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It has been sobering going through the results of our poll on rising energy costs. The sense of desperation and despair can only be compared to the days between then prime minister Boris Johnson suggesting people don't go to hospitality venues and the launch of the furlough scheme which pulled business back from the brink.

This time, however, it is unlikely that the government is able to pull such a rabbit from the hat. Back then it was only a sticking plaster, but it enabled businesses to limp through.

According to our survey (page 20) over half of the operators we spoke to believe that without significant support their business will go under within a year, with 40% expecting a rise in bills of over 300%. One told us: "I am extremely anxious for the future and don't see a way out. I'm afraid to express my fears as this could lead to the collapse of our business and support from the staff."

It's no surprise that 86% of respondents said that the worry was having an impact on their mental health.

There has been an understandable pause in governmental matters after the death of the Queen, but the hospitality sector can wait no longer for support. With what's billed as a mini budget set for this week the industry must have immediate clarity on what can be expected. Just like during the pandemic when people flocked to pubs,

restaurants and hotels – albeit outside – hospitality can once again be a place of refuge and warmth for the public. We must be able to keep the lights on.



James Stagg
Editor

FRONT COVER PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AUDIO UND WERBUNG

Content team

If you have a news story, contact: news@thecaterer.com



James Stagg
Editor

james.stagg@thecaterer.com
07790 192369



Lisa Jenkins
Managing editor

lisa.jenkins@thecaterer.com
07739 129112



Emma Lake
Assistant editor

emma.lake@thecaterer.com
07826 905176



Caroline Baldwin
Features and special projects editor

caroline.baldwin@thecaterer.com
07584 429280



Sophie Witts
News editor

sophie.witts@thecaterer.com
07786 223325



Jungmin Seo
Reporter

jungmin.seo@thecaterer.com
07715 237557

Phone numbers: 0207 881 4800 • Production Senior Designer Emma Winton • **Production editor** Kirsty Utting **Print and digital sub editor** Maria Mellor • **The Caterer events Head of events** Martha Allardyce + 728 **Other contacts Senior marketing manager** Meredith Pistulka + 741 **Marketing executive** Daisy Smith • **To place a display advert, contact:** + 317 or email advertising@thecaterer.com • **Commercial director** Rob Adam **Sales manager** Cheryl Townsend + 322 • **Account director** Michael Murray + 309 • **Recruitment sales manager** Tanya Read + 272 **To place a job advert, email** jobs@thecaterer.com • **To place a property, classified or The Caterer Directory advert, contact** advertising@thecaterer.com • **Managing director** Stuart Parish • **Chief executive officer** Duncan Horton • **Chairman** Clive Jacobs

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Restaurants switch to set menus in face of rising costs

Set menus are making it easier for restaurants to be efficient and manage overheads, while tempting customers with value for money



Oklava in London's Shoreditch is one of the restaurants beginning to offer a set menu to combat costs

By Sophie Witts

Some restaurants are switching to offering fixed-price set menus to cope with staff shortages and soaring costs.

Operators say they face a crisis “worse than Covid” with many struggling to balance the books amid rising energy bills, wages, and ingredient prices.

Turkish-Cypriot restaurant Oklava in London's Shoreditch began offering an evening set menu over the summer and extended it through the week in September. It is priced at £48 per person for four courses on weekdays and £54 for five courses on weekends.

Co-owner Laura Christie said she was initially reluctant to make the change but that it has made it easier to manage staff, waste and the customer experience.

“It's about how can we be more efficient and run tighter but still provide people with a great experience,” said Christie.

“Switching to a set menu means everything is more straightforward because front of house don't have to take people through the menu as we already know what they're having.

“It's quicker and more efficient and you can do it with fewer staff. We can take a risk on more junior people who need more time and training.”

Japanese-inspired restaurant Dai Chi in London's Soho is offering a £42 six-course menu and a £59 eight-course set menu.

Co-founder Joshua Owens-Baigler said it had “worked a treat” and meant customers would get to try dishes they would not normally have ordered.

“[Against] the backdrop of rising costs it enables us to keep our prices consistent and also offer an excellent product,” he said.

Filipino restaurant Sarap in Mayfair has launched a six-course evening set menu for £55 per person. Guests can add the restaurant's signature roasted lechon for an additional £10 per

person, while a smaller set menu is available for lunch service.

Chef-founder Ferdinand ‘Budgie’ Montoya said he had always wanted to switch the restaurant to a set menu format but admitted staffing shortages and rising costs had sped up the change.

“No doubt the increase in costs and staffing shortages have forced us to maybe bring this on sooner rather than later, however we've always wanted to create a reference point to Filipino cuisine as well as build our repertoire, confidence and ultimately our identity,” said Montoya.

Cash-conscious customers

Restaurants are increasingly aware that their customers face a squeeze on their own budgets. This month chef Tom Kerridge launched a two-course, £15 set lunch menu at three of his restaurants, in London, Marlow and Manchester, with the aim of getting “the excitement and buzz back into restaurants

without guests having the fear of spending too much money”.

Kerridge inspired the Castle hotel in Taunton to offer its own fixed-price menu at £15 for two courses or £20 for three courses throughout September.

Christie, who also runs the Linden Stores restaurant in Cheshire, said some customers were wary of ordering from a menu of small plates due to uncertainty about how much they may need to spend.

“[Linden Stores] is in a small village and we do small plates and some people found it baffling when we first opened. We started doing an optional fixed price menu and it's so popular because people don't have to think about it.”

Oklava still offers à la carte options on Friday and Saturday and Christie acknowledged some customers would dislike the change.

She added: “It can be tempting in times like now when it's difficult and scary to batten down the hatches and keep everything the same. But we can't just stick to old methods that don't work because we're scared. We have to be bold and make different choices.

“I think you're going to see lots of people in the industry start to do [set menus]. I've heard lots of chatter from people calling me up to see how it's going. It won't work for everyone's format and restaurants need to do what's right for them.

“We will see restaurants start to focus on giving the kind of better all-round experience to people at a higher price point, even if there's fewer customers, because it makes sense right now. It could be a return to dining out being a ‘special’ experience.”

sophie.witts@thecaterer.com

Industry pays tribute to restaurateur Andrew Edmunds

By Katherine Price

Andrew Edmunds, whose eponymous restaurant had been a bastion of the Soho dining scene for more than 35 years, has died at the age of 79.

The Observer restaurant critic Jay Rayner said that the restaurant was “a true pillar of Soho”, while Marina O’Loughlin of *The Sunday Times* said Edmunds was “the best kind of restaurateur, in it for the love of it”.

Jesse Dunford Wood, chef-restaurateur of Parlour in Kensal Green, tweeted: “An ardent stickler of the traditional, the scuffed, the unfashionable, the classic, the unfussy, the great value, the seasonal and the functional.”

The restaurant was established in 1985, and was described as “one of the last bastions of ‘old Soho’”. It is set within an 18th-century townhouse and offers a seasonal menu and reasonably priced wine list.

Edmunds opened the site next to his existing art dealership, creating exactly the sort of restaurant he wanted as a neighbour. More than 35 years on, its daily-changing menu of



Edmunds created the sort of restaurant he wanted as a neighbour

classic comfort foods continued to attract diners.

The art dealership itself was founded in 1974, selling English and French prints, drawings and cartoons from the 18th and 19th centuries. It was one of the few old print dealers left in London selling works by the likes of William Hogarth, Daumier, Mesquita and Thomas Rowlandson. Edmunds was also known for lending pieces to London’s Tate Britain gallery and Cambridge’s Fitzwilliam Museum.

The Andrew Edmunds Memorial Page has been set up and is accepting donations for the Woodland Trust, which celebrates his life-long interest in tree conservation.

A post on the Memorial Page read: “It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Andrew Edmunds who died suddenly, after a short illness on 15 September 2022. Much loved and missed by his family, many friends, staff and customers at Andrew Edmunds restaurant, print shop and the Academy Club. Donations welcomed here to a cause close to his heart.”

katherine.price@thecaterer.com

Great Fosters hotel to relaunch the Tudor Room with chef Alex Payne

The Great Fosters hotel in Egham, Surrey, is to relaunch its Tudor Room restaurant as the Tudor Pass under new executive chef Alex Payne on 1 October.

It comes after the departure of the restaurant’s former executive chef Tony Parkin in July.

Payne competed in the 2018 series of *MasterChef: The Professionals* and was previously head chef at the Thames Table at Crockers in Henley-on-Thames. In the past, he has worked with Heston Blumenthal and Gordon Ramsay.

At the Tudor Pass, he will oversee the lunch and dinner menu, serving dishes with seasonal ingredients using modern techniques.

Payne said: “My team and I plan to explain and serve many of the dishes directly to diners to bring some of the excite-

ment and theatre of the kitchen into the restaurant. I want to create lasting memories for our guests; whether that’s eating something they’ve never tasted before, finding their new

favourite wine that’s paired with one of our dishes, or simply learning something new about cooking from the team.”

Prem Kumar, hotel manager at the Great Fosters Estate,

added: “We are delighted to be opening the Tudor Pass and eagerly anticipate Alex’s exciting menu. I know that our guests are really going to enjoy this new style of cooking and we all look forward to The Tudor Pass becoming the restaurant of choice for local Surrey residents, as well as becoming a reason to visit for guests coming to stay overnight with us.”

The recently refurbished Tudor Pass has just seven tables and will be open Wednesdays to Saturdays, with prices starting at £65 for a four-course lunch and £120 for a seven-course dinner.

The Great Fosters is part of the Alexander Hotel Collection and features 56 individually designed bedrooms, two restaurants, private dining facilities and the Utopia Retreat.



The refurbished Tudor Pass will have just seven tables for diners

Hotelier stole £800,000 to pay debts

Liverpool Crown Court heard that Gateway to Wales hotelier Simon Matthews-Williams considered the funds a “short-term loan”

A hotelier has been jailed after stealing hundreds of thousands of pounds from a business.

Simon Matthews-Williams, 62, was sentenced to 28 months in prison after abusing a position of trust to transfer nearly £800,000 out of the bank account of a company he had formerly held a stake in.

Matthews-Williams was a Holiday Inn franchisee whose portfolio also included a Doubletree by Hilton and Days Inn in Chester, a Marco Pierre White restaurant and guest house in Aughton and events venue West Tower near Ormskirk.

A trial at Liverpool Crown Court heard that the “experienced company director” had been a minor stakeholder in the Gateway to Wales hotel, near to the A494 in Deeside. By early 2019, Matthews-Williams “no longer had any role” in the business and “had long given up any financial interest or management in the hotel”.

However, he still retained access to its banking facilities and made a series of payments of just under £200,000 into another of his company’s accounts before transferring the total of £794,779 to himself and his family members “to pay bills that he was being pressed to pay”.

Ben Jones, prosecuting, described how Bjorn Parkander was the primary investor in the Gateway to Wales hotel. Matthews-Williams’ Sanguine Hospitality Limited (SHL) “initially managed the day-to-day activities of the hotel”, but this was taken over by an unconnected company, Black and White Hospitality Limited, in 2015.

Barbara Holtaway had been employed by SHL to manage the payrolls and accounts of the hotel and continued to do so for Black and White Hospitality. When she went on bereavement leave on 15 February 2019, Matthews-Williams was able to “misuse her access” to the hotel’s bank accounts, making the first of his transfers three



Matthews-Williams was jailed on 12 September after being found guilty of five counts of theft

“We suggest the defendant had no intention of paying back anyone”

Ben Jones

days later and continuing to do so into the following month.

The court heard that Matthews-Williams had “a feeling that he was owed up to £1.6m” by a third-party company, Downing Wealth Management (DWM), which had assisted in the management of Parkander’s investments. DWM and Matthews-Williams had previously been involved in a project to develop a hotel in the capital, which had failed.

Jones described how the defendant felt “somehow enti-

tled to take the money” from the hotel because of its association with Parkander.

Matthews-Williams had described the transfers as a “short-term, inter-company loan which he intended to pay back immediately”.

Jones said: “Yes, he had the physical ability to still access the Gateway to Wales hotel’s bank account after his company Sanguine stopped managing the hotel. But no, he did not have the legal right to take advantage of that ability to treat the hotel’s money as his own.”

He continued: “We suggest the defendant had no intention of paying back anyone. He did not in fact pay anyone back and only made this suggestion when the fraud was discovered.”

In a statement read to the court, Parkander described how he “feels very stupid, having blindly put faith” in Matthews-Williams. He added that he “felt a significant amount of betrayal”.

Robert Dudley, defending,

said his client had attempted to pay £200,000 of the money back but was prevented from doing so due to ongoing court proceedings.

He added: “The offences were borne out of frustration with Downing and the perception that it was undermining the financial position of Sanguine. This was an intention to get Downing around the table. There was no intention to steal money from Mr Parkander or the Gateway.”

Judge Stuart Driver KC imprisoned Matthews-Williams on 12 September, after he was found guilty of five counts of theft by a jury. He was also banned from acting as a company director for seven years and told to pay a victim surcharge.

Matthews-Williams could now be ordered to repay the money under the Proceeds of Crime Act. He will be brought back before the same court next year.

news@thecaterer.com

Hyssop launches crowdfund after fire

By Emma Lake

Hyssop restaurant in Glossop, Derbyshire, has launched a £10,000 crowdfunding appeal after its site was “completely devastated” by a fire.

The blaze was started by a tumble dryer on the evening of 14 September.

In an Instagram post the restaurant, which was founded by chef Paul Sykes and his partner Jess Hine, said it had been “the worst day of our lives”.

The post said: “Our whole top floor of the restaurant went up in flames and we’ve lost the lot. Thankfully Paul and all of the staff managed to escape unharmed. No lives were lost and that is the most important thing.”

The restaurant started as a pop-up in a local pub before moving into its own premises on Glossop high street. It is listed in the *Michelin Guide Great Britain and Ireland 2022*, which praised its classic flavour combinations and the creativity of its vegetable dishes.

In a bid to keep trading



The Hyssop team is staging a pop-up while the restaurant is rebuilt

while the restaurant is rebuilt, Hyssop has launched a crowdfunding campaign.

Its Crowdfunder page reads: “As we wait to get the ball rolling on the rebuilding of

our business completely from scratch, we have to come up with a way to keep the finances afloat to pay the bills and staff going forward in the coming months.

“Just as many other businesses operate in this current economic climate, Hyssop survives week by week, and any loss of earnings will be catastrophic to our future.

“We are trying to raise some funds to enable us to make part of our space functional in order to trade in some way, shape or form, in order to keep things ticking.”

At the time of writing, the crowdfund has raised almost £7,000 from 207 supporters.

The restaurant team said: “We are honestly so overwhelmed, we can’t even put into words how grateful we are. You are all incredible.”

View the crowdfunding page at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/hyssop-fire-devastation

emma.lake@thecaterer.com

Nottingham to scrap late-night levy next month

A tax on late-night licensed premises in Nottingham is to be revoked next month in a bid to ease financial pressure on local businesses.

Nottingham’s late-night levy was introduced in 2014 and imposed a charge on licensed premises operating between midnight and 6am.

The funds raised were split between Nottingham City Council and police to tackle late night crime and disorder and help manage the night-time economy.

But the council said the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the cost of living crisis meant the economic situation of the hospitality industry had now changed,

“[It] is felt the levy is placing a difficult burden on existing licensed trade businesses and could be a barrier to incoming or expanding businesses,” said a statement from the council.



Nottingham Council said the levy could be a barrier to new business

The council’s licensing committee reviewed the levy earlier this year and launched a consultation over the issue, which

found the “vast majority” of respondents were in favour of it being revoked.

The council endorsed the

revocation of the scheme, meaning it will come to an end on 31 October.

Councillor Neghat Khan said: “A lot has changed since the late-night levy was introduced eight years ago, with the hospitality industry really struggling during the pandemic – only to be hit by the cost of living crisis bringing them higher bills and lower incomes from reduced customer numbers.

“It was the right time for us to consider whether the levy should be revoked, to ease the financial burden on existing businesses and to help encourage businesses looking to expand or invest in Nottingham’s late-night economy.”

The council said it anticipated that the loss of this income will be offset by Nottinghamshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner receiving an extra £13m towards recruiting more police officers.



GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW IMPACT OF CALORIE COUNTS ON MENUS

The government is to review its anti-obesity policies to measure the impact of rules such as including calorie counts on menus.

It is understood an internal review is being undertaken in light of the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Hospitality businesses with more than 250 employees have had to list calorie information on menus since 6 April.

Chefs have warned the regulations could stifle creativity in the kitchen and prove difficult for customers with eating disorders.

The Guardian reports the review will be “deregulatory in focus” and could see the scrapping of many anti-obesity policies introduced under Boris Johnson’s government as part of a move by his successor Liz Truss to cut red tape for businesses.

HOTELS SOLD OUT AROUND QUEEN’S FUNERAL



Hotels in London and Windsor saw a surge of bookings ahead of the Queen’s state funeral on 19 September.

Thousands of people lined the streets to see the funeral procession from the capital to Windsor Castle.

Andrew Coney, general manager of the Hari hotel, which is a 20-minute walk away from Buckingham Palace, said the hotel was full last week and for much of this week.

“We completely understand and appreciate our guests’ wishes to share in the country’s mourning and have ensured to maintain our usual service and room rate offers, in no way capitalising on such a sad occasion,” he said.

Stuart Proctor, chief operating officer of the Stafford Collection, said: “[Since] the sad news of Her Majesty’s passing, we have seen a sharp increase in demand from guests across the globe – not only those looking to pay their respects over the next week, but those looking to visit London throughout the remainder of the year.”

Travelodge, which operates 78 hotels across London, said its properties in central London and Windsor were “literally sold out”.

IHG SAYS GUEST DATA REMAINS SAFE AFTER HOTEL CYBER-ATTACK

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has said it has found no evidence that hackers were able to access guest data as part of a cyber-attack earlier this month.

On 6 September IHG told investors it had been hacked, causing its reservations channels and other applications to be “significantly disrupted”.

The hackers, who described themselves as a couple from Vietnam, have since contacted the BBC through encrypted messaging app Telegram.

They said they gained access to IHG’s Outlook emails, Microsoft Teams chats and server directories using the weak password Qwerty1234.

IHG’s hotels remain open and the company said it was continuing to investigate the incident.

An IHG spokesperson said: “At this time, we have not identified any evidence of unauthorised access to guest data. We remain focused on supporting our hotels and owners.”

TOM CLARKE TO OPEN ESSEX RESTAURANT



Tom Clarke, former head chef of L’Ortolan in Reading, is to open a restaurant with his wife Nancy Witte at the end of September in Little Waltham, Essex.

JASON AND IRHA ATHERTON TO END NEW YORK RESTAURANT PARTNERSHIP

Jason and Irha Atherton have announced the end of a six-year partnership between the Social Company and Starr Restaurants in New York due to a “difference in vision” for the Clocktower restaurant.

The Clocktower, which was launched in 2015 and marked the first collaboration between Atherton and US restaurateur Stephen Starr, received a Michelin star in the 2018 edition of the *Michelin Guide USA*.

The 90-cover restaurant is located on the second floor of the Metropolitan Life building, and is part of the New York Edition hotel.

A spokesperson for the Social Company said: “[Jason and Irha] would like to thank the Edition New York, as well as Steven Starr personally for being professional and courteous throughout the partnership and wish him and the restaurant the best for the future.

“Jason and Irha will deeply miss operating a restaurant in New York and can’t wait to be back in the vibrant city soon.”



The restaurant, which will be called the Windmill and is in Chatham Green, is to serve seasonal, modern British food with a European and Asian twist. The menu will also put an emphasis on foraging.

Clarke previously worked at Raymond Blanc’s two-Michelin-starred Le Manoir aux Quat’Saisons in Oxfordshire and took over as head chef at Michelin-starred French fine dining restaurant L’Ortolan in Reading in 2015.

Clarke said: “It’s obviously a

challenge under the circumstances but ultimately it’s something that myself and Nancy always strived to do, so we’re excited.”

Witte, who will oversee front of house, added: “I’m incredibly nervous but so excited as well.”

FULLER’S REPORTS £10m ENERGY PRICE HIKE

Pub group Fuller’s has said it expects its total gas and electricity costs this year to be around £18m, compared to £8m last year.

The group, which owns 385

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and restaurants went insolvent in the 12 months until the end of July, compared to 1,354 the year before.

There were 216 insolvencies of hospitality businesses in July, up from 158 in June, according to data shared by audit, tax, and advisory firm Mazars.

Hospitality firms have warned they face a struggle to survive without help to tackle rising energy bills.

Adam Harris, partner at Mazars, said: "Small business owners in particular are struggling under the weight of multiple crises, often without the resources or financial cushion to see them through.

"The government's upcoming energy package will be key to determining whether many businesses survive. Unless the picture dramatically changes, we are likely to see many more businesses close their doors in the months to come.

NEW DATE FOR NATIONAL HOSPITALITY DAY 2022

NATIONAL HOSPITALITY DAY

National Hospitality Day 2022 has been postponed until the end of the month following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

The event, designed as a celebration of the industry, was due to take place on 16 September but has been pushed back to 30 September.

A statement on the event's website said: "We want National Hospitality Day to be a celebration of our fantastic industry and the

brilliant people who work within it. After discussions between the partner charities and participating businesses we felt it was only right to postpone the event to allow us all time to mourn Her Majesty the Queen."

The first National Hospitality Day was held in 2021 and encouraged people to visit their favourite venues, while operators were invited to put on activities and offers to celebrate the sector and its suppliers.

Businesses were asked to incorporate a fundraising element into their activities to support charities including Hospitality Action, Springboard, the Drinks Trust and the Licensed Trade Charity, and over £50,000 was raised as a result.

ALEX BOND LAUNCHES CROWDFUND FOR NOTTINGHAM FRIED CHICKEN RESTAURANT

Alex Bond, chef-patron of Michelin-starred Alchemilla in Nottingham, has launched a £100,000 crowdfunding campaign for the opening of his fried chicken restaurant concept Mollis.

Bond secured the site, which is next to Alchemilla, 18 months ago, but said the team were "tied up in red tape for a long time with the purchase" and are now facing structural issues with the building, which have hit their budget.

The chef has promised that those who support the campaign will receive tickets to "collab dinners" with other chefs, preview access to the soft opening, Mollis T-shirts, and cocktail masterclasses.

Bond said: "We are on the final stretch now and have all our ducks in a row. We just need your help to get us over the line."



pubs, said the global energy crisis was causing "significant increases" in expected costs for gas and electricity

During the first half of the year, total sales were up 3% against pre-pandemic levels and 50% on the same period last year. On a like-for-like basis, sales were 21% up on last year.

Chief executive Simon Emery said: "While sales continue to

recover from the effects of the pandemic, we are conscious that consumers face increasingly challenging times ahead.

"Businesses across the hospitality sector are experiencing unsustainable increases in energy costs. Despite having proactively purchased forward contracts to limit the impact on Fuller's, we will see significant increases this year and do urge the government to provide much-needed clarity on its proposed support package so that we can plan accordingly."

NUMBER OF HOSPITALITY COMPANY INSOLVENCIES RISES

The number of hospitality company insolvencies has risen by 59% over the past year amid spiralling cost pressures.

New figures from the Insolvency Service showed 2,156 pubs, bars

Brace for impact: the worst is yet to come with the cost of living crisis

Just when the industry was picking itself back up after Covid and Brexit, it's back to square one with energy costs. *Emma Lake* takes a look at CGA's research into what business leaders are anticipating

Optimism in the future of the hospitality sector has fallen substantially in the past year, with 43% of business leaders saying they feel actively pessimistic.

The Business Leader Survey 2022, produced by *The Caterer* and CGA, revealed that just 40% of respondents felt optimistic about the industry's prospects in the next year, compared to 80% in 2021. It's a stark difference in just a 12-month period.

In 2021 the industry was

“The research we’ve done shows that what people are prioritising in terms of discretionary income is eating and drinking out”

Charlie Mitchell

emerging from the pandemic with demand reflecting a pent-up desire to socialise. A year on and a cost of living crisis is threatening to hamper demand, costs are increasing across the board and the industry has found itself in the midst of a staffing difficulties.

Leaders' confidence in their own enterprises held up slightly better, with 51% of respondents saying they were optimistic about their own businesses in the next 12 months, compared to 81% a year ago.



Charlie Mitchell, research and insights director at CGA, said: “I think this time last year there was probably a slightly inflated sense of optimism because of where we had been and the light on the horizon. If you fast-forward the last 12 months, that inflated optimism has been well and truly shattered.

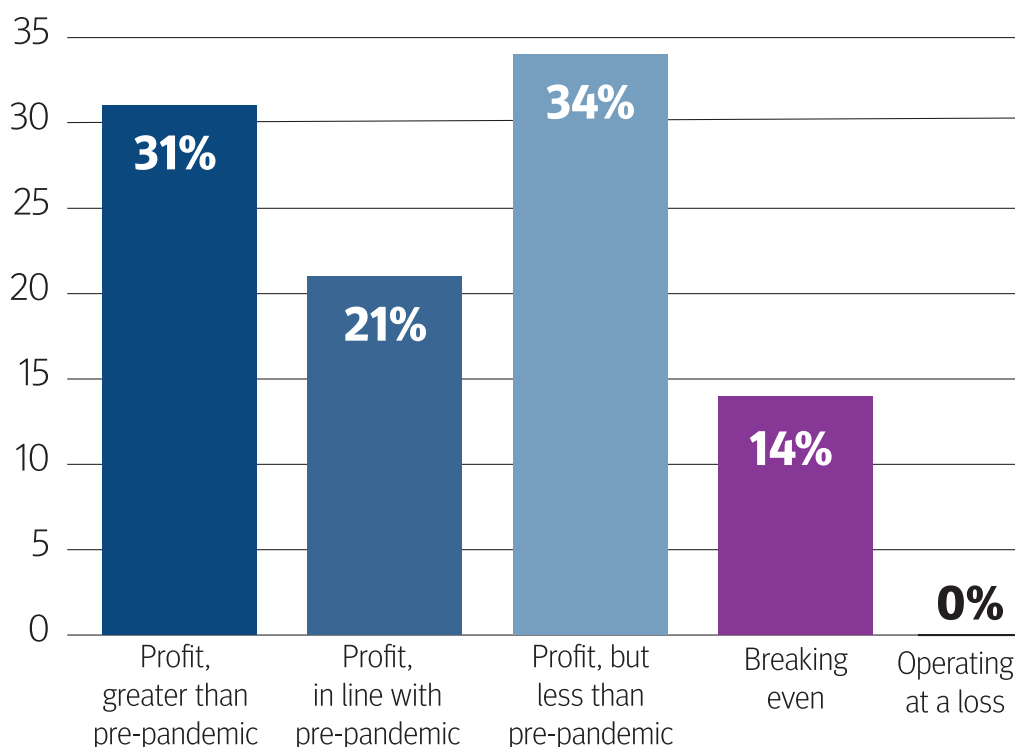
“I think while we’ve not seen much of an impact in terms of consumers just yet, we are seeing that people are really concerned about the impact the cost of living crisis is going to have.”

Shattered confidence

Nine out of 10 respondents said their businesses were in profit when responding to the survey in July and August this year. However, the weeks that have followed have seen dramatic increases in inflationary pressures and, of course, energy costs (see special report pages 19-27), so it must be anticipated that profits will have decreased.

The cost of living crisis clearly weighed heavy on operators' minds when completing the survey, with 52% saying they were very concerned, 30% concerned, and 13% were moderately concerned. Food and drink inflation

Which of the following best describes your operations?





“One thing we’ve learned over the last two years is that it’s an innovative sector and a resilient sector”

Charlie Mitchell

SHUTTERSTOCK

Playing catch-up

Customer service and food or product quality were the areas of their businesses leaders felt most confident in: 80% of respondents felt they were market-leading in customer service, with the same level of confidence seen in food quality. Less confidence was apparent in delivery and food-to-go offers, where 63% felt they were behind the market while 19% felt they were behind in terms of technological innovation.

While there are many concerning headwinds facing the industry, a quality offering, that respondents have shown they are confident in will continue to draw people in. Peter Backman of Peter Backman Foodservice Consultancy said: “The industry is robust, innovative, entrepreneurial and it will find its way through, all be it, it might emerge smaller. Costs are going up massively, inflation in operator input costs could be 21% or even more when you take everything together. You can be pretty certain that the overall amount consumers have to spend is going to fall. So the question is how much of that reduced consumer spending is significant for the sector.

“There’s a feeling that when

people have less money and go out less, they expect more so that says they will tend to go to more expensive places, or go to the usual place and spend more. At the other end there may be more of the cheaper buying, which suggests the middle is going to be squeezed.”

The figures show that since the start of 2022 like-for-like sales have consistently performed in line with or ahead of 2019 levels. Mitchell said: “The sector is resilient and when people are having a hard time they go out and have a drink, when they’re celebrating, they go out and have a drink. The research we’ve done shows that what people are prioritising in terms of discretionary income is eating and drinking out.

“People have realised what a big part of their lives it is and we’re yet to see huge decreases. In fact, our most recent research shows the most frequent visitors to hospitality have increased their visits and any drop is coming from consumers who were lower frequency anyway. Operators can take heart from that.”

To view the full report from the Business Leader Survey go to www.thecaterer.com/insight

meanwhile had 51% of leaders very concerned, 36% concerned and 10% moderately concerned.

However, fears of Covid-19 further impacting trade were far less pronounced, with just 5% of leaders saying they were very concerned about the infection’s impact in the UK, and 12% very concerned it could negatively impact inbound tourism.

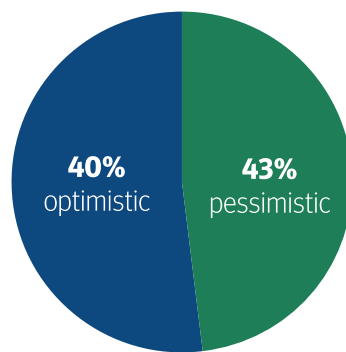
For business leaders the biggest issue they were facing in 2022 was labour shortages, with 81% of respondents saying the problem was “very significant”. However, it can be assumed that for many increasing energy costs will now be their primary concern.

Mitchell added: “It shows that energy costs were not concerning when we put this together – it was concerns about inflationary pressures in terms of food and drink. Now energy costs are spiralling and having a big impact on margins and profit levels.

“The good news is that when we did this, not so long ago, people were in profit, so the hope is there’s still some way to go before people start operating at a loss or breaking even, but energy prices will certainly have a huge impact.

“We’ve definitely not seen

How do you feel about sector over the next 12 months?



the last of the closures, but we saw the best operators surf the waves of the last few years. One thing we’ve learned over the last two years is that it’s an innovative sector and a resilient sector and there are always new entrants. I think we’ll see a net decline [in sites], and my prediction is that those that leave the sector will be the lower-quality outlets. Although there will be some really good operators that have to exit, I think they will be replaced by a similar, innovative and new operators as well.”

Operator view: Des Gunewardena, D&D London

Consumers will inevitably cut back on spending as the reality of increased energy costs comes through in their bills in October. The increase in interest rates will also mean lower discretionary spend. The question is how much of the cuts needed will be borne by pubs and restaurants.

Restaurants serving customers with average or lower disposal income are likely to be hit hardest. But high-quality, low-spend restaurants should benefit from customers trading down from more expensive poorer value for money venues.

Companies also in general have emerged post-pandemic with strong balance sheets and hopefully will continue to spend. We have not seen to date any evidence of our corporate clients scaling back their events.

We currently have a big focus on quality of food and service,

and how our venues look. And we are also reviewing pricing throughout. In tough times there is always a flight to quality and value.

There are reasons to be optimistic long term. I think the UK economy has got the people and the companies to figure out how to get the country back on track and overcome the severe challenges we face on staff, etc.

The biggest opportunity is to maintain and improve the relationship with your people and customers as we go through a potentially tough period.

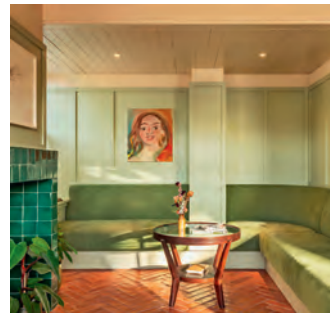
That will benefit your business significantly long term. And obviously, as everyone reviews their expansion plans more cautiously, there will be an opportunity for bolder companies to accelerate their growth plans by acquiring new sites on better terms.

Review of the reviews

Condé Nast Traveller

This isn't just a resurrection of a beloved local institution, but instantly the most grown-up hotel in Margate. Inside, the cool terracotta-floored bistro restaurant doubles as the reception, where we sit on a banquette in a pretty wood-panelled corner in pistachio shades. There's a copy of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* (written partly in Margate, mid-breakdown), and *All the Devils Are Here*, David Seabrook's book of deranged, dream-like Kent coast psychogeography. On the wall, above a square British racing green-tiled fireplace, is a squiggly, smudgy line drawing of the Margate seafront by local hero Tracey Emin.

The 14 rooms have an understated mid-century vibe; a tactile sense of Denmark, from Louis Poulsen PH5 pendant lights to 1960s upholstered teak chairs and Kvadrat felt curtains, made by the local Margate Design Collective. There's a Boomer-friendly level of comfort that's sometimes missing in contemporary hotel rooms: ample storage, 400-thread beds, large teak makeup mirrors, unobtrusive TVs in some rooms. But also cute touches like Roberts smart speakers and Hay kettles; coolly branded house guides to Margate, and appo-



Toby Skinner says Fort Road hotel offers the most grown-up accommodation in Margate

site books on bedside tables (Rosa Rankin-Gee's *Dreamland*, Franny Moyle's chunky Turner biography). Bathrooms have pleasing Mexican tiles, with local seaweed-based Haeckels bath products.

Head chef Daisy Cecil comes from the River Cafe, where she worked with sous chef Lucy Ellwood, who has also worked at Kent coast classic the Sportsman. The menu is short but impeccable, from deep-fried mussels with Espelette pep-

per to rich classic Dover sole, a sublime Montgomery Cheddar soufflé and local cheese or a plum torte to finish. Downstairs, the two-storey subterranean bar – all industrial-cellar exposed brick, reached via a mural-daubed stairwell – is as much of a surprise to guests as it was to its new owners. Cocktails include a Pasada de Moda, a sort of mezcal Old Fashioned, and a Cocchi Sbagliato, a Negroni-like vermouth drink but with a fizzy top of Cava.

THE TIMES

Susan d'Arcy finds the Queen's Arms, Somerset, has found a winning formula

When Doune Mackenzie-Frances and husband Simon were house-hunting 15 years ago, it was the cracking little pub that sold the place to them. When the Queen's Arms came up for sale during lockdown, they didn't hesitate.

The moodboard is now more cosmopolitan bistro than country boozier but it's proving a winning formula. The couple knocked through the dimly lit old-fashioned snugs to create one spacious bar. They also added a smart oak bar counter and a welcoming paint palette from putty grey to slate blue and colonel-mustard yellow.

Doune trained as a chef at Ireland's impressive Ballymaloe Cookery School so food is the focus. Kick off in the courtyard, which has views over Hardy countryside as lusciously wholesome as Tess of the d'Urbervilles, and order a gin-based Whipper Snapper (£10), deliciously laced with sugarsnap-pea syrup. Sobrasada butter brought spicy interest to my local hake with rainbow chard and white bean puree (£22), and a peppercorn sauce gave a comforting retro twist to my husband's beef bavette with charred broccoli (£25).

Doune's boundless gusto has been deployed for the 10 bedroom interiors too. The five above the pub are more contemporary than those in outbuildings. Expect blasts of vermilion pink, emerald green and syrupy ochre and quality fabrics from the likes of Robert Kime.

Price: B&B doubles, from £120

THE SCOTSMAN

Rosalind Erskine has an enjoyable afternoon tea at Queen's House, Bridge of Allan, Stirling

Queen's House is the brainchild of a collaboration from Graham Suttle, Mo Clark, the names behind Kained Holdings, who founded the likes of Glasgow's Lebowskis, Porter & Rye and the Finnieston, and Doug Wood of Woodwinters.

Before long a traditional tiered cake stand appeared laden with finger sandwiches and cakes. The sandwiches were, much like the bar, a twist on the traditional with egg mayo and tomato, cheese, pickle and tomato and coronation chicken on both brown and white bread.

The egg mayo was creamy, whereas the cheese sandwiches

had a kick from the pickle but it was the coronation chicken that was a little different from what you might expect. There was no yellow curried mayo, instead these sandwiches were pink hued and I couldn't quite place the taste so had to ask what they were. I'd have guessed more sweet chilli than coronation, not bad, just different.

Then it was on to the cakes. The middle tier had two fruit and two plain scones, served with strawberry jam and cream. There were also two types of mini cream tarts – strawberry and banana and chocolate. Finally there was a chocolate course in the form of two rich and sticky brownies.

While this afternoon tea, known as the Queen's Tea, isn't as refined as what's available in five star hotels, it was an enjoyable way to spend a Saturday catching up with a friend.

Score: food 6.5/10; ambience 7/10

The Observer

There's a lot to be said for being good over a narrow bandwidth; for doing a small number of things really well, rather than trying to prove your exhausting high-trapeze virtuosity. I thought about this while studying the brown-paper menu at L'Hexagone in Norwich. It is the tiny French restaurant that really can. It is the sort of place we could all do with more of, when money is tight and we need to take our pleasures with care.

Downstairs is a bar with seating for at least, ooh, six. Upstairs, past the spray-painted words "liberté, égalité, fraternité", is a dining room seating another mighty 20. In keeping with the very smallness of it all, that lunch menu runs to barely 50 French words. They are, however, great French words: a distillation of southern French country cooking down to its essentials.

The £12 *salade niçoise* is a pleasingly dense, chopped affair, with a pretty arrangement of anchovies and tomatoes, topped by half a boiled egg, its yolk at a perfect state of jamminess. A tomato tartine is a crisply toasted piece of sourdough smeared thickly with garlic-boosted tapenade and laid with slices of beef tomato, closely zigzagged with stripes



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HEXAGONEBISTROFRANCAIS/PHOTOS

of thick pungent pistou, the French answer to pesto only with a little Gallic swagger. Eat the tartine with your hands and you'll be smelling your lunch on your fingertips for hours after, in a happy way.

There is, of course, steak frites, or a bavette with a shallot sauce. Cheaper, gnarlier cuts get the only treatment they understand: stewed until breaking down into threaded fragments, in a tomatoey stew with black olives, new potatoes

and the lofty insistence of fennel seeds. The special today is a steak tartare, a properly dressed affair, with a golden egg yolk at its centre and a big heap of hand-cut chips, still tipped with the fat-wrinkled skins.

Don't come to L'Hexagone expecting life-changing drama. Come here expecting to be fed. Incidentally, the name is a French nickname for the shape of their country. I did not know this and now I do. Every day is a school day.

Jay Rayner says **L'Hexagone in Norwich is doing a small number of things really well**

DorsetLive

Sarah Ping finds pleasing levels of heat at the **Coconut Tree, Bournemouth**

I went to meet a friend on a busy Friday night when the atmosphere was buzzing and almost every table was taken.

The dishes we ordered for the table were the famed Jaffina goat curry, stir-fried chickpeas, hot battered mushrooms, Sri-tato, and a side of Basmati rice. For drinks, I opted for a virgin coconut mojito, because what's the point in going to the Coconut Tree and not having a coconut drink?

The Jaffina goat curry was branded as being extra hot. I love spicy food, but in my experience when ordering hot food, I always find it disappointing to find the

dish is never really that spicy. But I can firmly say that this goat curry is not for the faint-hearted as they really did mean when they said it would be extra hot. It's no wonder its a favourite with customers as I would say it was the tastiest dish we ordered. The Sri-tato dish was spiced fried potatoes which were dangerously moreish, and the battered mushrooms had a nice crunchy coating. The stir-fried chickpeas were also well seasoned, so if you're someone who's big on flavourful foods, then this restaurant delivers on that.

The drinks [include] an array of different fruity flavoured cocktails and a great selection of mocktails too. Mocktails can sometimes be hit and miss, but I can confirm that my virgin coconut mojito was a hit. After splitting the bill, I paid £20.65 for five dishes and a drink, which I thought was very reasonable.

The Guardian

Grace Dent finds that at **Bubala Soho, the restaurant knows best**

The new Bubala in Soho has a menu so deliciously worded and branding so smoothly positioned that my lunch guest was for some time quite unaware she was in a meat-free restaurant. Thankfully, at Bubala, you can pacify a carnivore with the corn ribs, sticky with black garlic pilpelchuma, and warm challah to drag greedily through bowls of baba ganoush made glossy with curry leaf oil and pine nuts. Bubala Soho is this outfit's second incarnation, after Helen Graham and Marc Summers made a successful start in Spitalfields some three years ago.

There were bowls of smooth

and luxurious hummus finished with burnt butter and served with laffa flatbread for dipping, and of pale, creamy labneh dotted with aromatic garlic and a liberal amount of za'atar. Humble cornish mids potatoes, for example, come with silken tofu and smoked harrisa salsa, and we stirred them into vesuvio tomatoes, mango, tamarind and cumin.

Bubala, you see, really does know best. They knew I needed the roast cauliflower with bkeila, tomato and slightly sweet yogurt, and the braised hispi with seaweed that has a citrus burst of dried orange and an undertone of sesame. The latkes are like the delightful, deep-fried concertina'd spuds you get at the Quality Chop House and on the fanciest Sunday roasts, though here they're served with a puddle of toum, AKA Lebanese garlic sauce.

Price: about £40 a head

Openings

Milk Beach

All-day Australian restaurant Milk Beach has opened in London's Soho, marking its second site in the capital since it first launched in Queen's Park in 2018.

Head chef Darren Leadbeater, who has worked at the three-Michelin-starred Guillaume at Bennelong, Sydney, has created a modern Australian menu that takes inspiration from a range of South East Asian and Mediterranean cultures.

Milk Beach Soho's collaboration with wine importers such as Modal Wine, Liberty Wines and Alliance Wines has resulted in a wine list that features more than 65 bottles from independent winemakers across the globe.

The restaurant's new nomadic coffee roastery, Album Coffee Roasters, will also supply specialty coffee to both sites.

The 155-cover diner, designed by A-nrd, resembles the art deco buildings dotted along the Sydney coastline, with features such as a palladiana terrazzo floor, rose-shaped tiles and natural wood and stone finishes.

Opened 13 September

Typical dishes Four Pillars gin Bloody Mary oyster shooter; grilled prawns, fermented chilli butter; Belted Galloway bone-in ribeye, tare, oyster and tarragon butter

Address Ilona Rose House, Manette Street, London W1D 4AL

Website www.milkbeach.com



Extra openings



Kanada-Ya

Ramen restaurant Kanada-Ya is to open its fifth site in London's Ealing. The 1,571 sq ft restaurant will feature an open kitchen and offer 60 covers with 14 spaces outside.

Opening 30 September

Typical dishes Tonkotsu X (pork and corn-fed chicken bone broth, chashu pork belly, spring onion, wood ear fungus, yuzu-shoyu)

Address Unit 3B, Filmworks Walk, 56-61 New Broadway, London W5 5FA

Website www.kanada-ya.com/ealing



The Holland

Following extensive refurbishment, the Princess Victoria in London's Kensington has re-opened as Chef Max de Nahlik's pub and dining room the Holland. The menu offers British cuisine with ingredients from the Ethical Butcher, Celtic Fish & Game and Henderson's.

Opened 14 September

Typical dishes Spiced brown crab on toast; pork collar steak, greengage chutney, kohlrabi

Address 25 Earls Court Road, London W8 6EB

Website www.thehollandkensington.co.uk



Terre

Chef Vincent Crepel, who has worked at the three-Michelin-starred Arzak, is to open his first solo restaurant outside France in Cork, Ireland. Terre will be housed in a 17th-century manor house on the Castlemartyr estate.

Opening Mid-September

Typical dishes Chawanmushi with Parmesan broth; cod with caviar and white rose petals

Address Castlemartyr Resort, Grange, Castlemartyr, Co. Cork P25 X300

Website terre.ie



PHOTOS: DAVID ROBSON

Please email your new openings to openings@thecaterer.com



Rows & Vine

Second-generation English sparkling wine business Ridgeview has opened the Rows & Vine restaurant in East Sussex. The alfresco dining venue overlooks Chardonnay vineyards.

Opened 7 September

Typical dishes Seared duck breast, truffle polenta, tenderstem, blackberry, honey balsamic

Address Ditchling Common, Fragbarrow Lane, Sussex BN6 8TP

Website www.ridgeview.co.uk/the-rows-and-vine-restaurant-at-ridgeview/



De Nadas

De Nadas, London's first empanadería specialising in Argentinian hand-shaped empanadas, has opened in Notting Hill. The restaurant features a teal 'mesh' bar, a concrete counter and the Vinyl Wine Room.

Opened 14 September

Typical dishes Smoked Malbec (caramelised Malbec onions and cheese); Puca Capa (cheese, coriander and aji molido)

Address 61 Golborne Road, London W10 5NR

Website www.denadas.co.uk



Fort Road hotel restaurant

Head chef Daisy Cecil, who was previously at London's River Café, offers a seasonal British menu infused with Mediterranean flavours at the 35-cover restaurant in the newly opened Fort Road hotel in Margate.

Opened 1 September

Typical dishes Pan-fried sole with mussels in cider; Ashmore Cheddar soufflé, wild rocket; Romney Marsh lamb, oyster and anchovy sauce

Address 18 Fort Road, Margate, Kent CT9 1HF

Website www.fortroadhotel.com



Neil Rankin
Chef-founder,
Temper restaurants and
Symplicity Burger

Inside track

After nearly 20 years in the industry, I've seen fads come and go. But there are always those that hang on a little too long and should have been left well in the past.

Some are maybe just me and my fickle little palate, but some are like the Cheeky Girls hanging on for a third album. The biggest culprits are usually those in 'fine dining' and those that aspire to be called fine dining, but in reality are just normal dining with micro herbs and less food.

Take chocolate and fruit. There is nothing less impressive to serve than chocolate and some kind of fruit. If you want to aspire to the culinary heights of a middle-class dinner party serving strawberries in a choco-

I think they're popular for the same reasons. They're easy to portion, can be plated in a fancy pants way and easy to cost out for a tasting menu, but they are not the best in any other way. No three-star sushi chef has ever gone crazy over a scallop – probably because there are 600 better fish bits to eat served raw. In the same vein no chef has ever gone wild for a lamb or pork loin, as there are hundreds of things on an animal that taste a million times better.

Now for micro herbs, or herbs that taste half as good as the grown-up version. They stick in your teeth and cost far too much for no benefit to the end-user. I remember a chef shouting at me for not seasoning and dressing them. He can do one too. Buy some grown-up herbs, cut them roughly and

These are a few of my least favourite things

Some food trends should be left firmly in the past, pleads **Neil Rankin**

"I've had at least five excellent meals completely ruined by the final bite being chocolate and some bloody fruit"

late fountain, then please continue, but its all been done.

Terry's Chocolate Orange was and is great, and we get that it's nostalgic in some way to emulate this, but replacing oranges with passion fruit is not as clever or delicious as you think. I've had at least five excellent meals completely ruined by the final bite being chocolate and some bloody fruit. Just give me one or the other.

Next: raw scallops and roasted loins. I'm putting these in the same bracket because

actually give your food some flavour and vibrancy rather than just a workout for a toothpick.

Finally, sticky 'jus'. A two-Michelin-starred restaurant I worked in once made five separate jus for each service. Each day the sous would cook down huge pots of various animal bones and trimmings for hours with enough brandy to knock out a Wu-Tang Clan afterparty – all this produce and work for about six 200ml pots of sauce. Each tasted pretty much the same (like a posh, boozy Bovril reduction) and it should have been a blessing for me on my first day working sauce to spill them down the back of the flat-top 10 minutes before lunch service... but it was all taken less kindly than expected.

Today, I feel I did everyone eating there a service, because that claggy, lipstick sauce is only really suitable for old French people and dinosaur meat. Meat shouldn't need a meat sauce to make it more meaty – it needs a counterbalance of acidity to cut through its inherent meatiness, unless, of course, you're using a really terrible cut like loin, which needs all the help it can get.



MARIAN WEYO/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Let's look at the bigger picture

The constant and reassuring offer of good food ensures contract caterers are essential to businesses in turbulent times, says *Chris Chidley*

We can't move for doom and gloom headlines – the geopolitical backdrop, inflation on the rise, energy prices rocketing and concerns around an imminent recession. Yet, encouragingly at Compass we're seeing new business for food and support services going through a period of significant growth, especially in relation to first time outsourcing partnerships. I believe that outsourcing can continue to thrive in this economic climate.

Our business, Compass Group, can trace its roots back to World War II and was started out of the need to feed workers in munitions factories. Jack Bateman, the founder of the then 'factory canteens', wanted to lift workers' spirits through nutritious food, while also creating a successful business. When rationing made more established meals harder to prepare, new ones were created and the factory canteens became places to come together and create cheer.

By the 1950s and 1960s contract catering was viewed as an entirely new industry, evolving from the fundamental need to feed people well – wherever they worked and congregated.

We all know recent years have posed huge challenges for our industry. As we moved into the post-Covid era, we began to see clients wanting to return to solely focus on their areas of expertise and understandably, they didn't want to worry about catering as well.

There are many myths surrounding outsourcing, with outdated views associating us with cost savings and low quality. This couldn't be further from the truth. If you outsource to experts you should be getting high quality services, with the people to deliver it.

Modern outsourcing is an area of innovation. It's about the catering industry's ability to create amazing experiences, enduring partnerships and the value we can deliver on people, the planet and wellbeing. It's this shift in attitude, that is bringing an extraordinary growth opportunity for our industry.

Outsourcing catering and support services enables clients to solely focus on the issues their business is currently facing, around managing the impact of life post-Covid, heightened inflation and their operational challenges. As we all know, working with the right partner should enable organisations to focus on their core business.

Against this challenging backdrop, innovation will continue to be critical, demonstrat-



PHOTO: DOUGLAS KUHN

“I know we're facing into many challenges, but I am optimistic about the opportunities the coming months will bring”

ing time and time again to our clients why we operate smarter. We're using technology to drive efficiencies, but importantly alongside this we are also investing in the future – through our amazing people and the commitment to deliver on sustainability targets.

I know we're facing into many challenges, but I am optimistic about the opportunities the coming months will bring and I think Compass' story demonstrates that sometimes out of the toughest of times, comes the most inspiring change, that will ultimately lead to growth.

Chris Chidley is chief growth officer at Compass Group UK & Ireland

The government has a stark choice: offer support or see businesses fail

The headwinds have become a hurricane, but great restaurants will survive with the right government support, says *Martin Williams*



PHOTO: DAVID TETT

All too often in the past months we have had to remind the government of the amazing contribution our sector provides to both the economy and our society. At Rare Restaurants, as we open a new M venue in Canary Wharf this month and make plans for Gaucho Newcastle and Liverpool launches, while also progressing our journey from providing carbon-neutral beef to net zero, we are planning significant investments in the planet, our people and Great Britain. This approach requires confidence and sustained growth, which in the face of the energy crisis now also needs government action.

We have seen in the past weeks that energy pricing is causing a lot of pain to small, medium and large companies. Some have been vocal, others are shellshocked and reaching out behind the scenes, unable to talk publicly about how close they are to collapse. One thing is certain: we need further clarity and additional support from the government – quickly.

At Rare Restaurants we're very fortunate. We fixed five-year deals at the start of the year because our contracts were up for

“You will see operators looking to hold tight and ride it out, which will mean huge price increases”

renewal and we have always fixed our rates to control that margin. Had we not had that policy, the open market is currently 10 times more expensive.

Even with a cap for six months (announced earlier this month), we're likely to see a doubling of business energy bills for many, which realistically is likely to be the erosion of the last margin of profitability for many and the final working capital challenge for numerous start-ups and SMEs (of which I was one from 2014-2019).

If further support is not announced in the mini budget and put in place in addition to the cap, then those companies and employees will be going out of business very soon.

What restaurants big or small need from the government is three things: a long-term energy cap until energy pricing stabilises, a permanent reduction in VAT to 10%, and to reduce business rate, offsetting this with the introduction of an online tax and in doing so making hospitality equitable with retail.

These three measures combined will allow our sector to continue to grow and contribute hugely to both the economy and our communities and will allow us to absorb food and wage inflation without having to increase pricing and add to the danger of hyper-inflation.

The cost of living crisis will inevitably result in a reduced overall consumer spend in our sector, however this combined action from the business secretary and chancellor would make hospitality sustainable for the future.

Martin Williams is the chief executive of Rare Restaurants

An industry in crisis

The *Caterer's* survey on how operators feel about energy prices has shown that people are overwhelmed by rising costs, with some facing the fact that closure may be the cheaper option. *Sophie Witts* reports

More than half of hospitality operators fear they may have to permanently close their business within the next year unless the government takes action to deal with rising energy costs.

That was the message from a survey by *The Caterer* of restaurateurs, hoteliers, contract caterers and publicans, which has laid bare the scale of the crisis facing the industry.

Some 80% of respondents said rising energy prices had wiped out their profits, while 60% feared their business may not survive the next 12 months without sufficient government support. The majority of operators said their bills had risen by more than 100%, while 22% had seen a rise of over 300%, and 22% said their costs had increased by over 400%.

One wrote: "If there is no reduction [in energy bills] or financial support we will close by next summer as reserves are low. We will be homeless and jobless, government should act now before it's too late for so many."

"We will be homeless and jobless, the government should act now before it's too late for so many"

Survey respondent

Another added: "Some of us survived the lockdowns, but this will finish us." One comment simply read: "No business. No job. Bankruptcy."

Supply struggles

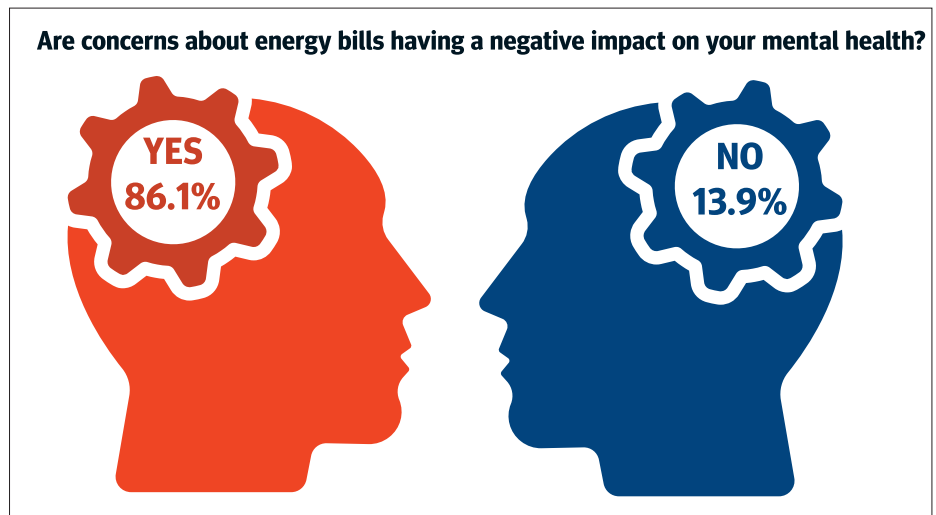
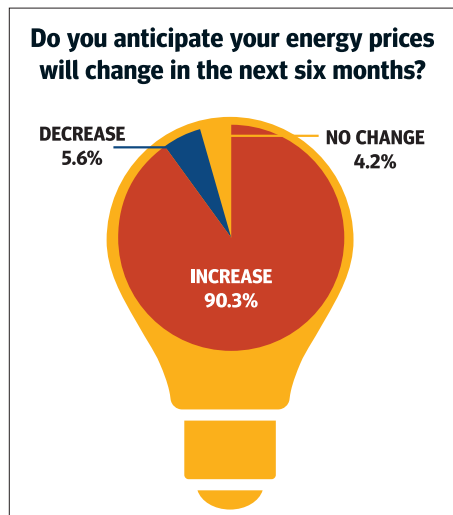
The survey revealed the difficulties some hospitality businesses have faced in trying

to secure new energy contracts. Over a third (41%) said they have had issues securing a new contract or struggled to find an energy company willing to supply them. Others have been asked to pay security deposits of thousands of pounds despite being long-standing customers of energy firms.

One wrote: "We renewed in March with our gas bill multiplying by 4.5 and electricity bill multiplying by 2.5. Our existing supplier demanded a £3,000 security deposit to renew despite being a model existing customer! These energy suppliers are monsters."

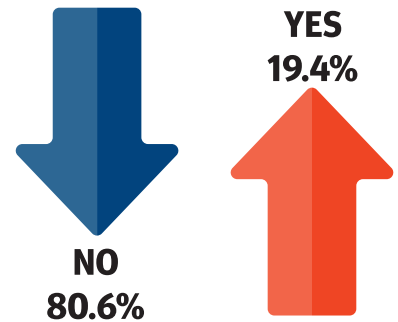
The survey also painted a stark picture of the steps hospitality venues are taking to try and survive in the face of rising bills. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of operators expect to reduce opening hours to cope or have already done so, while 80% have already cut staff numbers or expect to do so.

"I worry about the future of the business and the people employed in it," wrote one





Can you afford to pay the increase in energy costs and still make a profit?



said: “As these figures lay bare, the energy crisis is putting already fragile businesses under colossal pressure and there is no doubt that without urgent support many will fail. The Government must make good on its promise of help with energy costs without delay and look at a wider package of support for the sector.

“According to the latest ONS employment statistics, one in six new jobs in the last year were generated by hospitality. If we are to continue to create jobs and invest in local communities we need targeted support on top of the energy price cap, including VAT cut to 10% and a business rates holiday, to sustain businesses big and small and protect jobs this winter and beyond.”

A government spokesperson pointed *The Caterer* towards an online fact sheet on energy support and said further details would be announced “in due course”.

Where is the support?

The government is expected to announce details of its £150b energy bill support package this week. The scheme will cap the amount ▶

operator. “If we need to close over winter and can’t retain our staff, it will be even more of a problem staffing the hotel when we reopen than it was [last year].”

Another added: “Too many jobs will be lost, [and] it’s been difficult to recruit in hospitality since the pandemic.”

One operator expected to increase prices by 15% to cover the rise in energy bills and wage costs but was worried customers would spend less over the winter when household bills rose.

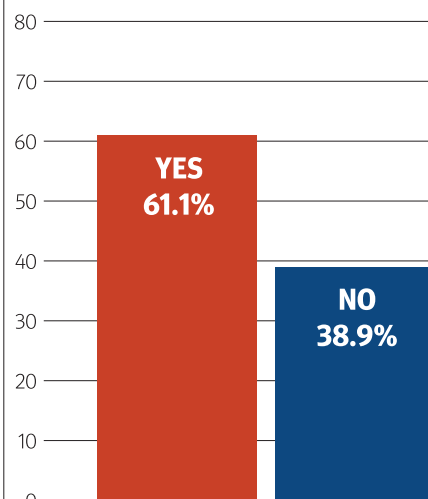
The survey also showed the toll the situation was having on hospitality business owners. 86% of those who responded said concerns about energy bills were having a negative impact on their mental health.

“I am extremely anxious for the future and don’t see a way out,” an operator wrote. “[I’m] afraid to express my fears as this could lead to the collapse of our business and support from the staff.”

Another commentator said they were “finding it difficult to sleep” while one simply said: “God help us all”.

Responding to the survey’s findings, Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UKHospitality,

Do you anticipate your business may have to permanently close in the next 12 months without government assistance to offset the increased energy costs?



Why are energy prices high?

The rise in UK energy costs has been driven by a squeeze on wholesale gas prices which began in 2021. Global energy usage was historically low in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic shut down businesses and travel, but the reopening of economies sparked a surge in demand.

Last year, countries in Asia and Europe used significant amounts of gas stocks during a long winter, and the higher energy usage helped drive up prices. Russia is Europe’s largest provider of natural gas and has historically supplied around 35% of gas used across the continent. The country’s invasion of Ukraine earlier this year led to a restriction of Russian gas, which has pushed costs even higher.

Imports from Russia made up less than 4% of the UK’s gas supply in 2021, but suppliers are not shielded from the rise in prices across the rest of Europe. These increases have been passed on to customers.

suppliers are allowed to charge households and businesses for every unit of energy they use. It will mean a typical household energy bill will cost around £2,500 annually until 2024 but this will still be dependent on how much energy is used. Before the announcement, household bills had been due to rise to an average of £3,549 a year.

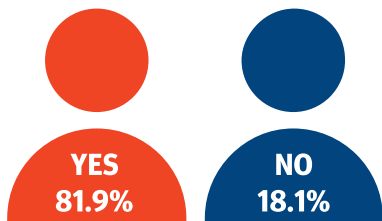
Businesses have been promised “equivalent support”, but only for six months. After this period “vulnerable” industries such as hospitality will receive focused support. There will be a review in three months’ time to consider where this should be targeted.

The government has promised to backdate any help with business’ energy bills following reports the scheme may not be ready to launch until November. It is reportedly taking longer to set up as there is no existing price cap for businesses. The government has yet to reveal how its plans will be paid for, but Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng is expected to hold an emergency budget on 23 September.

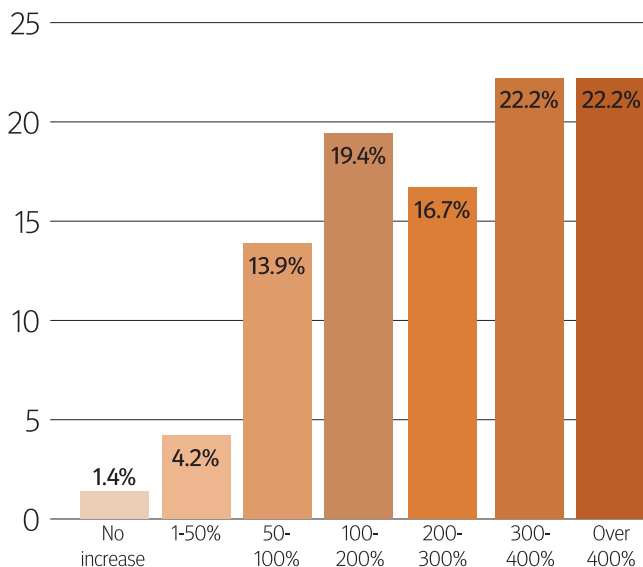
The Caterer’s survey revealed significant anger at the government over its failure to act sooner. One commentator wrote: “[The] government needs to get a move on before too many more businesses and livelihoods are destroyed. [There are] four closed restaurants



Have you or do you expect to reduce staff headcount due to energy costs?



If you expect your energy bills to increase, how large do you expect this rise to be?



How are businesses trying to save energy?

Hospitality operators are buying their staff body warmers, closing whole floors of hotel rooms, and putting curtains over doors and windows to save energy.

The Caterer survey asked respondents how they are trying to cut consumption in the face of rising bills. Some of the responses are as follows:

- “We are closing the spa two days a week”
- “We are reducing winter opening days to three or four and reducing the number of public areas during open days.”
- “[We have] invested £80,000 in new windows and installed £270,000 of solar panels across the hotels.”
- “We close out a floor of rooms

if business is low and turn down radiators. We have installed more LED light fittings and [motion sensor lights] to help reduce usage.”

- “We are reducing the size of the menu to save on refrigeration and freezer running costs.”
- “Turned off extra freezers and fridges and take deliveries daily instead. Removed menu items that used too much energy.”
- “Introduced low voltage lighting, replaced old inefficient equipment, trained staff and checked use of equipment. Internal lift is now only used for goods.”
- “We have done just about everything we can in recent years. We are continually investigating ways to become more self-



“[I’m] afraid to express my fears as this could lead to the collapse of our business and support from the staff”

Survey respondent

Five-point plan

Trade body UKHospitality has written to the government proposing a five-point plan of action through to April 2023, with a review in early 2023. It includes:

- 1 A 10% headline VAT rate for hospitality.
- 2 A business rates holiday for all hospitality premises, with no caps applied.
- 3 Deferral of all environmental levies.
- 4 Reinstatement of a generous HMRC Time to Pay scheme.
- 5 Reintroduction of a trade credit insurance scheme for energy.

within 100 metres of my restaurant, including a Michelin-starred one next door. How many jobs is that gone in a small seaside town? Devastating.”

Another said: “Many including myself have seen this crisis coming for months, yet the government just messed about and went on their summer holidays when small businesses are folding at an alarming rate, absolutely shocking.”

Operators said they were keen to see a range of support measures introduced, including a cut in VAT, a price cap on commercial energy bills, cuts or waivers on business rates, and grants to businesses. Others suggested rent reductions, subsidised solar panels, and the reintroduction of a part-time furlough scheme to help protect jobs.

One commentator said they wanted to see extra help for isolated rural communities. They wrote: “We are on a Scottish island, so costs of delivery and ingredients are way higher. Also, there is no chance of turning off the heating or even reducing it through autumn and winter.”

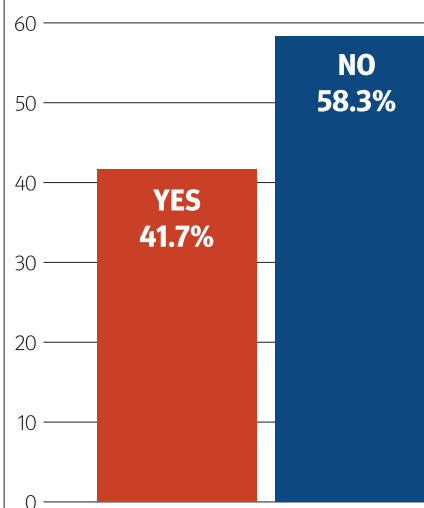
PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK/TOMMASO79; JAN MIKA

sufficient but face potential opposition from planning authorities due to green belt location”

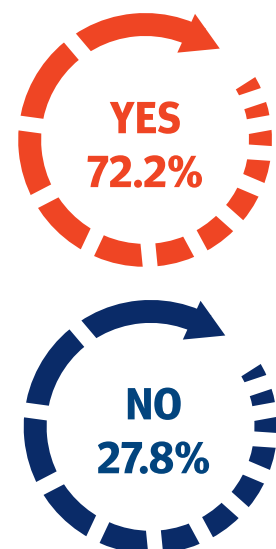
- “The impact of what we can do is negligible at the levels our bills have increased by. We are always careful and will remain so.”
- “Every possible step has been taken but none can offset the astronomical increase in gas and electric that will fall on to us.”



Have you had issues getting a new energy contract or been turned down by energy firms?



Have you or do you expect to reduce opening hours due to energy costs?



People power

Operators are united in the fact they feel alone in fighting the energy crisis, as seen when *Emma Lake* and *Jungmin Seo* asked how they will cope with the cost increases



“Energy bills are more than our rent”

James Allcock, owner, the Pig & Whistle, Beverley, East Yorkshire

James Allcock’s fixed tariff ends later this month. His existing supplier refused to quote for his business, and the first offer he received was for £23,000 a year, compared to the £3,000 he currently pays. He says: “That’s more than we take a month. It’s inordinate. It’s gone from one of our smallest bills to our joint second-highest bill, with VAT and just behind wages. It’s more than our rent.”

The quote has since reduced to £16,500, which, he says, is still “inordinate” and even with a government cap he expects to be paying three or four times what he is now.

He says: “Unless [the price cap is] hand-in-glove with some VAT support, it’s not going to be enough. The thing that’s frightening is that they’re saying it might even be November before we see any support. It’s too late – I know people who are giving the keys in now.

“It’s all too familiar. It’s similar to during the pandemic, when the government makes a speech about what they’re going to do but don’t do it.

It’s ridiculous – it’s sticking plasters on broken legs to fix the energy for six months. Equally to delay that by three months, I can’t think of anything more insulting.”

Allcock says the industry needs the details of government support now. For it to be implemented quickly and to last for at least two years, in line with the domestic support package. He stressed that if businesses have the tools to trade they can help pull the country through the impending recession.

He added: “We’ve proved we can be part of the recovery, we showed that with the pandemic you only have to look at the figures to see that hospitality is essential to recovery. The other thing is we’re one of the only industries that employs people in every constituency. It’s a huge industry.

“We’ve got a good little business, it’s a nice little restaurant that does alright, but I’ve still not paid off the last once-in-a-lifetime crisis. I spent the first two years paying off the money I needed to open, the next two years borrowing more to get through Covid, and now we’re crying about energy.”



“Reducing VAT would be a major, immediate help”

Harriet Mansell, chef-patron, Robin Wylde and Lilac restaurants, Lyme Regis

Harriet Mansell has called on the government to reduce VAT, saying “it’s become increasingly difficult to make ends meet”.

She says: “I’ve heard of lots of really shocking energy bills – it seems everyone has been affected. Our electric and gas are both capped until early next year, but that’s really only a temporary reprieve. With VAT and the cost of everything having gone back up, we were already operating on very slim profit margins as it was. Everything has gone up by 5% to 50% and we haven’t been able to increase prices in line with that, so it’s become increasingly difficult to make ends meet.

“I do think reducing VAT would be a major, immediate help – hospitality is on its knees. At every turn you think it’s going to get easier but it doesn’t. We’re at the hardest moment yet because everyone has already used their reserves to get through the pandemic.”

With the threat that the cost-of-living crisis and impending recession could reduce covers, along with the prospect of a sharp increase in energy bills in the new year, Mansell is concerned for the future.

She adds: “In regional coastal towns things have gone really quiet after summer and the cost of living is starting to hit. We look like we’re facing a quiet winter and that’s the scariest thing for me.”

The chef and restaurateur spoke to her local MP about the pressures facing hospitality but was told that fine dining restaurants were not the priority. She said: “We’re so much more [than the food we serve]. We’ve got apprentices, I have over 20 people in my team, we work with the community, we’re adding to the area with these passionate, creative people making beautiful food. We’re working with education providers to get schools into nature and foraging – there’s so much we do, it’s not just about restaurants.

“The conditions right now are stacked up against small and independent business owners, particularly because there’s no reprieve and no fallback. Not many people have that safety net, they’ve used up every resource to survive, and that’s why we’re seeing so many businesses going under.”



“I don’t think it’s right for us to pass on costs to our guests”

Simon King, founder, the Victoria, Surrey

The Victoria community pub in Oxshott, Surrey, is coming up to a year old. Simon King says all the normal challenges of establishing a business had been compounded by “a lot of things out of our control”.

He says: “I go into these opportunities fully expecting to dig deep and find clever ways of overcoming challenges, but it feels as if the challenges are unrelenting and they seem to get bigger with the utilities element.”

King feels his financial options are limited, because the energy crisis is impacting everyone, leaving customers reluctant to spend.

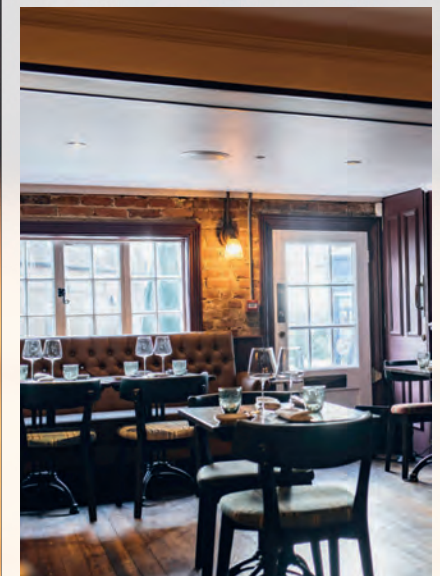
He adds: “A lot of us are in the same boat and I don’t think it’s right for us to pass on these costs to our guests and I don’t think our guests really have the bandwidth either.”

Since energy bills account for 25% of total operating costs compared to 10% previously, the team have been looking into alternative sources of energy, such as wood. The pub already had facilities for a wood-burning fire. However, King points out that many operators have already turned to wood, making it a much more competitive market than it was before.

He says: “Even the price of wood has gone through the roof and I’ve been told it’s going to double. Wood suppliers don’t necessarily open new accounts right now because they are so inundated with inquiries.”

King would like to see more government support if hospitality businesses are to use renewables and implement energy-efficient equipment in the long run.

He adds: “The speed at which this has happened is also why the government needs to step in, because making [energy source] changes like this takes time and I feel that it’s a very steep spike.”



“The pricing and availability of sustainable energy is difficult”

Daniel Alvarado, general manager, Dinings SW3, Chelsea, London

Energy bills have tripled at Japanese izakaya restaurant and sushi bar Dinings SW3. This, combined with the pressures of staff shortages and inflation has forced it to close one day a week.

Daniel Alvarado says: “As much as we would like to move into sustainable energy sources, when you look into the pricing and availability, it’s very difficult. But because of the situation, everyone is moving to those. I think the pricing and the waiting times for any of those installations

will take forever. You need some sort of support from the government or local authority.”

Alvarado said kitchen equipment takes a long time to heat up, meaning that operators often have no option but to keep it on unless they have the financial resources to replace it.

However, the team at Dinings SW3 has been taking smaller steps to implement savings in the restaurant. For example, food compost is being sent to farms, leftovers are being fermented and the venue celebrates its ‘fin-to-tail’ – its take on ‘nose-to-tail’ – policy, by offering canapés that use all parts of a fish.

Alvarado adds: “People are actually very understanding and curious. In Japanese culture there is wabi sabi, the beauty of imperfection, so we can link all of these things. Little things go a long way.”



“Many feel the potential threat of closure is on the horizon”

Lionel Benjamin, co-founder, AGO Hotels

For hotels that recently renegotiated contracts, energy bills are taking up 30% of total operating costs compared to 8%-12% previously, according to Lionel Benjamin, co-founder of AGO Hotels, which includes several Ibis Budget branches across its portfolio.

He says: “We’ve all tried to turn towards government to help, but despite the efforts of [UKHospitality chief executive] Kate Nicholls and many others, it seems to have taken no bearing. It’s fallen on deaf ears.”

In the meantime, Benjamin is trying to mitigate the situation by thinking of creative methods to reduce energy consumption, which has led to an acceleration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) programmes across the board.

He adds: “We’ve tried to implement as quickly as we can what we were intending to put in over a period of time, such as infra-red sensors in public areas and reducing boiling temperatures by a couple of degrees.”

Longer-term solutions include ground water pumps, solar panels and combined heat and power units, which use gas to create electricity.

However, he adds: “It’s exceptionally difficult to find the investment to put into ESG at the moment. We know that legislation is being implemented, but to do this now, on the back of Covid, is very challenging for an industry that’s been on its knees. Many feel the potential threat of closure is on the horizon.”



“We’re resilient, but not that resilient”



Ed Thaw, director, Ellory, London

Energy bills have doubled for Ed Thaw, who owns the Michelin-starred restaurant Leroy and rotisserie chicken diner Royale, both in East London.

He says: “I’m still not clear what the solution will be. A cliff edge in six months’ time doesn’t seem to be good enough. Understandably, the prime minister has only just got in and is now in the midst of spending 10 days with regard to Queen Elizabeth II, so cost of living has been put on the back burner, but it’s going to be there once we get back.”

Thaw believes the energy crisis raises the “perfect argument against privatisation” and urges

the government to reflect on the decisions it made over the pandemic, particularly in relation to its interventions in the hospitality industry, such as furlough.

He adds: “We’ve had a hell of a two years. We’re resilient, but not that resilient. It’s heart-breaking to think that there are going to be many good businesses that are just going to go to the wall, and all before this help could kick in.

“The issue at the minute has been staffing, but now it’s becoming energy. Staff wages have gone up – that’s reasonable in the context of staff – but you can’t really work with uncapped energy prices that could just triple.”

“No one’s saying when it’s going to end”

David Armstrong-Reed, owner and operations manager, #Fish, Edinburgh

Energy bills at #Fish, a fish and chip takeaway in Edinburgh that has been operating for two and a half years, have quadrupled, with figures jumping to £1,200 a week. The weekly rate has almost doubled, considering that in December 2021 David Armstrong-Reed was being charged £3,000 a month via direct debit.

Energy bills have overtaken rent, coming in as the third biggest expenditure after fish (£3,500 a week) and staff salaries (£3,000 a week). Despite working for 70 hours a week, Armstrong-Reed can only afford to pay for 30 hours’ worth of his work, and even that is at minimum wage.

The fish and chip industry was “already feeling very under pressure” as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, he says, which led to tariffs on fish and a shortage of cooking oil.



He says: “I think for smaller operators and more old-fashioned, established operators, this [energy crisis] will be the straw that breaks things.”

Armstrong-Reed charges £11.50 for a cod or haddock with chips, but expects the price-point to rise further. Although his city centre clientele has coped with the cost increases so far, he is worried the rest of the industry will not be able to bank on deeper pockets.

He says: “From what I’m hearing through [online] industry chat groups, there are many, many fish and chip shops who will be gone before the end of October. There were three posts today. People are already under massive, massive pressure.

“No one’s saying when it’s going to end. We’ve been told we’ll get a price increase now, but we’ve been told there’s another one potentially coming in January. I don’t know where to turn to.”

So what can be done? The Carbon Trust and Hospitality Action advise on reducing costs and looking after mental health in financial hardship



SHUTTERSTOCK/GIS

The Carbon Trust

Heating

Heating can account for more than 40% of energy use in non-domestic buildings. It is possible to save up to 20% on heating costs through simple energy saving measures, such as heating spaces to appropriate temperatures, maintaining boilers and pipework, ensuring timers, control systems and thermostats are correctly set, and upgrading systems to create heating zones.

Air conditioning

It takes energy to heat or cool the air inside a building. If that air escapes through inefficient ventilation systems, or through opened windows and gaps in the building fabric, energy is wasted. Maximise opportunities for natural ventilation and ensure mechanised ventilation is used only when necessary. Regular cleaning of ventilation can increase efficiency by 25%.

Lighting

By implementing lighting controls and efficient luminaires, lighting energy costs can be reduced by up to 50%. LEDs, which have the highest efficacy and lamp life, are easy to control and have no warm-up period. Most businesses will benefit from occupancy sensors, which can achieve savings of 30% to 50%.



Catering

Typically, 65% of the energy supplied by cooking equipment will be extracted through the canopy as convected heat, 5% will be retained in the food being cooked, and 30% will enter the kitchen area as radiant heat. Switch off or turn down equipment when it is not required.

Seals and gaskets on oven doors should be checked weekly. Gas burners should also be checked weekly for a blue flame and efficient combustion. Consider replacing any kitchen equipment over 15 years old.

Leisure facilities

Using a pool cover when the pool is not in use can produce substantial savings through reducing the need for heating (water and pool hall air), pool hall ventilation and make up water. Solar water heating can be effective for pools and changing facilities and is relatively easy to connect to a conventional heating system.

To see more go to:
[www.carbontrust.com/
resources/hospitality-sector-
energy-saving-guide](http://www.carbontrust.com/resources/hospitality-sector-energy-saving-guide)

Hospitality Action

Mark Lewis, chief executive of Hospitality Action

The Caterer's research bears out our own experience. There is a clear link between financial hardship and deteriorating mental health and the situation is becoming more acute.

In recent weeks we've received calls from pensioners who've already turned the gas off through fear of unsustainable bills; mums and dads losing all hope as they become engulfed by bill after bill; and proprietors contemplating taking their own lives because the responsibility they feel towards their staff is too much to bear.

Fifty per cent of all grant applications we receive are from families in high-risk debt, which places them at risk of homelessness, and 35% of applicants cite deteriorating mental health as part of the reason for asking for support. The knock-on effect for hard-pressed

Hospitality Action

businesses is a more stressed workforce at higher risk of absence.

Hospitality Action provides a free and confidential 24/7 helpline. It can provide in-the-moment mental health support and can signpost callers to additional sources of help. The number is 0808 802 0282. In addition to its own grants programme, the website also provides guidance on sources of financial support for families struggling to make ends meet. Hospitality Action's Employee Assistance Programme provides wraparound care to all employees of subscribing companies – to find out more email eap@hospitalityaction.org.uk.



Yvonne Thomas

The chief executive of the Clink Charity is passionate about training prisoners to work in hospitality. *Lisa Jenkins* finds out how she is helping to fight the industry's skills shortage

You are eight months into your role as chief executive. Can you tell us how your initial vision and strategy for the charity has progressed?

It was an interesting start because when I took over on the 31 January, all our restaurants were still closed with staff only just coming back from furlough and the plans for the roll-out of our Clink Kitchens [the charity's community-based training scheme] put on hold.

Nevertheless, my first task was to ensure the charity continued to help the maximum number of people that we can into hospitality. My constant undertaking is to ensure that the charity remains financially sustainable. Every charity doubles [their fundraising] to a greater or lesser extent, but we don't have the same reserves as others, and we need to change the balance to make us less reliant on charitable funding. It is my responsibility to lessen our dependence in this way by focusing on our trading activity. Clink Events [as a wholly owned subsidiary] creates surplus profits for the charity, so we need to continue to grow these elements.

Another strand of the strategy is to work with more people who aren't in prison but are at risk. We have started to work with people serving suspended sentences in the community in Cardiff and are just starting in Styal and hope to extend this training into more community-based facilities. It helps to generate a soft landing for graduates coming out of prison too.

There is a limit to what we can do – there are only 65 people across the whole team – but we continue to look at community training opportunities, with the caveat that we will only take them on if we can resource them fully. Our core aim has got to be about rehabilitation and training and our chosen industry is hospitality. Anything we do will be food related.

What is the direction for the Clink Charity over the next couple of years?

We are picking up speed with our Clink Kitchens project. The roll-out has been re-planned and is going well. We have been able to recruit an extra 30 people, 16 of which are chef trainer assessors from the industry, to deliver the City and Guilds curriculum, and the remaining support workers help those who have been trained and graduate to get work in the industry. We've gone from five to 32 prison locations.

When we launched, we had a statement that we were aiming to deliver training to 70 prisons, but we will end up at about 52. I'm more interested in the number of people being trained than the number of prisons.

Of the 37 people that have been released from our kitchens and restaurants this year, 76% have gone into employment, which is a very good outcome. If we maintain that level, I will be very happy indeed.

What has been your toughest challenge in taking on this new role?

Reopening the Clink restaurants post-Covid was a lengthy process and High Down in Sutton didn't reopen until June 2022. We were able to carry on with some training at Brixton and we continued to serve staff meals, so there was a level of training, but it was difficult to get students who could attend. We are delighted with where bookings are now, however, with Brixton doing well and Cardiff too [see footnote]. Thank goodness for our funders, who have continued to support us through the closures, as we had no restaurant revenue.

It's all about ramping up student numbers now as our training numbers need to be filled, but it's almost like starting over again. ▶

“We all need to be educating these potential new recruits that the industry is a great place to work”



City and Guilds trained

A graduate can leave the Clink with all of the following (depending on the restaurant they are trained at):

- Food and Beverage Service levels 1 and 2
- Food preparation and Cookery levels 1 and 2
- Food Safety level 2
- Barista Skills level 2
- Food Hygiene Certificate level 2
- Barista Skills Certificate level 2
- Horticulture Certificate and Diploma

Leading up to a prisoner's release, the Clink team will work with the individual on the practicalities, such as setting up a bank account, writing a CV and creating a disclosure statement (if applicable). It will work directly with employers to arrange an interview, which they will be prepared for. Once they have been offered a job, the Clink follows up with lifestyle change support, typically for about a year after release.



The Clink at HMP Brixton, London

offer good professional development and support our chef trainers to do advanced qualifications and become City and Guild assessors themselves. We also offer benefits like the blue light platform [a public sector discount scheme]. The work our team do is mostly independent, too. You have the autonomy to interact with a group of men or women that you are turning into professionals. We have about 60% men to 40% women as chef trainers and our support worker ratio is 70% female to 30% men. Our senior management team is a 50/50 split.

What are the latest figures on how the Clink affects prisoners reoffending?

Our one-year rate is holding steady at 12% of people reoffending on release [based on Ministry of Justice figures]. The national rate is between 24%-31%. Of the people that do reoffend, that have completed our programmes, the number of victims they impact is reduced by half and the term between reoffending is extended.

How can people access the Clink programmes?

The New Futures Network 'Unlocking Hospitality' initiative (see panel), devised by HM

Has the staff shortage in the industry impacted the Clink?

Yes. The Clink needs to employ chefs and general managers who are highly motivated, and a challenge we have is that we can't compete with the industry on salaries, so it's harder for us to recruit in some ways. However, we attract people who are looking for roles that are socially valuable with regular hours. The Clink Kitchens are Monday to Friday, for example.

We've edged salaries up slightly and we



Unlocking Hospitality

Unlocking Hospitality is the first time that Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice have run a national recruitment campaign across 92 resettlement prisons at the same time, focused on one industry.

For two weeks, from 14-28 October, all participating resettlement prisons will focus on the hospitality industry. They will run events to maximise interest in the industry and improve uptake of applications, as well as employment events, which will see employers going into prisons and potentially recruiting.

It will allow new initiatives, such as Employment Hubs, Employment Advisory Boards and prison employment leads to be shared with the wider industry, as part of the Prisons Strategy White Paper.

The initiative came about due to the unprecedented times the industry finds itself in around recruitment, coinciding with the significant investment that has been secured for reducing reoffending.

New Futures Network will support the collaboration of partners to network with



Melanzane of aubergine and tomato



The Clink at HMP Brixton, London

employers on the outside to help them understand why and how to get involved.

George Welborn, senior national employment manager at New Futures Network, says: "There has never been a better time to organise events on a national scale and challenge our colleagues to work more collectively with the industry. I also feel this is a great opportunity to showcase the great work all our partners do behind the walls, day to day, to support our prisons becoming job-ready. The Clink is one of the best examples around this and I was over the moon to receive its support in making a campaign of this nature a reality."

UKHospitality is providing literature to promote, signpost and inspire people to know more about the hospitality industry, and charity Only a Pavement Away will be supporting a national employment event over the campaign, where employers will be invited directly into the prisons to discuss with prisoners why they hospitality should be an option upon release.

www.newfuturesnetwork.gov.uk

Prison and Probation Services, is one way that we intend to engage with new employers. It will take place from 14-28 October and we will get involved by hosting a hotelier networking event at Brixton prison and a pubs and restaurants networking event at High Down. We will be inviting the industry to come and join us.

What else can the hospitality industry do to support ex-offenders?

It helps if businesses have a physical engagement with the people and prisoners in training and they can join our Ambassador's Programme. Chef and restaurateur Cyrus Todiwala is head ambassador, and like Cyrus individuals can get involved and come and talk to our trainees about hospitality and their business.

Currently, if we give offenders a choice between construction and hospitality, they'll choose construction as they think it is better paid. We all need to be educating these potential new recruits that the industry is a great place to work, and that it can open up a whole new world. We do need the industry to come in and sell it for us.

Potential new employers can talk to existing ones and get an understanding of how the trainees are qualified on graduation. For instance, it helps to know that the graduates can be flexible and that they are prepared to

start in positions such as kitchen porter and work towards a promotion.

How many Clink restaurants are there now, and do you have plans for any more?

We have High Down and Brixton prisons in London and Styal women's prison in Wiltshire. We would dearly love to open another restaurant, and I personally would like to go to the north, perhaps somewhere like Newcastle or Leeds, somewhere that needs trained hospitality professionals and where there is a local community that would support them.

Footnote

The Clink Cardiff restaurant, which is run by prisoners at HMP Cardiff, will close at Christmas 2022 after being open for 10 years. The restaurant's lease is set to expire and is unable to be renewed. The Clink Charity said it had trained more than 400 prisoners and people on probation in the restaurant over the past decade to help them into hospitality careers. The charity will maintain its presence in Wales through its Clink Kitchens scheme, which will expand into HMP Cardiff and HMP Swansea.

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

MENUWATCH



Cornish hake, tiger prawns, potato, bouillabaisse, sea vegetables

The Dartmoor Inn

A family has come together to buy a coaching inn, and with son-in-law Jay Barker-Jones’s high-flying chef experience, it’s a recipe for success. *Amanda Afिया* reports

Situated on the north-west fringes of Dartmoor National Park, the Dartmoor Inn has been a popular stop-off point for travellers to West Devon and Cornwall for centuries. Minutes from the village of Lydford and its historic Lydford Gorge, and surrounded by neighbouring farms, grasslands, and well-trodden trails, its immaculately maintained, white-washed exterior is a beacon.

In July 2019, the 16th-century coaching inn was purchased by a local family – new-to-hospitality Andrew and Jo Chisholm, their daughter Tess Barker-Jones, a hospitality management graduate who worked at the Dartmoor Inn in her teens, and her chef husband Jay, whose career includes periods with Shay Cooper (at Talland Bay Hotel in Porthallow, Cornwall), Kenny Atkinson (at the Michelin-starred St Martin’s hotel on the Isles of Scilly), Chris and James Tanner (at their eponymous restaurant in Plymouth), and at Andrew Brownsword Hotels.

The two couples bought the freehold property “lock, stock and barrel”, and while the furniture stayed largely unchanged, they immediately set about adding warmth and

“Adding an extra texture completely changes the way your mouth feels when you’re eating a dish”

character to the building by introducing colour on the walls in contrast to a previously simpler look. The result is a homely feel with eclectic furniture and natural tones punctuating the building’s collection of intimate dining rooms, and its three, spacious, shabby-chic bedrooms.

Jay’s daily-changing menu draws on local suppliers and features classic food pairings in flavour-packed, crowd-pleasing dishes. Intricately presented plates of food, illustrating Jay’s love of textures, include a suitably autumnal pan-seared breast of wood pigeon, served with sauteed wild mushrooms, Jerusalem artichokes “a la Grecque”, artichoke purée, artichoke crisps, fresh blackberries, and a red wine sauce.

“Textures are very important to me. Adding an extra texture completely changes the way your mouth feels when you’re eating a dish. This is training that comes from working with guys like Shay, Kenny, Chris and James – having access to recipes is all very good but being trained to actually analyse what you’re putting in your mouth and how you can change that only comes from the guys who want to be inspirational.”



Week St. Mary red venison loin, haunch ragout, kale, celeriac, red wine



Tess and Jay Barker-Jones,
Andrew and Jo Chisholm



Sticky toffee pudding

Much like the pigeon starter that hasn't come off the menu since the early days is a dainty salad of hand-picked Brixham crab paired with avocado (blended with olive oil, lemon juice and seasoning), orange and pink grapefruit, a touch of mayonnaise, topped with crunchy Parmesan crisps and pea shoots for colour. The 60-cover inn can sell anything up to 50 portions of the dish each week.

Among the best-selling main courses is loin of red venison from the Cornish village of Week St Mary, served with a deep and comforting haunch ragout, kale, celeriac and red wine jus. The most popular desserts, which Jay describes as "quite simple", include a timeless sticky toffee pudding.

"It's difficult to talk about sticky toffee pudding because everyone does one," explains Jay, "but I like to think that we do a very good one. I've adjusted a recipe that I've used for years. We serve it with candied walnuts, some great Devon clotted cream and a very treacly dark and rich toffee sauce seasoned with salt to offset its rich and creamy sugary base."

There's no pretending that the last three

From the menu

Starters

- Whipped goats' cheese, heritage beetroot, gingerbread, hazelnuts **£9.50**
- Crisp smoked ham hock, rémoulade, shallot, apple, nasturtium **£9.50**

Mains

- Pork fillet, glazed pork cheek, carrot, red cabbage, apple **£23**
- Bass, tempura courgette, piperade, aubergine, fine beans, pesto **£20**
- Atlantic cod, chard, cauliflower, curry broth, coconut, coriander **£20**

Desserts

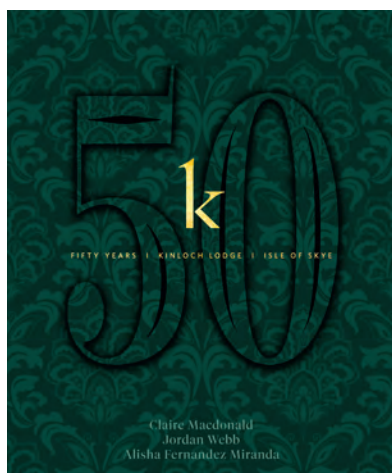
- Vanilla panna cotta, strawberries, sorbet, shortbread **£8.50**
- Dark chocolate brownie, orange caramel, honeycomb, salted caramel ice-cream **£8.50**
- Raspberry trifle, passion fruit, pistachio **£8.50**

years have been easy for the Dartmoor Inn's relative newcomers. But the challenges of navigating the choppy seas of Covid, multiple shutdowns, the cost of living crisis and spiralling energy bills, were somewhat evened out when Jay and Tess welcomed their daughter, Willow, two years ago.

And while they are anxious to see what the next 12 months bring for operators as a whole, they couldn't be prouder of their achievements which include a clutch of tourism awards, three consecutive years in the *Michelin Guide*, and, hot off the press, a notable new entry in *The Good Food Guide*.

"During the course of the last three years, aside from having this place, learning about it and understanding it, all the storms we have weathered has given us quite a thick skin," explains Tess. "But we're really proud of what we do, we're really proud of our team and our family, and everything that we've accomplished."

**Moorside, Lydford, Okehampton,
Devon EX20 4AY
www.dartmoorinn.com**



Fifty Years: Kinloch Lodge

By Claire Macdonald, Jordan Webb and Alisha Fernandez Miranda
Kinloch Lodge, £35

For the past 50 years Kinloch Lodge has served visitors to the Isle of Skye. It started life as a shooting lodge before being transformed into a luxury hotel with a focus on sustainability. To mark its 50th anniversary, founder Claire Macdonald and chef Jordan Webb have written a recipe book with author Alisha Fernandez Miranda, who once worked as an intern at Kinloch. The result is a lush and regal book showcasing the story of the lodge through food.

This book is ideal for the professional chef who is looking for an insight into another kitchen. The recipes showcase accomplished cooking techniques, but instructions are comprehensive enough to be appealing to those less aware of the ins and outs of classic cookery. You're given building blocks, such as shellfish stock, herb oil and butter-fried breadcrumbs to be able to understand the flavours on which Kinloch Lodge's restaurant thrives. Then you can work your way up to crafting beautiful dishes which wouldn't look out of place at a Michelin-starred establishment.

There's a recipe for pumpkin tortellini with toasted seeds, which can be served as an autumnal starter or sized up for a main course, and there's an intriguing recipe for langoustine ceviche and lobster tian topped with a gnarly squid ink tapioca crisp. Recipes are split up into sections according to where the kitchen finds its ingredients: forest, field, coast and garden. The staff are keen foragers, so many recipes contain mushrooms and seaweeds from the local areas.

Webb describes how the crystal clear waters in the area provides a bounty of langoustine, along with his favourite spot to forage wild garlic. There is a section about the extended family of Kinloch Lodge and how everyone who has worked for it over the years has become part of its history. But if you just want to get to the good stuff, the pages are jam-packed with food. After 50 years in the business Kinloch Lodge is looking good, and it's exciting to think what the next half-century will bring to this Scottish establishment.

By Maria Mellor

Venison loin, green peppercorns, red cabbage, and game fondants

We get amazing venison from the woodland around Skye from our friend Davie Urquhart and his team at Skye Game. For this recipe we use the loin, or what's known as the saddle. We like to air dry our meats on cooling racks in our fridges to get a more intense flavour to the loin.

Serves 6

Pickled red cabbage

½ red cabbage
1 banana shallot
100ml Champagne vinegar
(or white wine vinegar)
100ml white wine
100ml water
90g maple syrup
1tbs grainy mustard
Salt and pepper

Red cabbage purée

1tbs mustard seeds
1tbs olive oil
1 white onion, sliced
3 garlic cloves, sliced
½ red cabbage, sliced
200ml sherry vinegar
(or white wine vinegar)
200ml red wine
200g muscovado sugar
2tbs redcurrant jelly
Salt and pepper

Game fondants

2tbs olive oil
4 large potatoes (such as Maris Piper or Desiree), chopped in 2cm dice
Knob of butter
3 whole garlic cloves
3-4 thyme sprigs
200ml meat stock

Venison loin

3tbs oil
3tbs brined green peppercorns
800g venison loin (I prefer cooking a single piece and then carving portions from it, but you can also cook individual pieces)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN DONALDSON, MARTIN LEAR AND STEVE TAYLOR

Green peppercorn sauce

1tbs cracked green peppercorns (reserved from the loin)
100ml port
100ml meat stock
200 meat glaze

For the pickled red cabbage This can be made in advance. Finely slice the red cabbage and shallot either by hand or on a mandolin. Mix all the remaining ingredients together in a large sealed container, then add the cabbage and shallot. Leave for 2-3 hours, turning the pickle every hour or so.

For the red cabbage purée In a deep saucepan, dry toast the mustard seeds for a couple of minutes, then add a splash of olive oil and then the white onion and gently

This can be chilled and will keep for three days.

For the game fondants Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C). Heat the olive oil in an ovenproof frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the diced potatoes, trying to get a nice golden edge on most sides. Add a good knob of butter, the garlic and a few sprigs of thyme. The thyme crackles a bit in the frying pan but don't worry.

Add stock, making sure there is enough to create a layer of stock in the bottom of the frying pan. Bring to a simmer turning the potatoes in the buttery stock. Pop the whole frying pan into the oven for 10 minutes. Take the pan out, turn the potatoes in the stock and check with a skewer/knife to see if tender. If still firm add some more stock and place back in the oven for another five minutes. When the potatoes are tender remove from the pan and dry on some cloth and cool down in a fridge.

For the venison loin Heat a dry frying pan over a medium heat. Add the brined green peppercorns and gently warm for a couple of minutes to toast them and develop more flavour. Take off the heat and crush the peppercorns with a pestle and mortar, or simply with the end of a rolling pin in the pan. Set aside the 1tbs crushed peppercorns for the sauce, then roll the venison loin in the remaining peppercorns. Leave the loin to come up to room temperature for 30 minutes and to let it pick up the flavour of the peppercorns.

Preheat the oven to 170°C (fan 150°C).

Use a good frying pan set over a medium heat and add oil. Seal the venison on all sides, then add a knob of butter, some thyme and a couple of cloves of garlic to the pan. Place the venison in a roasting tray, then place in the oven for 4-5 minutes (the core temperature of the loin should 37°C-39°C on a meat thermometer). When ready, allow the meat to rest for 8-10 minutes wrapped in tin foil.

For the peppercorn sauce In a dry saucepan add the reserved green peppercorns and the port. Turn up the heat and boil off the raw alcohol until the sauce has reduced by two thirds. Add the game stock to the pan and reduce again by two thirds. Add the meat glacé and simmer before removing from the heat.



Revelations

James Jay, head chef, Sur-Mer at the Suffolk, Aldeburgh, Suffolk



What was your best subject at school?

PE

What was your first job?

Paperboy

What was your first job in catering?

Kitchen porter, specifically de-bearding 50kg of mussels

What do you normally have for breakfast?

Coffee and Marmite on toast

Which is your favourite restaurant?

Kiln in Soho, London

What is your favourite drink?

Coffee or red wine

What is your favourite cuisine?

Thai food. I love the use of fish sauce as seasoning

Are there any foods you refuse to cook with?

Farmed seafood. We need to respect our rivers and oceans

Which person in catering have you most admired?

Anthony Bourdain for his travelling and Thomas Keller for his longevity and constant innovation. His alumni are incredible



Which person gave you the greatest inspiration?

My grandfather. He was a paratrooper in the D-Day landings. A true gentleman

If not yourself, who would you rather have been?

Alexander Von Humboldt, the German geographer and explorer

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

Living somewhere sunny being a full-time diving instructor

Describe your ultimate nightmare?

Being covered in sand and never being able to get it off

Tell us a secret...

I collect spoons



What irritates you most about the industry?

Disrespectful customers – be nice!

When did you last eat a hamburger?

Patty & Bun about a month ago and it was glorious

What's your favourite film?

Toss-up between *Se7en* and *Léon: The Professional*



fry until soft. Add the garlic and carry on frying for a couple of minutes. Add in the red cabbage and the rest of the ingredients and cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid. This is to bring the liquid to a simmer but also to steam any ingredients not under the liquid.

Simmer the mixture for about 20 minutes on a medium heat. The cabbage should be nice and soft and have given out a lot of water. At this point carefully take off the lid, avoiding the steam, and continue to boil the mixture until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 20 minutes.

Take off the heat and allow to cool and then add the redcurrant jelly. Purée this whole mixture until smooth in a blender, and set to one side in a tub.

Flat mates

House party concept Little Door & Co has opened its fourth site in Soho. Co-founders Kamran Dehdashti and Jamie Hazeel tell *Millie Milliken* how they transform flats into bars

Tell me about the concept of Little Door & Co and how it all started

Jamie Hazeel (JH): It's a good story. It started almost eight years ago after myself and Kam worked on a pop-up together, and through an old boss of Kam's there was the opportunity to rent a bar above Notting Hill Gate tube station. We spent two days trying to work out what to do with the space. There were lots of features – a fireplace, cornicing, moulding – and it was obvious it had been a living room. We kept coming back to this idea that we could return it to a living room, adding stuff from our own homes. We called it Little Yellow Door.

Kamran Dehdashti (KD): We create venues that feel like you're going into a home – we create them in flats in different areas [of London] and we throw house parties and dinner parties. They are all very different and are reflective of the neighbourhoods they're in.

Your newest venue, Little Scarlet Door, is your most central. Why did you want to open in Soho and how is it different from the others?

KD: This is the first site we've built from scratch, so from that perspective it has been the largest undertaking. In terms of how it differs, we always dreamt of having a flat that was more industrial but it never felt quite right. In central London we could work on that concept, with concrete flooring, industrial finishing and a New York loft vibe. It gave us a chance to playfully remind everyone our concept has more legs than just maisonettes. We also believe the best house parties are the ones where you have the best melting pot of humans and Soho offers that in abundance.

JH: We were also set in our minds that Soho is a less residential area of London compared to where we have opened before, which have been neighbourhood venues. They follow a similar theme as the homes that would be in that area, but Soho is totally different.

“We also believe the best house parties are the ones where you have the best melting pot of humans”

What does the drinks offering look like?

JH: All the cocktails are named after films. We have classics and house specials, and we have also brought on some new cocktails that represent Soho. A lot of inspiration is from the heyday of New York parties, so for example we have a sharer served out of a soup tin called Studio 54. We like to do things that have a sense of fun and humour and work thematically for us.

We made our drinks menus for Scarlet Door more refined – we had the chance to play with some higher-end spirits and gave them a more elegant and contemporary energy.

KD: One of the things I love is we have fun sharing serves. At Little Yellow Door we have a glitter disco ball with straws, while at Little Blue Door in Fulham you can drink out of a large vase full of flowers.

How easy is it to train staff in that house party environment?

KD: First and foremost we ask people to be themselves. Hospitality is about welcoming people into your own house and treating them like your family, so we do not follow the standard steps of service, but behind all of that we have to know our product.

JH: One thing we like to say is that if there is a table full of people and one seat free, sit down at the table to take that order. It is a really good example of how we want people to treat customers.

How have you grown your business?

KD: After the pilot pop-up we took on an investment partner and they have helped fund our growth, but it is also tied into each venue being successful.

JH: It's also been important never to have a scattergun approach. Opening a new venue is a thought-out and considered process – the design, the brief, we even write a story – which we never share – of the flatmates like who would live in the venue, what music they listen to on the way to work, what car they drive, how they know each other, and that dictates the brief.

Can we expect any new Little Doors soon?

KD: Funny you should ask – we spent this afternoon debating that as we have three areas we're looking at: one is west, one north and one east. We're having a lot of conversations



and one of the beautiful things is that we don't truly believe there is a limit as so many areas in the four quarters [of London] are different. **JH:** It's continually exciting. When we first opened Little Yellow Door after a few months I think we realised it was a big concept. There's definitely scope to create homes outside of London too.

**Seasonal food and drink pairing
Grouse + Tanners Red Burgundy**

Here comes game season, and grouse is just one of the many game birds that will be popping up on menus. This rich and gamey bird goes perfectly with a red Burgundy and this one from Tanners, made by Nicholas Potel, is the ideal match. Ripe damsons and black cherry on the nose is met with more spice and lovely tannins on the palate.



ALEXBLACKSEA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Cocktail of the week: Kola 75

Booking Office 1869, London
Bar manager: **Jack Porter**

40ml Lime-infused Bombay Sapphire
20ml Champagne cordial
15ml Palette Roots
5ml Cadello 88
4 dash kola bitters
30ml water

Combine all ingredients with ice and stir. Strain into a glass and garnish with Falernum foam.

Lime-infused Bombay Sapphire

Per 700ml Bombay Sapphire, add 20g of peeled lime zest and leave to macerate at room temperature in a sealed container, making sure the lime is submerged.

Champagne cordial

Add 400ml flat champagne, 400g



caster sugar, 5g citric acid and 5g malic acid to low heat and stir until the sugars and acids have dissolved.

Falernum foam

In a measuring jug measure 100ml lime juice, 100ml simple syrup, 100ml egg white and 200ml Falernum. Pour into a siphon and charge with a NO2 canister.

Raise a glass with...



PHOTO: JOHN NEATE

There are myriad opportunities for a mezcalero to put their stamp on a mezcal, making it a unique spirit, says *Matthias Ingelmann*, head bartender at Kol Mezcaleria and Kol restaurant, London

The beauty of agave spirits lies in their inconsistencies, but what does that really mean? Why are they so consistently inconsistent? Are spirits not supposed to taste the same every time?

Agave spirits are a bit like grapes and wine: each has a different flavour profile, requires a different terroir, and a different production process. Every mezcalero (maker of mezcal) has a different style, learned different techniques from their ancestors and uses different tools. Agaves need a long time to grow, from around seven years for the Maguay Espadín to 25 years for the Maguay Tepeztate. This means the plant experiences a lot over its lifespan: the surrounding plants, weather and animals all influence the flavour profile of the agave.

Will the mezcalero cut the quote (the stem that carries the flower) down when harvesting, and how much of the pencas (leaves) will be taken off? Will the agaves be halved or quartered before cooking? How will the cooking pit be structured? What wood will be used for the fire and for how long will it be cooked for?

After the cooking will the agave be mashed straight away or be left for a while? Will a tahona (a big stone wheel) be used or a wooden mallet?

All this happens before we even see a drop of alcohol and before probably the biggest contributor to the beauty of inconsistency comes into play: the natural fermentation using the yeasts around the palenque (distillery). Will the mezcalero use a wooden pine vat, one made of concrete or the raw hide from last year? Will it be distilled in copper or clay, or a tree trunk copper construct? There may be one, two or three distillations, or it may be mezcal pechuga (where a raw chicken or turkey breast is hung over the still, cooking in the vapors, supposedly adding to the spirit's final flavour).

Mezcal production has a lot of question marks, but it creates a truly unique product. And that's the beauty of it: every vintage is different, every agave has its own style, and it is up to the mezcalero how that is expressed. Inconsistency is beautiful and exciting. Savour and honour every sip you get.



Waste not, want not

Don't waste your waste. Use it to track output and minimise the amount of food going in the bin. *Angela Frewin* has found the tech to help recalibrate your usage and prevent profits being thrown away

“Without doubt, food waste has become one of the most pressing issues to face the foodservice industry and is front-of-mind for operators and customers alike,” reports Scott Duncan, managing director at Unox UK.

“As awareness of the impact of waste, the rise in food shortages and the cost of living combine, caterers are faced with greater scrutiny from consumers and the government, with pressure to reduce their waste, improve efficiency and offer a more sustainable business.”

Charity WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) estimates that UK foodservice and hospitality operators waste some 500,000 tonnes of food annually while international food waste coalition Champions 12.3 found that businesses throw away 900,000 freshly prepared meals each day.

This costs more than £3.2b a year. According to Kelsius commercial director Mario Kelly: “Of the £20,000 that food waste costs each hospitality venue on average every year, up to 75% of that is avoidable.”

Kelly cites recent research by Fourth and the Sustainable Restaurant Association that found that only one-fifth of operators track whether their food waste comes from spoilage, preparation or plate waste (which, says WRAP, account for 21%, 45% and 34% of waste respectively). Just 10% were using technology to monitor their food waste output.

Digital menu and stock management soft-

Waste not checklist

Hayden Hibbert, director of client relations at food procurement expert Allmanhall, outlines simple actions to reduce food waste:

- Avoid overbuying stock, especially perishables.
- Store food at the right temperature, maintain fridges and freezers at the correct temperature and rotate stock appropriately.
- Label food containers correctly, including allergens and date information.
- Keep a stock inventory of foods in all storage areas, including use by and best before dates.
- Ensure deliveries match orders, are of good quality and within their use by dates.
- Ensure meal portions match customer requirements – around 25% leave food on their plate.
- Don't overextend your menu – keep it simple to keep stock levels down.



PHOTO: BJP PHOTOGRAPHY

Suppliers

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www.theaccessgroup.com/hospitality

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Waste2 Environmental Systems

waste2es.com

Williams www.williams-refrigeration.co.uk

Winnow Solutions

www.winnowsolutions.com

Wrapmaster www.wrapmaster.global

Zonal Technology www.zonal.co.uk

ware provides valuable insight in real time and over time, says Henri Jooste, strategic product manager at Zonal. Its menu management solution defines ingredients and quantities that can tackle both over-ordering and plate waste, helping kitchen staff tweak recipes, remove poorly-selling dishes or adjust portion sizes. Integrating digital stock management systems such as the Acquire end-to-end purchase to pay system with electronic point of sale (EPoS) technology means, he adds, that stock levels are automatically updated in real time as sales are processed.

Linking waste management software with stock control, purchase-to-pay solutions and recipe and menu modules can reduce food waste by up to 4%, asserts Henry Seddon managing director at Access Hospitality. EPoS systems that track sales in relation to ingredient cost will pinpoint the most and least popular and profitable dishes. He adds: "It may also identify if you need to think about reducing the number of dishes on your menu or getting creative by making more dishes from multi-use ingredients."

Wireless temperature monitoring and digital HACCP systems that ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures at all stages can play a key role in minimising spoilage. Kelsius's FoodCheck2Go combines a digital temperature probe with a tablet to check and record fridge temperatures, cook and cool temperatures, and deliveries, while its Food-Check 2.0 uses fixed sensors to record storage areas and alert staff to any sudden tempera-

“Charity WRAP estimates that UK foodservice and hospitality operators waste some 500,000 tonnes of food annually”

ture changes. "This could save businesses thousands in stock loss," says Kelly.

Mechline's wall-mounted HyGenikx air and surface sanitiser eradicates most of the

microbes and moulds that attack perishable foods, extending their shelf life in kitchens and coldrooms by an average of 58% (approximately 7.5 days) and some produce by 150%.

"Using this technology alongside methods of ensuring that fresh food stock and menus are carefully planned, with all foods being stored with a first-in, first-out approach, caterers can help preserve the lifespan of fresh foods and fight against food waste," attests commercial director John Newell.

Freeze frame

Simple storage solutions for prepped and ready-to-serve foods can help cut the 50%-80%





Meiko BioMaster



Kelsius

of avoidable food waste in commercial kitchens, says Adrian Brown, managing director at Cofresco Foodservice. Wrapmaster's reusable food-grade and dishwasher-safe silicon Flexsil-Lids, designed to fit most international gastronorm tray and steam pan sizes, provide air-tight seals to keep food fresh.

Everyday fridges, freezers and cold rooms play a crucial role in reducing spoilage at every step of production, but blast chillers and freezers add a new dimension in these uncertain times of fluctuating demand and reduced staff, says Martin Laws, marketing manager at Williams Refrigeration.

Operators can prepare meals in bulk, rapidly chill or freeze the hot food and store it in peak condition for extended periods until it is

regenerated for serving. The Williams range spans compact models that can process as little as 10kg of food to roll-in units capable of handling up to 320kg of product at once.

The downside of blast chilling, cold storage and regeneration is that it is "an incredibly energy-intensive process and can also lead to product wastage if regenerated dishes are not used," notes Duncan at Unox, which offers the world's first 'hot fridge', Evereo, as an alternative that costs just £1 per day to run. Evereo preserves hot food safely at the temperature at which it is served and above the danger zone for bacterial growth for eight hours in unsealed containers or 72 hours using Multi.Day bags and trays.

Larger sites and dark kitchens can also ben-

efit from cooking dishes in one kitchen, before preserving and serving from another location using Evereo," adds Duncan.

Smart solutions

Smartphone apps such as Olio and Too Good To Go enable caterers to shift surplus prepared foods to charities and food banks or offer unsold food at discounted prices for customers to collect towards the day-end.

Rising costs make landfill an increasingly uneconomic and unsustainable option for unavoidable food waste, but there is growing armoury of ingenious equipment that convert muck into brass by turning it into revenue-generating bio-fuel or compost.

Meiko's BioMaster pump and vacuum system is one of the costlier solutions but will, says the company, pay back over its 30-year life. The BioMaster hopper pulverises food waste, including oil, grease, bones, shells and fish skins, and pumps it into a holding tank to be collected for use as compost or biogas. It uses less electricity and water than other systems, needs no added chemicals, wood chips or enzymes and is government-approved as a sustainable solution.

Green Eco Technologies' compact WasteMaster converts food waste into a dry residue that can be anaerobically digested into bio-fuel, while Enterpack's Compostapack food waste system creates compost from food scraps, cardboard and compostable packaging and films. Waste2 Environmental Systems iD-R system uses aerobic and anaerobic digestion to turn food waste and compostable crockery and cutlery into a dry fertiliser crumb and covert waste gases into electricity that operators can use to reduce power bills or sell to the National Grid.

The good news, concludes the Champions 12.3 report, is that 76% of food outlets recouped their investment in food waste reduction programmes within the first year, rising to 89% within two years. "The study also found that for every £1 invested in cutting food waste, you can expect to see £7 back in saved profit, whatever the size or location of your business," says Seddon.

Winnowing the waste

Amadeus is rolling out Winnow Vision across all NEC Group venues after a successful pilot at the NEC ICC Birmingham slashed food waste by 33%, saving almost 97,000 meals a year.

Winnow Vision is an AI-powered bin with digital camera, smart scales and touchscreen that records the type, weight, cost and reason for all binned foods, which Amadeus has integrated with its Fourth hospitality systems to jointly track waste.

Food and beverage director Marc Frankl regards tackling food waste as "one of the most cost-effective investments to reduce your carbon footprint" and says Amadeus aims to cut avoidable food waste by 50%.

Simon Hellier, executive chef at ICC Birmingham, describes the technology as "game-changing". "The ICC's kitchens cater for 400,000 delegate days every year, so if we over-stock, this can vastly increase what we have to send offsite for recycling or anaerobic digestion," he says. "Changing our habits using AI helps the environment and saves us resources, time and labour."



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Textile Services Association asks Liz Truss for support during energy crisis

In an open letter to the new prime minister, the Textile Services Association (TSA) has called on Liz Truss to consider immediate measures to help the commercial laundry industry deal with the energy cost crisis.

The commercial laundry sector was denied assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic by the government because it falls between the definitions of various primary and secondary sectors.

The TSA recently surveyed its members and asked them about what changes they are seeing in their energy prices. All the companies reported significant increases, with rises of anything from 300% to 1,500% being forecast over the coming months.

“Without laundries, sectors like hospitality, healthcare and many others wouldn’t be able to operate,” says David Stevens, chief executive of the TSA.

“At the start of the year, energy costs represented 10% of a commercial laundry’s overheads, but we are looking at increases of sev-



ROSSHELEN/HUTTERSTOCK

The TSA is concerned firms will go out of business without intervention

“Without laundries, sectors like hospitality, healthcare and many others wouldn’t be able to operate”

David Stevens, TSA

eral orders of magnitude of that.”

The TSA is concerned that without decisive action there is a risk of companies going out of business, which could have cascading effects as sectors that rely on laundry services will be unable to access them.

“The increased costs would have to be passed on to customers, and at that level it would generate inflationary pressures,”

said Stevens. “Laundry tends to be a business that works behind the scenes, so most people don’t realise we’re there. Without laundry, hospitality would have to shut down within a day. The healthcare sector would last two days. The damage that would be caused by not supporting the laundry industry would be catastrophic for UK businesses as a whole.”

The TSA is calling on the new government to put measures in place that supports the industry as it is an energy-intensive user. The proposed measures include rate relief, low-interest, long-term loans and qualification for grants previously denied the industry, along with subsidised energy costs and the introduction of an industrial energy cap.

“We are doing what we can to help our members reduce their costs, but with price increases this large it will make little actual difference,” adds Stevens. “We urge the new prime minister to take swift action to ensure that laundries aren’t forgotten during this crisis.”

McCain Foods acquires Scelta Products

McCain Foods has acquired Scelta Products, adding the Netherlands-based producer of frozen foods to its portfolio.

Scelta Products marks the latest in a series of investments and acquisitions McCain has made in recent years to expand its appetiser and snacking offerings. Previous acquisitions include Ad van Geloven, Strong Roots and Forno De Minas.

“With common customers and shared values as family-owned companies, there is a natural complement between McCain Foods and Scelta Products,” said Max Koeune, chief executive of McCain Foods.

“We feel honoured and privileged to build on the legacy of Scelta Products, bringing their delicious products to our custom-



Scelta produces vegetable dishes such as cauliflower fries (above)

ers as we expand on the fantastic business that Scelta’s founders have created.”

Scelta Products, including onion rings, battered and breaded mushrooms and other vegetable appetisers, will be integrated into McCain’s product network, creating increased production capacity throughout European and international markets.

Scelta Mushrooms, co-founder of Scelta Products and the international route to market for more than 20 years, will solely focus on its mushroom business.

Jos Koster and Wilco Boone, co-founders of Scelta Products, added: “After more than a decade of building a successful business partnership, we are thrilled to officially become part of the McCain Foods family.”

Huhtamaki and Stora Enso call for partners on setting new paper cup recycling standard

Huhtamaki and Stora Enso have joined together to launch a new paper cup recycling initiative, the Cup Collective.

The programme, the first of its kind in Europe, aims to recycle and capture the value of used paper cups on an industrial scale.

With the aim of setting new standards for paper cup collection and recycling, the Cup Collective has issued an open invitation for partners from across the supply chain to get involved in working towards a systemic European solution.

The EU has a set recycling target for paper and board packaging of 85% by 2030. Paper cups are recyclable but need to be collected before they can be turned into new paper products.

The Cup Collective initiative will create the necessary collec-



The Cup Collective is looking for partners to meet EU targets

tion infrastructure to significantly increase the recycling rate of wood-fiber in paper cups. The programme will also make it easier for consumers and businesses to collect used paper cups to be regenerated into valuable recycled raw material.

The Cup Collective will work with partners throughout the supply chain, from large restaurants and café chains, retailers and transport hubs to independent coffee shops, collection partners, waste management operators and policymakers across Europe.

The Cup Collective will initially be financed by the two companies, but with plans to become self-funding in the future.

Visit [Co-cre8 at thecupcollective.eu](http://Co-cre8@thecupcollective.eu) to find out more

Menu Fresh brings distribution in-house to control supply chain



MenuFresh's in-house fleet will be made up of low-impact vehicles

Menu Fresh, previously known as IDC, has opened a new warehouse near Bedford.

Customers will benefit from an enhanced level of service, with one ordering system, a dedicated customer relations team, and a fleet of eco-friendly Euro 6 diesel vehicles.

Menu Fresh has been supplying food to chefs in hospitality, catering, care, business, industry and public sector organisations for 27 years. The company said the restructure comes in response to the increasing pressure faced by its customers, with

many forced to strip costs from their supply chain

Chief executive Chris Edwards said: "I'm a firm believer in seeking a positive from negative situations and we've used the lessons of Brexit, the pandemic and now war in Ukraine, to revolutionise our business model.

"We have taken control of the supply network to make sure our customers get food with impeccable provenance, delivered with a low-impact fleet of vehicles that won't be vulnerable to driver shortages."

JJ Foodservice launches own-brand campaign

JJ Foodservice has launched an own-brand web page with more than 40 brands and food categories developed in-house.

"We want to make it easier for our customers to find affordable, high-quality options against a backdrop of continuous price rises," said chief product officer, Sezer Ozkul. "Our customers are recognising the savings they can

make by shopping own-brand. We are proud to be able to work with the many of the world's leading brands together with our own brands to be able to offer our customers a great choice."

The new web page is supported with a 20-week social media campaign, promoting a different brand every week until February 2023.



Chris Corbin

The Corbin & King restaurateur looks back at a lifetime curating dining experiences, from the European dining of the Wolseley to the rise of the superstar chefs in the Eighties with *Jungmin Seo*

Our proudest achievement is without a doubt the Wolseley. It was sort of a game-changer and a fantasy to think of doing something that could trade from seven in the morning until midnight on a busy boulevard, copying the European or Parisian idea. We were also heavily influenced by Vienna, because we realised it was rather a lost cuisine. The fact we had the vision and we were able to create it; that we stuck at it and created this institution, which it is now – that is our greatest achievement.

Spot the gap and do your research. In 2003, people went to the Ritz London or Caffè Nero for breakfast. We had a place where they could go to for a sophisticated, honest experience, with a menu that was à la carte. We went to Paris, Milan and Vienna and copied how they served coffee with chocolates and a small glass of water. It was a real cultural mélange.

The world has changed enormously in terms of the restaurant business. In the early 1980s, there wasn't the plethora of restaurants that there are now, and the skills in the kitchen were also nowhere near what they are today. We were from the generation where none of the big chefs went to catering colleges; they were university graduates who had a passion for food and used imagination to do things differently. Now there is a certain diversity of menus and skills, with more people coming from different countries to be in London.

Your biggest asset, of course, is the staff. It's a tough job, there's no doubt about that. Eight-, 10- or 12-hour days are not unusual. The management at Kudu [run by Corbin's daughter Amy] decided to give people two days off in a row. That applies to the whole team, so everybody's off together.



“People won't always remember the food they ate or the drinks they had, but they will remember the experience it gave them”

It's about building a family ethos and getting loyalty. You can only really get that if you are honest and fair and people believe in you. The trust that you can inspire in people has to be at the forefront of your mind.

Remember to appreciate the unseen help in your restaurants. The people who wash-up, the dryers, the suppliers – the people who keep the plates spinning, so to speak. Unseen support can become underappreciated because they're taken for granted and it's important to show respect. Jeremy [King] and I would always recognise people's birthdays and anniversaries.

Labour shortages have never been as bad as they are now. The circumstances are unprecedented in terms of Brexit and people re-examining their careers after lockdown. Amy has very cleverly become a sponsor for people getting visas coming over from South Africa, given that Kudu has a South African ethos. That is the way forward in some ways.

The charity event Who's Cooking Dinner? [which sees guests learn who their chefs will be on the night] has continued for 20 years because of the camaraderie between the chefs. Although the chefs know each others' kitchens and menus, they don't get the chance to cook elbow to elbow very often. It is a huge buzz for them. We also have a really loyal clientele and here we are, having started in 1998, now in 2022. To be honest, I don't know how it's happened. It's an extraordinary thing that has become part of my life.

Back in the 1980s there was a lot of competition. I don't think either front of house or chefs saw each other as comrades, whereas now that has certainly changed. For example, I was once at a restaurant where I wasn't allowed to tell anyone where we got our bread from. These days, there is a huge brotherhood, sisterhood and community in hospitality. This year we are sharing the funds raised from Who's Cooking Dinner? with Hospitality Action and I think that is hugely important.

Someone once said to me that what you said won't necessarily always be remembered, but they will remember the way you made them feel. It sort of relates to restaurants. People won't always remember the food they ate or the drinks they had, but they will remember the experience it gave them, so I think that is a truly profound piece of advice.

Restaurants are so much about people, otherwise they are just inanimate products. We always say we can't do it alone.

● *Who's Cooking Dinner? 2022 has been postponed following the death of Queen Elizabeth II*

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