to show the kind of variety that can be offered to our customers.

"It's my role to support them to get the best out of what we supply and give them new ideas on how to get the most out of our products and perhaps bring that bit of theatre to your menu."

Traders and businesses can attend the exhibition with current, prospective and existing customers, chefs, restaurateurs, hoteliers and other foodservice industry professionals.

Harlech have also broadened their offer to include personal protective equipment for their care home customers as well as cleaning and other non-food products.

The two-day event is aimed at trade customers and is not open to the public.

To register for the expo, go to https://bit.ly/3orlNT9

Hobart Service to support dealer network

Hobart Service has extended its service and maintenance offering beyond its end-user client base to the dealer network.

The UK-wide service and maintenance team are introducing the dealership offer to facilitate closer relationships with Hobart equipment users, as well as re-enforcing the importance of their relationship with dealers.

Keith Mackie, managing director for Hobart Service, said: "Our proposition to the market has always focused on us maintaining Hobart machines. The dealer network plays a significant role in the UK catering industry, and we want to help dealers service teams who work across multiple catering brands, by supporting them on the Hobart machines. It is within our aligned interests with the dealer network to ensure customers receive the highest level of service, tailored to the specific brand of equipment. We are confident this extension of our expertise will be well received, and all parties will benefit, with customers at the forefront.



"Our full team will immerse themselves into supporting the dealership network. They are acting as a 'remote arm' to the dealership business, who will support customers in the exact same way we would our own client base. Our number one priority is protecting our brand, by ensuring our machines are maintained by factory trained engineers."

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www.thecaterer.com

Neel Radia

The national account manager of healthcare at Bidfood UK talks to *Katherine Price* about moving from tourism to retail to foodservice, but always with a focus on people

Did you study a hospitality-related course?
Yes, I studied a GNVQ in hospitality management at West Herts College before going to the University of Brighton to study a BA in tourism management.

Did you do any work experience in the industry at a young age?
When I was in college, I had one work experience placement at the Bupa Hospital in Bushey, where I helped prepare and serve meals to patients. I also did a placement at Harrow hotel, in housekeeping.

What was your first job?
My first paid job was for Topman/Topshop in Watford as a sales adviser. It started when I was 15 as a weekend job, and I continued working for the group throughout my teens and early 20s as I studied.

What initially attracted you to working in hospitality?
People. I've always been a people person and loved food, so what better industry to work in than hospitality. I took the tourism path for my degree because of my enjoyment of travelling and of working in a customer-facing role. My dream job at the time was to work in attraction management.

What was your first hospitality job?
My first paid job was with Walt Disney World, Florida, as a cultural representative at one of its parks, Epcot. I interviewed for the role in the UK and was given a one-year contract. It was one of the most amazing jobs I have had.

Who was your first mentor/role model in hospitality?
Clare Weeden, my lecturer at the University of Brighton. Clare was one of those lecturers who was so passionate about the industry and really helped me to understand the depth of career pathways the sector has to offer as well as what can be achieved.



"Personal career development is an ongoing process – every role enables you to develop"

How did you decide on your career direction?
I had just finished my year in the States and had the opportunity to start a five-year management programme. However, after 9/11 the tourism industry halted and so did my opportunity to start the programme, leaving me to re-evaluate my career.

I went back to retail and completed an internal management programme to work within the Arcadia group. Around 18 months into this role I was talking to an old colleague from Disney, which made me question if really wanted to pursue the retail route or to go back into hospitality. So, as you do, I had a think about it while backpacking for 18 months around Australia and Southeast Asia on a working holiday.

CV

2021-present National account manager – healthcare, Bidfood UK
2020–2021 Framework account manager (public and consortia), Brakes UK
2018–2020 Regional account executive – independents, Brakes UK
2013–2019 National chairman, National Association of Care Catering (NACC)
2007–2013 South-east regional chair, NACC
2005–2018 Business development manager, Raj Foods
2002–2004 Concession manager, Arcadia Group
2000–2001 Cultural rep, Walt Disney World, Florida

Talk me through the steps in your career in hospitality
On returning to the UK, I joined Raj Foods as business development manager where I spent 14 years. From here I joined Brakes Foodservice (part of Sysco) and am now national account manager – healthcare at Bidfood UK.

Have you embarked on any additional career development?
I'm proud to have served on a voluntary basis as national chairman of the National Association of Care Catering and on the London branch of the Institute of Hospitality as deputy chair. Personal career development is an ongoing process, and every role in a career enables you to develop and learn new things. Both the NACC and IoH roles on top of the day job have enabled me to grow as a person while progressing my career.

Do you have any regrets?
No. Every path we take helps define who we are. I sometimes wish I had pursued working in tourism after I got back from travelling; but if I'd done that, I would not have had the amazing experiences I have had, nor met some of the most incredible people.

What advice would you give someone new to the industry?
Don't be afraid to explore different roles. Working in hospitality does not restrict you to the obvious hotel and restaurant roles. There is great depth in the hospitality ocean – there are roles in hospitals and care homes as well as fantastic opportunities in areas such as finance, revenue management, sales, HR and procurement, which might not always get attention but play a big role in all hospitality businesses. And be proactive: if you see a brand or leader you want to work for, tell them why and how you think you could add value to their business.

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