

# THE CATERER

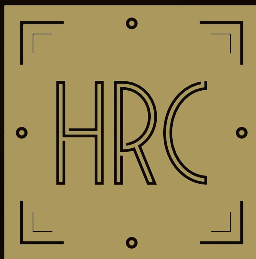
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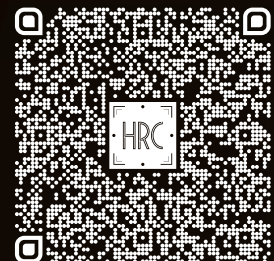
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Jason Carruthers on Leonardo Hotels entering the luxury sector

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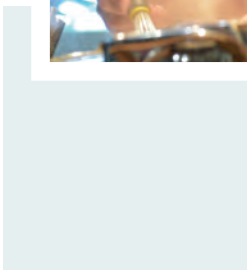


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## SUITE DREAMS

Jason Carruthers on Leonardo Hotels entering the luxury sector

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## HIT LIST

What's the first thing on the menu to be cut when making savings?

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# Cream of Cornwall

Emily Scott looks back at the journey to taking on her pop-up turned permanent restaurant in Watergate Bay

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## News & Opinion

- 4 **Investigation follows claims of security corruption at O2 Brixton Academy**
- 8 **News in brief** The week's top stories
- 10 **News analysis** Is fine dining sustainable?

## Business

- 20 **The Caterer interview** Jason Carruthers, managing director of Leonardo Hotels
- 26 **What's off the menu?** If you want to cut costs, what's the first dish to go?
- 32 **Cover story** Emily Scott on how she cooked up a menu for the G7 Summit and turned her Cornwall pop-up permanent

## Chef

- 36 **Menuwatch** Sao Paolo Bistro, Manchester
- 40 **The Drinks Doctor** Invaluable advice on low-alcohol menus in our inaugural column

## Products

- 42 **Labour of love** It's time to get your freakshake on with a host of new love-themed products and ideas for Valentine's Day
- 46 **New products** The latest launches

## People

- 48 **Pathways** Thomas Leatherbarrow, founder, the Thomas Leatherbarrow Corporation



In this week's issue of *The Caterer* we talk to chef Emily Scott of Emily Scott Food in Cornwall, who speaks candidly to us about her career. It's a story of strength and tenacity, of determination and hope.

The initiatives she has set up at Watergate Bay have ensured the successful continuation of her business with diversification through additional revenue streams offered up as one way of shoring up a business for many hospitality operators (page 32).

The viability of fine dining following the announcement of Noma's closure is examined on page 10 with Sven-Hanson Britt sharing his plan for his South London Oxeye site "to open as many different styles of outlets under one roof as we can," modelling his strategy on a two or three-star hotel restaurant "one that traditionally doesn't make any money but is propped up with the massive margins in afternoon tea, bar, events and private dining".

The subject of the real cost of fine dining is also reflected in this week's menu shrinkage article, examining how operators are adapting their menus to manage food costs with shorter, sharper, fixed-price menus.

Meanwhile in our new regular column, the Drinks Doctor, we share advice from a panel of drinks experts to help shape your beverage menus. This week we look at no- and low-alcohol offerings and the importance of strong flavours, as well as the senses and rituals in cocktails (with or without alcohol).



For further inspiration turn to our Valentines feature, with ideas and products to pep up the most romantic date of the year.

**Lisa Jenkins**  
Managing editor

FRONT COVER PHOTO: BETH DRUCE

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# Investigation follows claims of security corruption at O2 Brixton Academy

By Sophie Witts

An investigation has been launched into claims of corruption by security staff after two people died in a crush at the O2 Brixton Academy.

Rebecca Ikumelo, 33, and Gaby Hutchinson, 23, were killed when ticketless fans tried to force entry to a sold-out concert by Nigerian Afrobeats artist Asake on 15 December.

The venue's licence has been suspended until 16 April following a request by the Metropolitan Police, who are investigating the incident.

Additionally the Security Industry Authority (SIA) has now launched an inquiry into reports that security guards at the venue employed by AP Security regularly took bribes to let people in without tickets.

The claims were made in an episode of *BBC File On 4: Catastrophe At The Academy*, where it was alleged staff would allow "a couple of hundred" people inside in exchange for money, and some "made £1,000 cash".

According to Lambeth Council documents, the concert was sold



Two people died in a crush at the music venue in South London

out and 5,000 people attended, but an hour after it started a crowd of around 1,000 people gathered outside the venue and attempted to force their way in.

A police application to Lambeth Council for the O2 Brixton Academy's licence to be revoked said it was clear security staff had "completely lost

control of the situation" when officers arrived at the scene.

The SIA said: "As the regulator of the private security industry in the UK, we take allegations of corruption by security operatives extremely seriously.

"We have today launched an inquiry into these allegations which appear to extend beyond

the Brixton O2 Academy. We will also review licensing arrangements and take appropriate action against any individual or company carrying out such practices as part of our regulatory licensing responsibility across the private security industry.

"We regularly meet with security companies to ensure their staff adhere to the highest professional standards. It is a requirement that contracted security staff have passed our accreditation process to secure a licence. If a security operative falls below these standards, we demand an immediate investigation by the company that employs them. This includes disciplinary action to be taken and where appropriate that the matter is reported to the police."

Academy Music Group, which owns the O2 Academy Brixton, said on Saturday (14 January) that it had "reflected deeply" on the incident and the venue would remain closed while it co-operated with police enquiries.

*The Caterer* has contacted AP Security for comment.

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## Tipping legislation a step closer to becoming law

A bill that will ban hospitality businesses from holding back staff tips and place strict controls on how service charge is managed is on track to become law after gaining cross-party support in the House of Commons.

The Employment (Allocation of Tips) Bill had its final reading in Commons on Friday 20 January and will now go forward to the House of Lords. If approved in the upper house, it is expected to achieve royal assent in spring when it will become law.

The government had originally launched a consultation into tipping practices in 2015. After several delays the Employment (Allocation of Tips Bill) was introduced to Parliament as a private member's bill by Dean Russell, MP for Watford.

After the bill was approved by the Commons he tweeted: "One step closer to ensuring millions of UK workers will receive their hard-earned tips and gratuities."

When the bill was presented in July 2022 UKHospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls had said: "Tips and service charges provide a significant and welcome boost to hospitality employees' take-home cash.

"So we're delighted to see this proposed legislation recommend that employers can set a fair distribution policy for staff, meaning they all benefit.

"This should also reassure prospective hospitality sector workers at a time when the industry is seeking to fill vacancies."



To sign up to *The Caterer's* free Tipping and Payment webinar and learn more about the new legislation go to [www.thecaterersummits.com](http://www.thecaterersummits.com)

## Providers 'failing to pass energy support to businesses'

### Sacha Lord has called for an urgent inquiry into energy suppliers' failure to pass on support packages to operators since September

By Emma Lake

Greater Manchester's night-time economy adviser has called for an urgent inquiry into accusations suppliers are failing to pass energy support on to businesses.

Sacha Lord said many operators have yet to receive any of the support they have been entitled to since September 2022 and fear they will miss out completely, with the existing scheme set to close at the end of March 2023.

Without support and with spiralling cost pressures and Covid loan repayments due in the coming months, Lord warned that many venues could be forced to close.

Lord said: "I'm hearing from pubs where monthly energy bills are exceeding rent payments, and others who have temporarily shut sites during the colder winter months to save on gas and electricity costs.

"We also have evidence of energy providers who have either not yet applied any government support payments to business accounts, or have not applied the full amounts owed, and we are urgently pressing Ofgem and the government to investigate."

The owner of Capuchin Coffee in Altrincham, Greater Manchester said: "Our business has not had any money put into our business account from the government yet." While Damian O'Shea, director at Stockport's Heaton Hops bar, added: "We



Sacha Lord, Greater Manchester's night time economy adviser, said operators are yet to receive support

still have not seen any government support discount applied to our energy bills."

In an article published by *The Times* newspaper on Saturday (21 January) EDF acknowledged it had failed to pass on energy support to about 2,000 small businesses, blaming "systems issues".

Simon Delaney, owner of the Firbank pub in Wythenshawe, Manchester, told the paper EDF was charging him 25p per kilowatt hour for gas, when it should be capped at 75p.

He said: "My concern is if they're doing this to me, they'll be doing it to other [business owners]."

Expressing his concern for the sector Lord added: "From the end of March, we will see a hailstorm of damage

inflicted on businesses, from the removal of energy support to rises in income tax thresholds, which will further affect consumer spending. Unfortunately, we will see many businesses close down as a result of these extra pressures.

"We are moving from one financial crisis to another, and the Treasury urgently needs to put forward a long-term financial plan, which will not only secure economic growth and stabilise the industries currently in peril, but instil confidence in business owners across the UK."

Operators have told *The Caterer* they are reducing opening hours and even ceasing to take a salary from their businesses in a bid to weather the

cost pressures. Despite their efforts figures from the new Hospitality Market Monitor from AlixPartners and CGA by Nielsen IQ showed that 1,611 UK hospitality businesses permanently closed in the fourth quarter of 2022, the equivalent of nearly 18 a day.

Earlier this month UK Hospitality urged energy watchdog Ofgem to call out rogue suppliers who have been using government support as a "cash cow".

Chief executive Kate Nicholls said suppliers had been offering rates well above wholesale prices, hiking standing charges, demanding "eye-watering" deposits and in some cases refusing to work with hospitality.

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## Michelin announces release date for 2023 guide

Michelin will launch its 2023 guide for Great Britain and Ireland on 27 March, returning to an in-person event for the first time in three years.

Michelin star recipients will be announced alongside the winners of Michelin green stars and a number of special awards during a ceremony at the Silver-

stone Circuit in Northampton.

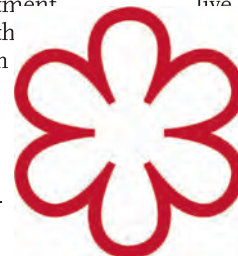
Gwendal Poullennec, international director of the Michelin Guides, said: "After two years without being able to organise a physical event in Great Britain and Ireland, we are thrilled to be back with what should be a warm, exciting and friendly gathering.

"The Michelin guide team

is on hand and busy organising a celebration to fully reflect the talent, commitment and resilience of the British and Irish gastronomic scenes – a celebration all the more welcome in the current challenging economic climate."

The presentation of the 2023 accolades will also be broadcast live via Michelin's YouTube channel.

The publishers of the little red book typically announce the new Bib Gourmand recipients in the days leading up to the launch event.



# Hospitality counting the cost as further train strikes announced

Further strikes on 1 and 3 February mean yet more loss of earnings for the already embattled sector



UKHospitality has estimated that the train strikes have cost hospitality some £2.5b in sales in the last year

By Sophie Witts and Katherine Price

Train drivers have announced a fresh round of strikes after rejecting a pay offer, while hospitality businesses continue to count the cost of reduced trading.

In its results, published this week, pub group Fuller’s estimated strike action had already cost the business around £4m and lowered its expectations for full-year earnings as a result.

Fuller’s chief executive Simon Emeny said: “While it is frustrating that the train strikes have set back our reported sales and earnings, it is reassuring that we are achieving our anticipated sales trajectory in periods unaffected by strikes.

“While ongoing strike action will dampen sales, demand from customers remains good and we are optimistic that 2023 will deliver further sales growth.”

Hospitality businesses in London have told *The Caterer* they had seen hundreds of bookings

cancelled and lost thousands of pounds of business a day during strikes by rail and other transport unions last year.

Earlier this month UKHospitality said train strikes are believed to have lost hospitality businesses some £2.5b in sales since summer 2022.

At the time UKHospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls said: “The sector has struggled to recover from Covid and these protracted rail strikes since May have made that bounce back much tougher. Enough is enough, this needs to end now.”

The next round of strikes will see members of the RMT and Aslef unions across 15 train operating companies walk out on 1 and 3 February.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents train companies, had offered Aslef drivers a backdated pay rise of 4% for 2022 and a 4% increase this year. But Aslef said it amounted to a “real-terms pay cut” at a time inflation was

running higher than 10% and came with “so many conditions attached that it was clearly unacceptable”.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of Aslef, said: “The proposal is not and could not ever be acceptable, but we are willing to engage in further discussions within the process that we previously agreed.”

The Department for Transport said Aslef’s decision was “incredibly disappointing” and passengers had “borne the brunt of these damaging strikes for too long. The government has played its part and facilitated conversations,” a spokesperson said.

“We urge Aslef to play their part, call off strikes and consider this fair and reasonable offer to members, which would see train drivers receive a pay rise in line with the private sector without fuelling inflation, so we can bring this dispute to an end.”

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## Job vacancies fall to 149,000

The number of job vacancies in the hospitality sector fell to 149,000 between October and December last year, a 5.7% drop on the previous quarter.

This marked a decrease on the July to September period, when there were 158,000 unfilled roles across the industry, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

However, the number of hospitality vacancies remained well above the 85,000 reported in the last pre-pandemic period.

Between October and December 2022 the number of empty jobs across all areas of the economy remained at a historically high level, despite six consecutive quarterly falls.

The ONS said this was due to economic pressures causing some employers to hold back on recruitment. At the same time wages continued to rise, with total pay increasing 6.4%.

UKHospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls said: “[These] figures reinforce the challenging recruitment landscape hospitality businesses are facing, with vacancy rates still 63% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

“Wages in the sector have been steadily rising for a long time, reflecting the efforts of businesses to both attract staff and keep up with inflation. Our latest quarterly survey showed staff pay was up 12%, joining energy, food and drink as the most significantly rising business costs.

“There is not a silver bullet to solve this recruitment crisis but we do need to see ambition from government, ranging from investment in skills, apprenticeships and education to immigration solutions where necessary.”



Vacancy rates are still 63% higher than pre-pandemic levels



# Italian restaurant in High Court battle over 'Cibo' name

By court reporters

The owners of two restaurants in the suburbs of Manchester, frequented by celebrities including Ryan Giggs and Will.i.am, are suing three restaurants in the city centre in the High Court for using the 'Cibo' name without consent.

Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow are suing three restaurants in Manchester, called Cibo Manchester, Cibo Liverpool Road and Cibo Great Northern, and four company directors, in a dispute over trademarks.

Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow, which reported revenue of £4.2m last year, opened in 2016 and 2017 and list celebrity clients in legal documents, including musician Will.i.am, Ryan Giggs, Patrice Evra, Alison Becker, social influencer Molly-Mae Hague, and former Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

Sir Alex Ferguson, Cristiano Ronaldo, Mohammed Salah, and boxers Tyson and Tommy



The court will hear that the three city centre restaurants have achieved lower-rated reviews than Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow

Fury are also reportedly regulars at Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow, where main courses cost between £18 and £45.

The two Cibo restaurants and its sister company, AER Restaurants, which runs the Italian restaurant and takeaway Sasso in Stockport, claim the three restaurants in Manchester and four directors have passed off their businesses as being connected to the original Cibo by using the same name, while

also changing the interiors of their restaurants to look similar, in a deliberate campaign to confuse customers.

Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow are suing company directors Mohamed Elgouhari, Ahmed Fathalla, Ramy Abdelhamid and Andrea Battaglini, and say Liverpool Road Leisure, which runs Cibo Manchester and Cibo Liverpool Road, applied to trademark the name Cibo Manchester in November

PXLSTORE/SHUTTERSTOCK

2020, just 22 days after Cibo's solicitors wrote demanding undertakings that they immediately stop using the name.

Cibo argues the alleged imposters have received far lower rated reviews, which negatively impact Cibo's own reputation and goodwill, and offers discounts of up to 54%, while Cibo does not offer discounts, which has led to confusion from guests when they attempt to use vouchers which are not accepted by Cibo, the claim says.

Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow have also received complaints from customers of the Manchester eateries.

Cibo Hale and Cibo Wilmslow are also suing the defendants over the Sasso takeaway, which, it is claimed, is very similar to its own takeaway name and branding – Sasso – in what it says is an example of a deliberate campaign to use their signs and branding.

news@thecaterer.com

# Byron burger chain loses £99m in value

The Byron restaurant chain was sold for just £856,000 earlier this month, ten years after the burger group changed hands for £100m.

Famously Proper, which is also behind the Mother Clucker fried chicken brand, was bought out of administration in a deal which saw 12 Byron sites saved and nine permanently closed.

It was sold to Tristar Foods, a new company linked to investment firm Calveton UK, which holds a 34.8% stake in Famously Proper.

It is a drastic turnaround in fortunes for Byron, once seen as a pioneer of the gourmet burger market. It was founded in 2007 by Tom Byng and grew to 34 sites. It was sold to investment firm Hutton Collins for



The closed Clapham branch of Byron in 2019, when it had 34 sites

JUST ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPHER/SHUTTERSTOCK

£100m in 2013. The business nearly doubled in size to 67 sites within five years but underwent a restructuring in 2018 blaming economic headwinds.

Byron struggled to survive the pandemic and 31 of its 51 restaurants closed when Calveton acquired it for £4m in 2020.

According to an administrator's report, the chain had recovered from the impact of lockdowns to post positive monthly earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) at the end of 2021.

However, Byron had been in "decline since the start of 2022" driven by rising food and energy prices and a reduction in customer spending as the cost of living crisis started to bite.

## DELIVERY AND TAKEAWAY SALES STILL DOUBLE PRE-COVID LEVELS

Managed restaurant groups' delivery and takeaway sales in December 2022 were 104% higher than in December 2019, with deliveries up 238% and takeaway and click-and-collect orders 53% ahead.

That is according to CGA by NielsenIQ's latest Hospitality at Home Tracker, which also found just over 24% of restaurant groups' total sales came from deliveries and takeaways in December. Drinks accounted for 10% of all at-home orders.

However, trading has plateaued since late 2021 and the tracker showed total delivery and takeaway sales in 2022 were 2% behind December 2021, the 14th month of year-on-year decline in a row.

## PLASTIC BOTTLE DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME TO LAUNCH IN 2025

The launch of a scheme designed to boost recycling of plastic bottles and drinks cans has been delayed until October 2025 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Deposit Return Scheme was due to roll-out in 2024 but will now begin in 2025 to give businesses more time to prepare.

The scheme will see a small cash fee added to the price of single-use drinks containers which will be refunded when people return their bottles.

Special machines, known as 'reverse vending machines', will be introduced to accept containers at designated sites.

## APPLEBEE BROTHERS TO OPEN LA GAMBA



The brothers behind Applebee's Fish in London's Borough Market are to open La Gamba, a riverside tapas restaurant, at London's Southbank Centre in February.

Applebee's Fish started as a fish stall in London's Borough Market in 1998 and has since grown into a seafood restaurant in London Bridge.

Brothers Jack, Harry and Matthew, who have taken on the business from their parents, Joy and

Graham Applebee, have already launched three separate concepts at the Southbank Centre.

La Gamba will offer traditional Spanish dishes with a focus on the north-western corner of Galicia.

## JOANNA'S RESTAURANT CLOSES AFTER 45 YEARS



Family-run restaurant Joanna's in London's Crystal Palace has closed after 45 years of trading due to the challenges posed by "current economic conditions".

American diner and neighbourhood restaurant Joanna's was founded by husband-and-wife team John and Christina Ellner in 1978.

The current owner, Will Ellner, posted on Instagram: "It is with the heaviest of hearts that I have decided to close Joanna's. Friday service was our last up here on the Triangle in Crystal Palace."

He added: "Current economic conditions are creating huge difficulties, especially in the hospitality industry, and these challenges are unfortunately too much for us as a small business to overcome which has led me to make this difficult decision."

## KFC AND PIZZA HUT OWNER HIT BY UK CYBER ATTACK



Yum! Brands, the owner of KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell, has said less than 300 of its UK restaurants were closed following a ransomware attack last week.

The company shut sites on Wednesday 18 January after certain IT systems were hit, but all locations have since reopened.

Yum! Brands said there was no evidence customer databases were stolen but data was taken from its network and an investigation is ongoing.

"While this incident caused temporary disruption, the company is aware of no other restaurant

## JUNKYARD GOLF CLUB TO OPEN BIGGEST SITE YET

Manchester-based crazy golf brand Junkyard Golf Club has invested £2.7m to open in London's Camden this year.

A 19,500 sq ft space will be refurbished into the group's second and biggest London venue, bringing the total number of UK sites to seven.

It comes after a £500,000 investment in Junkyard Golf Club's existing venues, which aims to enhance the immersive element of the golf courses, alongside a £200,000 investment in a new team training programme.

Junkyard Golf Club has also announced plans to launch the business in the US.

Managing director Sam Jones said: "We are always reviewing our brand position, but this year felt the right time to review our branding and marketing strategy in a way that reflects where we are heading as a company and to strengthen the message that we evolve and stay relevant to our customers."



disruptions and does not expect this event to have a material adverse impact on its business, operations or financial results," Yum! Brands said in a statement.

## BREWDOG BOSS SAYS PRICE INCREASES MEAN PINTS SHOULD COST £27.50

The co-founder of BrewDog has said a pint of its Punk IPA beer would cost £27.50 if the bar chain put up prices in line with soaring energy bills.

James Watt said passing on cost

increases would mean a burger and fries would be priced at "about £48.75" and warned businesses faced a "crippling combination" of inflation and squeezed consumer spending power.

He wrote on LinkedIn that the government would only "make the situation worse" when it reduced energy bill support for businesses from April.

"We're only in the foothills of a crisis which poses a far bigger threat to companies than [Covid-19]," he wrote.

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### NICK GILKINSON TO OPEN MÆNE RESTAURANT IN LONDON'S SPITALFIELDS



Nick Gilkinson, who opened Townsend restaurant in London's Whitechapel in 2020, is to open a new restaurant in Spitalfields this March.

Mæne will be located at 7-9 Fashion Street and will be inspired by European bistro culture, offering relaxed, modern cooking using British produce.

The restaurant will take over the

top floor of a Victorian clothing factory with a 50-cover terrace opening during the summer. The 54-cover restaurant will be open all day serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Gilkinson said: "The food will be creative and unfussy with the chefs placing a real focus on working closely with our suppliers to make sure we are showcasing the best produce possible."

### NOBLE ROT TO OPEN THIRD LONDON RESTAURANT THIS SPRING

Noble Rot is to open its third restaurant in London's Mayfair this spring.

Founders Dan Keeling and Mark Andrew, the pair behind importers Keeling Andrew & Co and Shrine to the Vine wine shop, opened their first restaurant in London's Bloomsbury in 2015. This was



followed by the launch of their Soho branch in 2020.

The duo posted the news on Instagram, stating: "We're hugely excited to announce that we have become the new custodians of 5 Trebeck Street – formerly longstanding French brasserie Le Boudin Blanc – which will re-open as Noble Rot Mayfair in spring 2023."

The Mayfair restaurant will offer Noble Rot's "trademark warmth and fine cooking" and is due to feature the group's "most ambitious wine programme yet".

### GREAT BRITISH MENU 2023 TO HIT SCREENS ON 31 JANUARY



*Great British Menu* will return to television screens at 8pm from 31 January on BBC Two for its 18th series.

Inspired by Paddington Bear's 65th birthday, this year's chefs will compete to cook at a six-course banquet celebrating the best of British animation and illustration.

The programme will be hosted by chef and TV presenter Andi Oliver alongside chef Tom Kerridge, restaurateur Nisha Katona and comedian Ed Gamble.

*Great British Menu* will run for nine weeks, starting with the North East heat, which will feature judge and chef Angela Hartnett.

### SOHO HOUSE CONFIRMS PIZZA EAST CLOSURES

Soho House & Co has confirmed the permanent closure of Pizza East Portobello in London's Notting Hill and the temporary closure of Pizza East Shoreditch.

Pizza East was first launched by the Soho House Group in October 2009 on Shoreditch High Street and offered thick, chewy ciabatta pizzas inspired by Los Angeles' Mozza Pizzeria.

A spokesperson for Soho House

& Co told *The Caterer*: "We have unfortunately made the decision to close Pizza East Portobello, and temporarily close Pizza East Shoreditch."

### CYRUS TODIWALA CONFIRMS CLOSURE OF MR TODIWALA'S KITCHEN



Chef Cyrus Todiwala has confirmed his Mr Todiwala's Kitchen restaurant at the Hilton London Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 has now permanently closed.

The restaurant opened in 2011 when the hotel was owned by Shiva Hotels, but the Hilton property was sold to an investment group in November 2022.

Todiwala said he hoped Mr Todiwala's Kitchen could find a new home in another London hotel.

The Todiwalas continue to run their flagship restaurant Café Spice Namaste in London's Docklands.

### DAN COX TO OPEN CROCADON NEXT MONTH



Chef Dan Cox is to open Crocadon, his long-awaited restaurant located on a 120-acre organic farm in St Mellion, Cornwall on 3 February.

Cox – formerly executive chef at Simon Rogan's Fera at Claridge's and the 2008 Roux Scholar – took on the farm five years ago. He has restored the restaurant over 12 months and will open it in February with a 25-cover dining room and open kitchen.

The menu will use ingredients from the farm, which the London-born chef has been working on over the past five years, improving the soil, establishing herds of rare and heritage breeds of sheep and cattle, which are rotationally grazed, and renovating outhouses, including an on-site microbrewery and pottery.

# Is fine dining unsustainable?

René Redzepi has made public what many operators feel: the real cost of a fine dining menu is far higher than what is being charged, but price rises are met with derision. *Ben McCormack* reports

The news that René Redzepi is to close his three-Michelin-starred Copenhagen restaurant Noma at the end of 2024 was one of those rare hospitality stories that makes headlines around the world.

“We have to completely rethink the industry,” Redzepi told *The New York Times*. “This is simply too hard; we have to work in a different way... It’s unsustainable. As an employer and as a human being, it just doesn’t work.”

Yet if the reactions of the world’s fine-dining fans have been ones of shock, fine-dining chefs themselves seem less sur-

**“No-one should expect to go out and be waited on hand and foot for a few hours, have all their requirements met and leave happy and full for under £150”**

**Sven-Hanson Britt**

prised at the news. Sven-Hanson Britt, chef-patron of Oxeye in south London, tweeted: “He’s not wrong. The whole system is so fucked. What’s the solution? £1,000-a-head menus or two-day-a-week restaurants?”

Britt firmly believes that diners need to pay more for fine-dining experiences. “It’s just too cheap. It’s as simple as that. No-one should expect to go out and be waited on hand and foot

for a few hours, have all their requirements met and leave happy and full for under £150. Prices need to go up because it doesn’t look like costs will come down anytime soon.”

Putting up prices, however, is not so easy. When James Knappett, the chef-patron of two-Michelin-starred Kitchen Table, announced last April that the cost of the 20-course tasting menu would be increasing to £300, with a commitment to spend at least a further £150 on the evening, the backlash led to a swift backtrack. The *Daily Mail* likewise reported on the “outrageous” £55 increase for L’Enclume’s tasting menu in the wake of the Cumbrian restaurant winning its third Michelin star. But Britt says that the price hikes were criticised by just as many chefs as irate *Mail* readers.

“It was as if we, who are meant to support each other, said, ‘fuck you, you’re not allowed to be a sustainable business, you can’t make a profit, you have to carry on struggling to pay your bills – because we all can’t, so why should you try and make some money?’”

“When anyone puts their prices up we all jump on it like

a pack of wolves out for blood. Striking a balance between charging the right amount to be viable and charging an amount that won’t get you publicly ridiculed is the hardest internal battle for a restaurateur.”

Mark Birchall, chef-patron of two-Michelin-starred Moor Hall and one-Michelin-starred the Barn in Lancashire, says that despite skyrocketing food and energy costs he has little room to pass costs on to the customer.

“We can’t simply slap up the price of our menu. If we were in Paris, our menu would probably cost another £200, but we’d get absolutely slaughtered for that in the UK. We just can’t charge that sort of money.”

Like many fine-dining chefs, Birchall has had to become more creative.

“All the margins have become tighter, so we’ve made sure that we’re tight with everything we



Sven-Hanson Britt

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK/EINKONTAN, SUSANNAH ALLTIMES



do. We use lobster tail in Moor Hall and the lobster claws in the Barn. We spread the cost that way.”

A tasting menu (£225 at Moor Hall) does offer the advantage of predictable costs, says Stacey Sherwood-French, co-owner and director with husband Luke French of Joro in Sheffield. “You know what to expect, how many dishes to prepare, and it’s quite easy to manage financially as long as you have those numbers coming through the door.”

The couple get their numbers through the door by offering two sittings per night for tasting menus of eight or 10 courses (for £75 or £95). The first sitting begins at 5.30pm and the second at 8.15pm, with a 15-minute turnaround in-between for tables to be re-set. Sherwood-French sees the closure of Noma as an inevitable shift in the landscape of fine dining. But if the fine-dining finances only add up when tables are turned, surely it’s a business model as unsustainable as Redzepi says?

“Luke and I have had this discussion many times and when we saw René’s announcement we said, wow, we’ve been talking about this for a while. Are we delivering the best experience we can when we’re having to turn tables? It’s probably not as good an experience as what you’d get if you were to have the table all evening. But in order for us to do that, we would need to charge double or triple we do now and the restaurant would no longer be viable. There isn’t an appetite in South Yorkshire for paying that.”



### Diversify to survive

Noma will become a food laboratory once it closes and there is already a limited line of merchandise, Noma Projects, which is set to expand. Luke and Stacey have likewise diversified into selling drinks and gifts to fund their fine-dining operations.

“It gives us a safety cushion,” Sherwood-French says. “Not only are we saving money on some of the products we use in the restaurant, but we’re able to buy them in bigger volumes. And in terms of how the restaurant runs day-to-day, if numbers do drop slightly, we have the retail side to fall back on.”

Moor Hall Dairy will launch this spring in collaboration with Martin Gott, the producer of Cumbria’s acclaimed St James Cheese. Britt’s Oxeye site is also home to Cartografie Chocolate, Bar Rex wine bar, the Sandwich Shack hatch and an events business.

“Our plan for surviving is to open as many different styles of outlets under our roof as we can,” Britt explains.

“This was the plan, but it’s now more necessary than ever. It’s like a hotel model. Traditionally, the two- or three-star hotel restaurant doesn’t make any money, but it’s propped up with the massive margins in afternoon tea, bar, events and private dining.”

### Moral maze

But what of the human cost that Redzepi spoke about?

“The emotional and physical toil of building and operating a fine-dining model restaurant is like nothing else,” Britt says. “You will miss the first steps of your child. You will have constant conversations with your partner about priorities. You will lose your friends and family through your own personal choices, and those choices will constantly see you skimming your own personal line of ethics when the end-of-month profit and loss is less than satisfactory. Do you use service charge to pay your ever-increasing bills? Do you ask your senior team

to pull more hours? Do you take on more free labour and interns? Fine dining is a perpetual battle.”

Free labour has been cited as one of the reasons Noma has become unsustainable. Redzepi began paying his interns at the end of 2022, which is believed to have added £40,000 to Noma’s monthly wage bill. None of the UK chefs we spoke to, however, use unpaid interns. Britt believes there is nothing wrong with working for free in exchange for learning a new skill, but he points out that it excludes all but those from privileged backgrounds, usually “rich white blokes”. Starting salaries at Oxeye are in the region of £30,000.

But if fine-dining is such a struggle, why open a fine-dining restaurant in the first place? “You can change someone’s day, their mind, their life by showing them the true meaning of hospitality,” Britt says.

“The problem comes when the restaurant forgets why they’re doing what they’re doing. Every plate of food is just as important as how you make the person feel. Real fine dining is about the personal connection we make every day to our guests. The moment ego gets in the way of this, hospitality is lost.”

## The Observer

Chef Luke Richardson, who has time with Gary Usher's bistros on his CV, describes [the menu] as "Parisian expat food", which perhaps makes most sense to those who have worked there. They also describe it, more helpfully, as "food you want to eat".

The name Climat references consciously the importance of weather to the nurturing of great wines and perhaps, unconsciously its importance to nurturing the stoic character of great Mancunians. It's the second venture from Christopher Laidler, owner of the small wine bar Covino in Chester. Accordingly, wine is a major part of the deal. There's a strong one-page list available by the glass and carafe, as well as a bigger document full of Burgundy's finest at reasonable prices.

Start with chewy slices of their focaccia bathing in ponds of the best olive oil. Follow that with the vol-au-vent. The puff pastry here is golden and deeply enriched, like a puffy brioche, and stuffed with spiced minced lamb, topped with pickled fresh chillies and deep-fried curry leaves.

A whole aubergine has been roasted until it has surrendered and slumped, the smoky skin bursting to reveal the pale flesh. It is dressed with a mix of tahini,



buttermilk and handfuls of toasted pine nuts, topped in turn with a tangle of shredded radicchio to bring a bitter note to the proceedings. They like grown-up touches of bitterness at Climat. It's there in a purée of lime pickle, which clings to the edge of a plate of spiced gurnard.

Not everything works. A risotto is so desperately sludgy, I find myself wondering whether it came from the same kitchen.

There is so much more here to try. I very much like the

sound of the braised carrots with whipped feta and hazelnut pesto, or the hake with barbecued leek, or the brill with seaweed hollandaise. Dessert is not just churned creamy things. There is a deep-filled frangipane tart layered with tart plums, with a snowy peak of crème fraîche on the side. There is a choux bun, as pert and golden as the vol-au-vent at the start, filled with a nutmeg ice-cream, dark chocolate ganache and cherries.

Jay Rayner finds an excellent wine list and a mature approach to the menu at **Climat** in Manchester

## THE TIMES

Giles Coren is a fan of **Straker's** modern European menu in Notting Hill, London

Then comes the partridge, an extraordinary thing: the leg quartered off, battered and deep-fried with the claw still on it, so that it reaches up from under the blanket of orange agrodolce sauce that covers the thigh like the arm of the Statue of Liberty at the end of *Planet of the Apes* ("You maniacs!"). The batter is dense and crunchy and struggles to cling to the meat once a knife is applied, but falls into chunks that are chewy and rich and a marvellous accompaniment to the tender game that steams inside.

The sweetbreads are separated out into the littlest lobes of their

mystifying glandular Lego and nicely creamy with drifts of crisp shallots and radicchio, and the crab is a beautiful dish: the shellfish dressed and bundled into a half oval on one side of the plate, with a shimmering green pile of agretti, which is also known as "salsola soda", "opposite-leaved saltwort", "opposite leaf Russian thistle", or "barilla", and is a small, annual, succulent shrub native to the Mediterranean Basin, a halophyte, of course. All of which I got from Wikipedia, without which I would have just called it "bonsai samphire". There is also dill, not too much, and a healthy grating of life-giving bottarga.

The pork neck is perfect as well: juicy with a nice bit of chew, and perfectly served with a clever little sunflower, hazelnut and honey "pesto" and some soft red peppers.

**Score: cooking: 9; service: 9; room: 6; overall score: 8. Price: £75 a head**

## The Guardian

Grace Dent discovers precise dishes on a four-hour tasting menu at **Restaurant St Barts** in London

It turns out I've chanced upon the people behind St Barts before. Johnnie Crowe, Luke Wasserman and Toby Neill opened the rather good Fenn in Fulham, and before that Nest in Hackney, although St Barts, with its 15-course, £120 tasting menu that lasts more than four hours, was always the dream.

If you are a meat-eater who shies away from the nitty-gritty of animal products, St Barts may well test you. A later beef course is served with a tongue and heart stew, which other restaurants might have skirted around, but St Barts fesses up so clearly. Service is warm and



prompt, which is just as well, because you're here for a good time and not a short time.

A stew of scallop with fierce red pepper is outstanding, as are a tiny piece of precisely cooked cod topped with preserved fungi, a suggestion of duck breast served with fewer than a dozen lingonberries, and a sublime tablespoon of crab and British ginger, zinging with freshness and served on a minuscule muffin.

St Barts is one of London's most notable new openings, a place to take the food obsessive in your life for a special occasion and watch them get severely het up about the minute honey and lavender ice-cream cone that arrives before the main dessert event.

## The Daily Telegraph

The lobster pie is a thing of novelty and excess. A golden-brown crust in a circular silver bowl with handles, out of which thrusts the head of a lobster. Cut into it and out comes a steaming mist of rich sauce and meat. At £96 it is perfectly priced. For that is what it basically costs to grab that size of real estate – the pie serves two – with rates and tax and staff costs in Mount Street.

We ate it with al dente purple sprouting broccoli, beautifully unnecessary crisp chips, and what looked like roasted potatoes but were in fact a magical concoction of bubble and squeak packaged in crisp cubes. More than enough to fill a hungry winter tummy, but excitement got the better of us and we also enjoyed half a dozen oysters; an immaculate plate of creamy, salty, pert indulgence that was a smoked eel and potato salad with cucumber and caviar; and a mock turtle croquette. The croquette was an Edwardian feast in itself. The ground brains and bits and pieces of beef had an ancient earthiness... from another century.

The tone of lunch is often set quite early with the arrival of bread and butter. At Mount St they also bring a dish of chicken

**William Sitwell sits down to a gargantuan feast and discovers there's no cost of living crisis at Mount St in London**



WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/MOUNTSTRESTAURANT

liver parfait, a fabulously face-stuffing piece of inexcusable largesse; the concept of Mount St in your face at the get-go.

For pud we shared a little glass bowl of chocolate mousse. Not fancy, not clever, not over-rich, just soft and decked with flakes of grated chocolate. We sat at that corner table of London's buzziest new establishment gasping almost at the ambition, the boldness, the bravura of opening such a business at this moment in our economic cycle.

If the bottom survives and the middle is squeezed then right here, right now, with every table jammed with folk ordering lobster pie and grappling with a wine list with an average price of £150 a bottle, is evidence that somehow the top end is booming.

With the deep pockets of an international business behind him and the obvious conviction of Mount St, [Ewan] Venters has created a London classic.

**Score: 4/5**

## THE SCOTSMAN

**Gaby Soutar devours cheap and delicious pizzas at Homies Pizza, Edinburgh**

While a pizza elsewhere is edging £15, the versions here start at about a fiver. We ordered three, wrongly assuming that the price was relative to the dimension. Nope. These chunky and chewy-based rectangles were the size of office carpet tiles. I was ready. As Marvin Gaye sang; "Let's get it on". Each was marvellous.

The edges were crispy and toasted, with lacy cheese, like the stuff that leaks into a toasty machine, and they were thickly upholstered and padded with toppings. In the case of the Philly Cheesesteak Pie (£6.50), that meant sweet sugo, thick

mozzarella, dots of mince, red pepper squares, loads of crispy onions and four creamy blobs of homemade cheese sauce, which was as orange as a lollipop lady's jacket.

The Homies Detroit classic (£5) was another springy wad, but this one had sugo, plectrum-sized discs of pepperoni, a thick and dappled layer of mozzarella, parsley, tiddlywinks of jalapeno and blobs of a very hot honey. I don't know how the bees coped with making that, but the hive must be aflame.

The pesto chicken crunch (£6.50) was topped by the prerequisite tomato and cheese, but also generous chunks of buff-coloured buttermilk fried chicken, chopped parsley and, positioned like sentinels in each corner, four large blobs of creamy pesto mayo.

In a cost of living crisis, this is a rare place to go for a bargain treat.

## London Evening Standard

**Jimi Famurewa is taken aback by ingenious vegan chicken at Jam Delish in London**

Ragged tostones of crisp, starchy plantain, piled with jackfruit (here standing in for saltfish), samphire, and a thin mortarboard of crisp nori, unleashed an exhilarating burst of layered, Indo-Caribbean spicing. And then came those faux wings.

In the abstract, the notion of smushing mock meat around a dummy bone feels too ridiculous to even momentarily engage with. In practice, however – and particularly in the case of the southern-fried variety that are all thickly cragged, profoundly spiced crust shielding a suspiciously chicken middle – they are aston-

ishing; a bravura conjuror's trick that will have you grinning at the ingenuity of it. In truth, the mains represented a slight drop-off in quality. Those methodically built, back-a-yard flavours that you only really get from domestic Caribbean cooking, were still present – especially in the warming, subtle depths of a seitan-spiked curry "goat". It was just that the indeterminate hunks of meat substitute, including unnerving shards of facon in a claggy mac and cheese, began to feel a little repetitive, unnecessary and to the detriment of each dish's sense of definition and pizzazz.

But, look, I feel like this might be my inner omnivore showing. If you have a vegan in your life, then Jam Delish, with its irresistible, enveloping party atmosphere and daft, forbidding drinks, is nothing less than a gift from the plant-based gods.

# Openings

## Humo

Chef Miller Prada has opened wood-fired kitchen Humo in London's Mayfair. The Colombian-born chef will serve dishes inspired by Japanese techniques, drawing on his six years of training under Endo Kazutoshi of the Michelin-starred Endo at the Rotunda in London's White City and the heritage of his Italian head chef.

Humo is part of the newly formed Creative Restaurant Group co-founded by Misha Zelman, founder of Burger & Lobster, Zelman Meats and Goodman, chef-patron Kazutoshi and managing director Alex D'Aguiar.

The 34-cover restaurant, named after 'smoke' in Spanish, features a four-metre grill that is powered by a selection of widely sourced woods, such as juniper, British oak, birch, cherry and walnut. No electricity or gas is used as cooking fuel.

A 10-cover chef's table is also available for private dining and exclusive events.

**Opened** 18 January

**Typical dishes** Trout and caviar (14-day-aged Ike-Jime Hampshire trout, HP18 oak, three-month-aged caviar grilled in konbu kelp); scallop (hand-dived Orkney scallop, Speyside whiskey barrel and sabayon, white konbu)

**Address** 12 St George Street, London W1S 2FB

**Website** [www.humolondon.com](http://www.humolondon.com)



## Extra openings



### Edit

Chefs Fabrice Jacquet and Beth Olivier will head up the team at Edit, the 42-cover veg-forward restaurant in London's Hackney. There will be a selection of modern British plant-based dishes and a range of low-intervention wines, local beers and ciders.

**Opening** 1 February

**Typical dish** Roast salsify, crispy kalettes, mustard green leaf and beetroot à trois;

**Address** 217 Mare Street, London E8 3QE

**Website** [www.edit.london](http://www.edit.london)



### Rudy's Leeds

Manchester-based Rudy's Pizza Napoletana will be opening its third Leeds restaurant, following sites in the city centre and Chapel Allerton. The dough is made using Caputo '00' flour and cooked in a Stefano Ferrara oven for 60 seconds.

**Opening** Spring

**Typical dishes** Marinara; margherita; calabrese

**Address** Unit 6-8, Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 2UE

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



### Mister Nice, Mayfair

All-day French restaurant Mister Nice has opened in London's Mayfair. The venue has been designed by Victoria Vogel and is spread across two floors. Members of the Mister Nice club will be offered 'no corkage' benefits and 50 members will receive wines at a low mark-up.

**Opening** 24 January

**Typical dish** Burrata with fresh caramelised figs, chicory walnut, pear and Roquefort salad

**Address** 14-16 Davies Street, London W1K 3DR

**Website** [misternicemayfair.com](http://misternicemayfair.com)





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



## The Tempus

The Northumberland-based Doxford Group will open Tempus, a hotel, bar and restaurant within the grounds of Charlton Hall Estate in Alnwick. The interiors have been inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* and are due to feature striking colour palettes and lavish furnishings.

**Opening** Spring

**Number of rooms** 15

**Address** Charlton Hall, Chathill, Northumberland NE67 5DZ

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



## Fair Shot Café

Fair Shot Café, a social enterprise business founded by Bianca Travella, is to reopen in London's Covent Garden following its move from Mayfair. The café provides training to young people with learning disabilities.

**Opening** 1 February

**Typical dishes** Overnight oats served with caramelised pear, sultanas and honey; roasted beetroot salad with feta, radish and walnuts

**Address** 3 Slingsby Place, London WC2E 9AB

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



## Archway

Hospitality company Spook London is to open its first restaurant and wine bar, Archway, under an old railway arch in London's Battersea. Alex Owens, former River Café chef, will offer seasonal dishes and Old and New World wines.

**Opening** February

**Typical dishes** Pappardelle with radicchio and scamorza; wood-roast scarlet prawns with nduja

**Address** Arch 65, Queens Circus, London SW8 4NE

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



**1-5** After a three-year hiatus, Hospitality Rocks returned on 13 January for a 'New York, New York'-themed extravaganza. Over 1,800 hospitality professionals attended the sold-out event at Smart Group's flagship venue, Evolution London, to celebrate the industry.

The event raised more than £24,500 for industry charities Springboard and Hospitality Action. Smart Group will be making a further donation, taking the total raised to £30,000

Smart Group chief executive Greg Lawson said: "It has been an absolute pleasure to host Hospitality Rocks and to remind ourselves of what a thrilling industry we work in. We are proud to continue to raise such a significant sum for both Springboard and Hospitality Action – two incredibly worthy charities that continue to support our valued workers."

**6** JD Wetherspoon staff and customers have raised £21m for the company's chosen charity, Young Lives vs Cancer, the UK's leading cancer charity for children and young people and their families.

Since the partnership began in 2002, staff and customers have organised and taken part in fundraising events such as quizzes, bake sales, skydives, climbs and treks to raise funds for the charity, which provides practical, financial and emotional help to children and young people living with cancer and their families.

Young Lives vs Cancer's director of income and engagement Luke Mallett said: "When our partnership with Wetherspoon began with a chance meeting in 2002, the initial fundraising had a target of £500,000, yet, 20 years later, that total has reached an incredible £21m. Wetherspoon's staff and pub communities have amazed and inspired us year after year."

**7** London pub group Cubitt House has launched a pastry academy. An internal training platform will focus on building classic and modern pastry skills and give participants the opportunity to expand their knowledge and expertise while continuing in their current roles.

Chef director Ben Tish has developed the programme alongside executive pastry chef Neradah Hartnett. The course will cover everything from sweet pastry and blind baking to crème diplomat and mirror glazing, with classes taking place at London Notting Hill pub the Princess Royal.

Neradah said: "I'm so excited to be launching the pastry academy under the guidance of Ben Tish. The kitchen can be so busy and bustling and this gives us the time and space to really teach the skills to the candidates every term."





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# It's time for some positive thinking

Suppliers and businesses should work towards the same goal in these extraordinary times we find ourselves in, says *Lord Karan Bilimoria*

**W**hen I became president of the Confederation of British Industry in 2020, I could not have predicted what was to come in the two years ahead. First the pandemic, then the war in Ukraine, followed by huge supply chain challenges and rapid inflation – it is a landscape unlike any I have seen during my three decades in business.

Hospitality has been among the industries most acutely affected by the economic turbulence, and there is no denying that the landscape in 2023 continues to look challenging, with venues battling the twin headwinds of ever-rising input costs and sky-high energy bills.

But it is not an altogether gloomy picture. While people's budgets will be squeezed, during previous times of economic uncertainty, many people saved money by cutting out bigger expenditures but held on to smaller indulgences, and drinks and meals out fall into this category. Indeed, recent CGA data shows that when reducing their spending, consumers will prioritise visits to hospitality venues over things like holidays and new clothes.

Navigating the ongoing cost challenges will be the priority. The government's efforts to reduce rates and energy bills for the sector has been vital, but the reduction in support from April will be concerning for hospitality businesses, particularly smaller independent venues. Groups like the CBI will continue to fight the hospitality sector's corner. And at Cobra we're conscious of the role we can play to support our customers too.

## **Pulling in the same direction**

Hospitality venues are not isolated, they are part of a huge supply network including big drinks brands, and multinational food and drink companies. We face challenges together, and we grow together. As we look to rebuild and evolve, it's important that venues use this network for support rather than try to go it alone. Communication and creative

**“When reducing their spending, consumers will prioritise visits to hospitality venues over things like holidays and new clothes”**



collaboration with suppliers is key to identifying and capitalising on opportunities to grow.

At Cobra, we've been looking at how we can help our 28,000 licensed stockists across the UK to attract more customers in a difficult environment. It was a big part of the thinking behind our recent work with Punch Pubs & Co. We supported their



Mighty Kari Night, working with them to elevate their menu and create dishes that stand out from the crowd, and also pair perfectly with Cobra Beer. The tie-in enabled Punch Pubs & Co to really tap into Cobra's brand power as a way of driving footfall to their venues. And we helped them to build on this even further through prize draws that included a free Kari night meal for four people. It's just one of a host of examples of how we can work together to increase footfall and drive more sales.

## **Moving forward together**

During the pandemic hospitality businesses were a prime example of how businesses can effectively find solutions in the face of unexpected challenges. The way so many quickly shifted to offer takeaways when they were unable to open their doors demonstrated how forward-thinking the industry can be.

We have already shown, during the pandemic, that we have the strength, resource and innovative spirit to navigate any challenge. By continuing to harness this and with the right support from government, we can navigate the challenges we are facing together. And as we look ahead, I firmly believe that the hospitality sector can play a key role in the UK's economic recovery.

*Karan Bilimoria is vice-president of the Confederation of British Industry and founder of Cobra Beer*

# Jason Carruthers

After a busy year retiring the Jury's Inn brand name and acquiring the 114-year-old Dilly hotel, the managing director of Leonardo Hotels speaks to *Sophie Witts* about what's next

**Buying the Dilly in London seemed like an unusual step for Leonardo hotels – what was the appeal of the property?**

We were working on the deal over a number of months. The appeal for us is that the Dilly is a very well-established but unbranded hotel which gives us the opportunity to bring it into our group. We see very clear opportunities for improvement from the guest perspective and opportunities to grow the business. It's a well-established hotel that's been trading for over 100 years and it's got a solid and long-serving group of staff and team in the property which was hugely appealing to us as well.

We know that it's very well located on Piccadilly – you couldn't have a more prominent location in the UK. It's not an exaggeration to say there's a global appeal. People from around the world will recognise that address.

**What are Leonardo's plans for the luxury market?**

David Fattal [founder of Fattal Group] is very keen to develop more luxury properties. The ambition is that in the next two years we will have 15 or so hotels of that nature which are one-offs in terms of style and will fit under the banner of Limited Edition Hotels. The Dilly compliments our strategy of growth, and we have hotels under development at the moment in Tel Aviv, Switzerland and Cyprus, which will be similar in nature as luxury properties.

The openings will be across our entire portfolio worldwide. We don't currently operate that much in the luxury segment so it's a new opportunity for us. There are individual hotels that either we could develop, build or acquire that don't fit into our current suite of brands

but that we know we could operate very well, and that's the appeal.

We could well open or acquire more luxury hotels in the UK. We would actively look at those kinds of opportunities. Realistically, they would be in the key cities where those kinds of hotels would operate most effectively, so London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Brighton and Glasgow.

**You're planning to invest £90m into the Dilly – what can you tell us about the redevelopment?**

We completed the deal in October and took on the operation of the hotel towards the end of 2022. We will renovate the hotel towards the second half of 2023, so there's a lot of planning involved. I'd imagine that renovation will take around 12 months to complete and then we'll relaunch the hotel as a luxury property. We're hugely excited about it as an opportunity.

**What other hotel developments is Leonardo working on?**

We've been working on extending the Jury's Inn in Edinburgh to turn it into a Leonardo Royale. We're also building a Nyx property adjacent to it which is well under way and we are building a Nyx hotel in Dublin which is 'out of the ground' from a development point of view.

In 2021 we opened the Manchester Leonardo Piccadilly hotel, which has been very well received. We've had some of the strongest guest feedback for any property in the group: people really like the design and the fact that it's quite an iconic building. For a new building to make that impact in the city has been really encouraging. ▶

**“We could well open or acquire more luxury hotels in the UK”**

## CV

**2017-present** Managing director,  
Leonardo Hotels UK and Ireland

**2016-17** Managing director, Jurys Inn  
UK and Ireland

**2014-15** Group chief executive,  
Andrew Brownsword Hotels

**2013-14** Vice-president operations –  
Mercure Hotels, Accor

**2010-13** Director of operations –  
Novotel UK, Accor

**2005-10** Operations director, Shire Hotels

**2001-05** General manager, Aztec Hotel  
Bristol (Shire Hotels)

**1999-2001** General manager, Audleys  
Wood hotel, Basingstoke, Hampshire  
(Thistle Hotels)

**1997-1999** Hotel manager, Stakis Dunkeld  
hotel, near Perth

**1991-1997** Assistant/deputy general  
manager, Shire Hotels

# The Caterer interview



◀ **The Jury's Inn brand name was retired in 2022 after 30 years and its hotels were due to relaunch under the Leonardo brand. How is that going?**

The rebrand is by and large completed and was due to finish in Q4 in 2022. It has been complex because we had to acquire planning permission for each of the properties to change signage, so it's quite an undertaking to do that for 50 hotels.

We've been renovating prominent Jury's Inn hotels in Glasgow, Galway and in Birmingham, which is the largest Jury's Inn that we have in the business.

Each time we renovate a hotel we don't take a cookie-cutter approach to the design; we make specific improvements relevant to the markets they operate in. Something great with the Leonardo brand is it isn't overly prescriptive in terms of how we want it to look and feel.

**What other areas are you changing as part of the rebrand?**

In tandem with the physical changes, we're also taking the opportunity to constantly monitor and improve the customer experience. We've been really pleased with how the Leonardo brand has been accepted and recognised. Before the rebrand we were at 17 Leonardo-branded hotels but we're constantly looking at how we can make things better for our



Leonardo Hotel Edinburgh Haymarket

## **“Our hotels are more domestic leisure-orientated than they were two years ago”**

guests. That means looking at how we handle the check-in to make it more efficient and easier for the guests with pre-arrival check-ins.

We've also introduced welcome drinks and snacks in all the hotels. We're constantly improving the breakfast product and looking at the quality of the coffee, the machines we use, and how we can give people more of a barista experience in the restaurant. We're also working with nutritionists in our restaurants

to make sure we're reflecting trends and offering people some healthier options and maybe educating our guests a little bit in those areas.

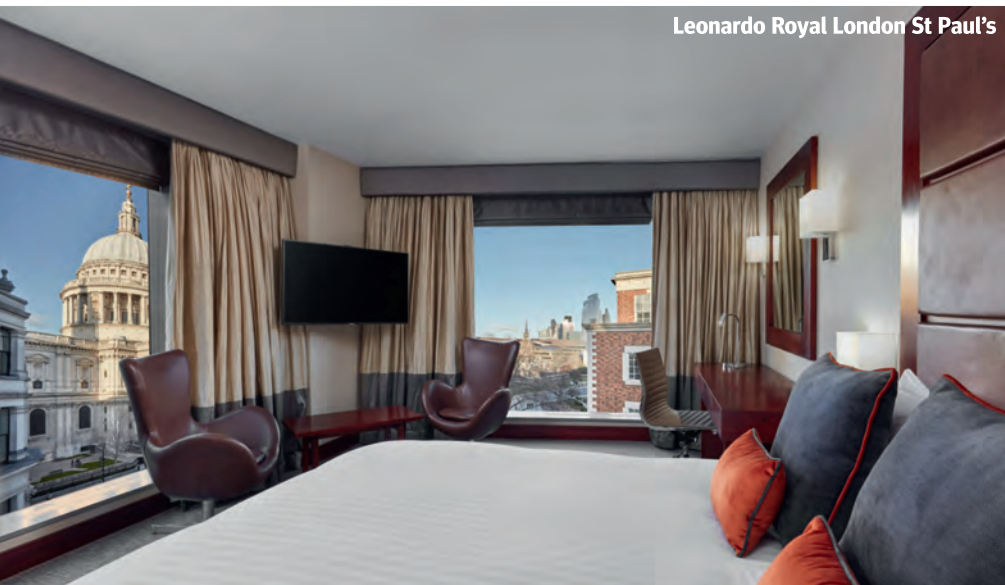
**How has the type of guest visiting your hotels changed since the pandemic?**

We're constantly monitoring the change in business mix. Our hotels are more domestic leisure-orientated than they were two years ago. And there are different demands from our other guests in terms of what time they want to access the room, how long they want to stay there, and wanting to extend the check-out time. There are often more guests in the room than there used to be as people are now travelling with children, so we're constantly adapting the offer relevant to that.

**What are your expansion plans for the UK?**

We're still very active in terms of growing the business and further acquisitions. We're





Leonardo Royal London St Paul's

actively looking at several development opportunities that would support the direction we're working towards of appealing to different segments within the business. So there's lots going on.

We've got most of the major cities in the UK covered, but there is opportunity within some of those same cities [for further sites]. So, if we had a core brand Leonardo in an area we might be able to operate a Leonardo Royale in the same city or a Nyx. Or if there was a smaller boutique hotel that could also fit into our suite of brands. We know of addresses in cities we've been operating in for a number of years where we'd like to open another hotel because we know those locations quite well.

#### **Have you seen a return in the number of international guests?**

We saw a very significant shift in international travel from July 2022 onwards when it was easier for Americans to visit the UK with the lifting of Covid restrictions. There was a very significant improvement in London, but also in Edinburgh and Dublin, and that hasn't changed. We also know that Chinese tourism hasn't returned at the level it was historically, both from a leisure and corporate perspective.

We are seeing international congresses return to major cities as well which is a key driver for hotels. Since April the demand has been exceptionally strong. We were ahead of where we were in 2019 since April and throughout the summer 25% and 30% same time in 2019.

#### **How are your corporate bookings now compared to before the pandemic?**

It's different in the sense that demand is concentrated over fewer nights, but the actual overall contribution to the business is a similar level to how it was historically. That was a phenomenon through the second half of 2022 as certainly over the first few months there was reticence to travel, and we only really came out of travel restrictions in March. In the second half of the year, it was almost completely back to normal.

I've seen it myself. I was in London recently during the week and it was the busiest I'd seen the city since pre-pandemic levels – you could really feel the difference. I did a walkaround of our hotels and kept hearing different accents. You can tell the tourists have returned, which is great for business.

#### **Leonardo Hotels fact file**

- Leonardo Hotels operates 52 hotels, including four in Ireland.
- It is a member of the Fattal Group, which operates over 200 hotels in 17 countries.
- The group is also a part of Pandox AB, a European hotel property investor and owner with approximately 31,600 hotel rooms in 15 countries, including 20 Leonardo freehold hotels.



# CORPORATE RECEPTIONIST OF THE YEAR

The award that recognises and celebrates exceptional front of house receptionists working in the corporate sector is open for entries

## KEY DATES

**16th January**

Launch of the 2023 competition

**3rd March 2023**

Entries deadline

**w/c 3rd April 2023**

Finalists announced

**w/c 24th April 2023**

Finalists interviews

**10th May 2023**

The Awards Event, coinciding with International Receptionists' Day

**Late Summer or early Autumn 2023**

Winner's trip to New York

## FREE TO ENTER

Enter online today at [www.croty.co.uk](http://www.croty.co.uk)  
Entries close on 3rd March 2023



Judita Poceviciute, winner 2022 (centre) with Greg Mace, Founder, Corporate Receptionist of the Year (left) and Dirk Talsma, Chair, Corporate Receptionist of the Year (right)

Corporate Receptionist of the Year was first launched in 2019, with huge success to recognise and celebrate the talented people working in the corporate world. Many of these individuals have worked in hotels and attracted by higher salaries and a better work-life balance are now building rewarding careers in some of the most fantastic organisations in the world.

### Who is this award aimed at?

This award is aimed at any professional front of house receptionist who is working in a recognised corporate office, providing reception services to visiting clients and guests.

### The competition

Applicants must download an application form which will ask a number of questions and also upload a short 45-second video clip of themselves. There is then a section where the applicant's manager must endorse them. These entries will then be assessed by an eminent panel of judges, who will shortlist 10 people for interviews and face-to-face role plays to decide the overall winner.

### Past winner Judita Poceviciute, Rapport

"It was such a surreal experience and it still gives me butterflies thinking about it now. The best part of winning was that it gave me a real boost in confidence, not only in my career, but in my personal life as well."

The judging panel also recognised three 'highly commended winners' in alphabetical order: Lauren Ayres, Rapport at Citi, Lainey Taylor, Portico at Deutsche Bank, and Imogen Walker, Anabas.

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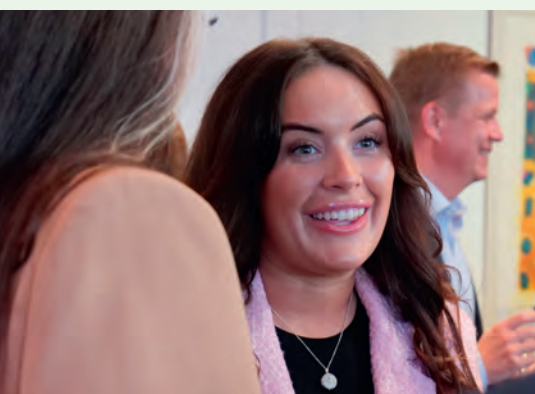
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## ENTER TODAY AND CELEBRATE A WINNING SMILE!

The competition is open to any receptionist working in a corporate organisation, whether directly for that organisation or through a third-party contractor service provider. The applicant must have worked for that company for at least six months on the 1st January 2023 and not be working their notice or have otherwise indicated their intention to leave. Entries are limited to just one application per corporate organisation and each application must be endorsed by the reception manager/front of house manager/facilities manager.

The competition is open to front-line employees, not supervisors, managers or more senior personnel.

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

**Judita Pocevičiute, the 2022 winner of the competition, in New York last year**



### THE PRIZES

As well as the trophy and title of Corporate Receptionist of the Year, the winner will receive the following prizes to be presented at a special awards event on International Receptionists' Day, Wednesday 10th May 2023.

#### NEW YORK FOR FIVE DAYS!

A fully hosted five-day trip to New York, which includes the opportunity to visit a number of exciting and prestigious corporate offices, including the Rockefeller Center, plus leisure time each day. The prize includes return flights and hotel accommodation and most meals.

#### DINNER FOR TWO

Dinner for two at a leading Michelin-starred restaurant in London.

#### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Two full-day leadership development programmes.

#### OTHER PRIZES

Other prizes by the sponsor partners will be announced.



## RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

Dirk Talsma, Chair of Corporate Receptionist of the Year says, "This award is very important to our industry in our bid to attract and retain the best people and to compete strongly with the luxury hotels and other hospitality businesses in the current competitive talent market.

"It also shines a bright light on the amazing receptionists working in the corporate front of house sector and showcases the exciting roles and rewarding career opportunities available."

### MORE APPLICATIONS

For 2023 we want to encourage more applications from different companies as this competition is a great opportunity to showcase the fantastic talent in our industry – it is also free to enter.

### JUDGING PANEL

The judging panel will once again be an experienced team of senior executives who all have significant experience in the corporate sector. They are drawn from some of the leading front of house outsourcing companies in the marketplace, as well as front of house leaders from a number of prestigious organisations that are run independently, as well as representatives from our sponsors.



# What's off the menu?

Menus across the nation are shrinking in an attempt to cut overheads and brace against rising costs. *Andy Lynes* looks at what restaurants are choosing to jettison and how it's helping them to keep sailing

**H**ot on the heels of Covid and Brexit, the hospitality industry is being asked to weather yet another perfect storm of adverse trading conditions. Spiralling overheads (exacerbated by the recently announced cut in the government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme for business), the recruitment crisis and a customer base with diminishing disposable income due to the cost of living crisis does not a happy new year make.

Some businesses have already cut wages and opening hours in response, while others are looking to adapt their menus in order to manage food costs while still maintaining an enticing offering that will attract price-conscious customers as they navigate the current tempest.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RAWPIXEL.COM; JAMES HOLE



## “We can spend more time on each dish ensuring better quality for a better price”

**Tony Rudd, Copper and Ink**

the amount spent developing the dishes, and streamlined prep and service. As a result, we can spend more time on each dish ensuring better quality for a better price. This goes for our wine list too. Rather than a huge wine cellar and lots of open bottles, we’ve cut the list in half and reduced our ‘by the glass’ offering to just those on our £70 seven-course taster menu.”

### Jet set

Cost was not the sole motivating factor behind Tom Kerridge’s recent decision to launch a £15 for two courses and £22.50 for three set lunch menu at Kerridge’s Bar & Grill in London and the Coach in Marlow. “A number of months ago we could see what was happening and what was coming round the corner,” he says. “Staff need to feel a sense of worth and belonging and that can be delivered through a busy and vibrant restaurant. We decided to put a set lunch menu on to help create an energy that guests like being a part of and staff like delivering.”

Chefs and restaurateurs are not just reappraising the size of their menus, but the ingredients that go into them, too. Roberta Hall-McCarron has introduced a set lunch menu at her flagship Edinburgh restaurant the Little Chartroom. Served Friday to Sunday, the no-choice, three-course menu costs £34 and might include the likes of braised beef shin served with parsley and potato dumplings. “It is a way for us to use up the cuts of meat from animals that we didn’t use

on our à la carte menu. This is a great way to give our guests a good meal at an affordable price,” she says.

Hall-McCarron is also rotating the fish option at the restaurant between hake, cod, plaice and skate, depending on the price and availability, reducing the amount of caviar and serving smaller portions of prime cuts of meat, bulking out the dish with a cheaper braised element. With fewer staff on hand, Hall-McCarron is also looking at the fine detail of the day-to-day running of the kitchen.

“We used to bake sourdough and treacle soda bread, but we have recently stopped doing the sourdough as it is a time-consuming process. We still bake the soda bread but have tried to elevate that by serving warm individual rolls to all of our guests, whereas before we used to serve room temperature slices of each bread.”

Kerridge says that, as a produce-led operation, ingredients costs have always been at the top end for all his sites, but he is now looking at cheaper alternatives from his suppliers. “Things like mince are more readily available and cheaper fish or vegetable-based main courses have allowed us to still work with our uncompromised viewpoint on cooking but celebrating more budget-friendly ingredients. The à la carte hasn’t changed, but that is not to say that perhaps in the future things might get tighter and we have to take another look at it, but it’s not something we are scared of doing.”

### Climate change

While reducing menu choice and the number and amount of more expensive ingredients is a sensible decision from an operator’s viewpoint in the current climate, there could be a risk of taking things too far from a customer’s point of view and impacting on perceived value. Careful planning and clever design is the answer to a successful reduced menu, according to Rudd.

“Our structure is always a vegetarian – or can be vegan – pescatarian and meat-based ▶

“As of January we’re running a shorter, sharper menu,” says restaurateur Sam Harrison of Sam’s Riverside in Hammersmith, London. “If you’re running a shorter menu, everything comes in fresh every day and there’s less choice and less wastage. Historically you would build some wastage into your costings, but if those costings and margins are reduced, it’s going to get harder and harder to build in that wastage.”

At Copper and Ink in Blackheath, London, chef and co-owner Tony Rudd has recently reduced the number of options on the restaurant’s fixed-price menu (two courses for £35 and three for £45) from 12 dishes to nine, with three starters, three mains and three desserts. “It’s helped cut food waste, reduced



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/TATIANA BAIBAKOVA; AMELIA CLAUDIA; TONY RUDD

◀ starter, and the same for our main. We have a cheese course, a light, often vegan pre-dessert and a rich, decadent dessert. From these nine dishes we can offer an amazing seven-course taster menu. By designing dishes to be dairy-free, we cover one intolerance, and our menu is gluten-free by design, ticking a box for many other diners. If you have a reduced menu, change it regularly to ensure guests can come back in a future month if there's nothing for them on there now, or come back every month if they love what you do."

At Sam's Riverside, Harrison has a different set of customer requirements to consider. "To me, a brasserie always has a fairly varied menu and people come and dine with us two, three or four times a week. They might pop in on a Tuesday night because they can't be bothered to cook or a Saturday night because it's a special occasion, so you are picking menu items for different occasions. Whereas before we probably changed the menu every six weeks, we're going to have to change it a lot, so that if you're coming back every week there's something new."

For Kerridge, however, his initial concerns about reduced choice didn't materialise. "I

**“The à la carte hasn't changed, but that is not to say that perhaps in the future things might get tighter”**

**Tom Kerridge**

think the guest comes to you because of your offering in terms of level and standard, not in terms of a huge amount of choice. I think we have moved on from the days of lots and lots of main courses; people buy into a quality and a standard and are quite happy to eat something that is good, rather than have the option of lots of things that aren't so good."

**Asking price**

In addition to resizing menus, chefs and restaurateurs are also having to consider

repricing menus to pass on at least some of the increased costs they are facing to customers. Rudd acknowledges that a fine balancing act is required in order not to put off customers.

"Our taster menu, which was previously £50 for five courses, is now £70 but we've added two courses. This looks like great value, and it really is, considering the quality, but the reality is, we're not offering more food, just more courses. Talk to your guests, be transparent with what you're facing and many will understand the situation. As more restaurants realise they need to change their prices to survive, the public will soon understand that this is the new norm."

Kerridge agrees. "There is a great fear with all of us that as prices go up for restaurants from their suppliers, that has to be passed onto the guest. At the same point, the guest has less spending power. It is like two poles being pulled apart, and I don't think there is a lot we can do about that. As a business, if you continue to absorb the cost and start going into the red and the guests start to reduce anyway, you will find yourself in an incredibly vulnerable position. I think the industry needs to stand strong. We have to put ourselves into a position where we charge the correct price to exist as an honest and true profession."

While operators would love to see government assistance in the form of a temporary VAT reduction, a sensible energy cap for businesses, restructuring of rates and a reduction in fuel duty to reduce transport costs, there is an acceptance that the hospitality industry will have to rely on its own ingenuity, including creative menu management once again.

"Can it get any worse? Hang on, I said that last year!" jokes Rudd. "Last year was definitely the worst year I've ever been in business, and it's not going to get much easier soon, but it feels like we're emerging from the worst of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. The hospitality industry has always been resilient and innovative, and if any sector can survive, it's us."



Little Chartroom



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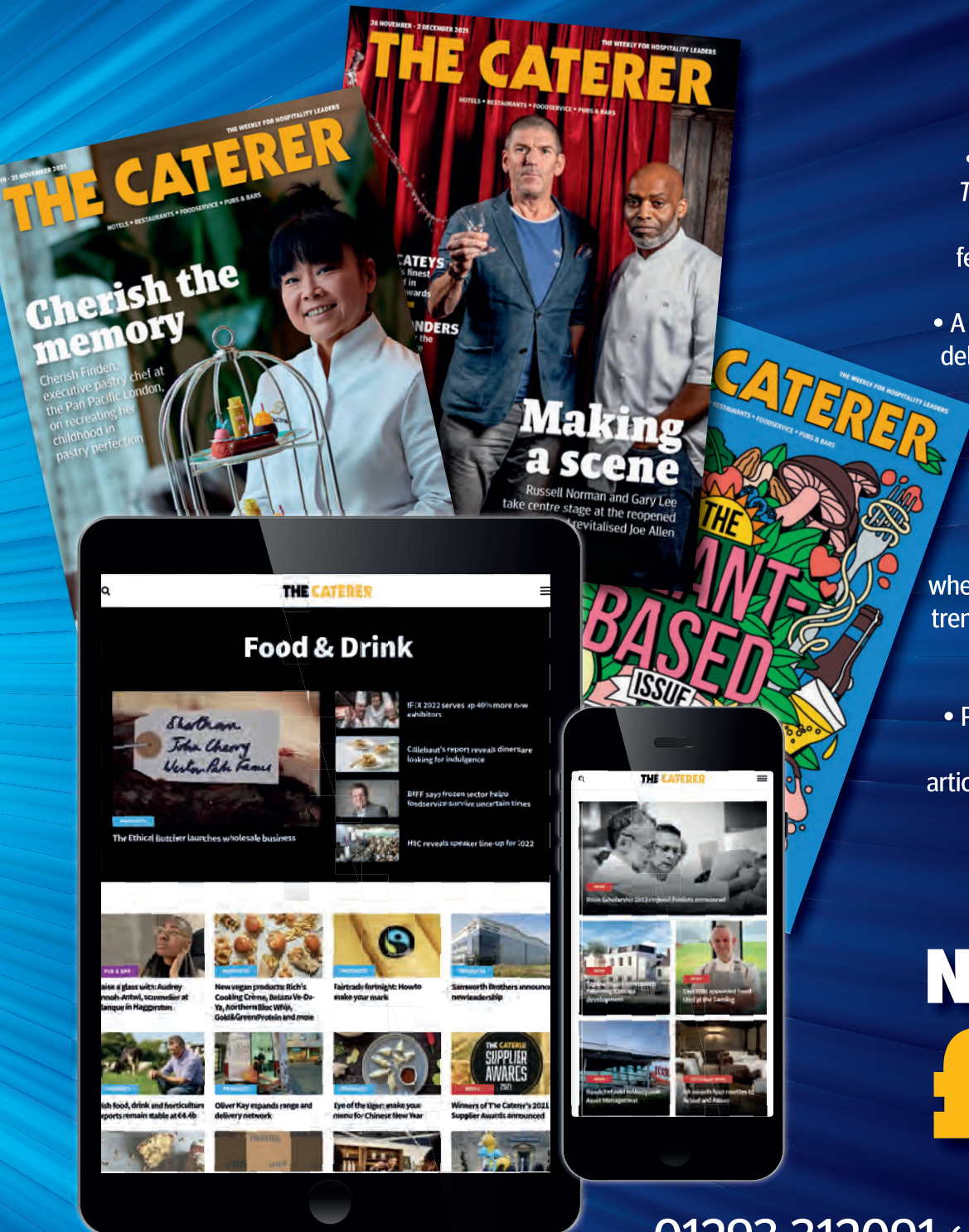
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# New developments need net gains on biodiversity

With new environmental requirements coming into force, *Robert Walton* gives advice on making sure your development is biodiverse

## The problem

The Environment Act 2021 creates a new requirement for a minimum of a 10% biodiversity net gain for all new developments. It is expected to come into force in November 2023, and some local councils are already trialling it. It presents interesting opportunities for hotel estates with under-used grounds.

## The law

Biodiversity value must increase by at least 10% on all new development with only very limited exceptions. It should, however, be noted that the increase in biodiversity of given land is from the 30 January 2020 and not the date of the development, to ensure landowners do not artificially lower biodiversity value prior to a development to achieve a higher gain later.

There are three methods where this can be achieved, measured in credits, used individually or together:

1. Onsite provision – altering biodiversity on the development itself
2. Offsite provision – altering biodiversity on another site
3. Statutory credits – purchasing ‘credits’ from the government (details of this have not yet been announced)

The most straightforward is the first option, but this will often be unattractive for developers as it requires long-term maintenance of a site, with habitats maintained for a minimum of 30 years.

The second method has additional factors known as the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric. This takes into account the distance of the offsite provision from the actual site and penalises the created habitat accordingly. If development is in the same local authority there is no penalty, but a 25% discount is applied when in a neighbouring authority and 50% if further away.

Furthermore, not all biodiversity is treated equally. Local Nature Recovery Strategies mean there will be weighted values attributed to certain sites that fall within this designation.

Therefore, in order to calculate credits there will need to be an element of planning required.

## Expert advice

While this can be looked on as a restriction for future developments, it is also opening up opportunities for those with land to spare, or those who would like to manage their land in a more ecological friendly manner.

There is likely to be significant demand for offsite provision with habitat credits being sold to developers to meet the requirements of the act. This will be of particular interest to landowners who will have the option of maintaining habitat themselves or leasing land to a third party who will maintain the land. Hotel



FABIO PRINCIPE/SHUTTERSTOCK

## “Hotel operators with under-utilised land may be able to offer developers a way to achieve their biodiversity targets”

operators with under-used land may be able to offer developers a way to achieve their biodiversity targets while creating enhanced amenity space for guests.

Although it is early days, we are already seeing initial agreements for such arrangements with developers looking to increase biodiversity of sites ahead of the act coming into force.

It is not yet known if land owned by a single party can be ‘pooled’ together, but this would open up significant opportunities, especially where increased biodiversity of an area of land would be useful aesthetically to a business but they do not necessarily have the spare funds to implement the changes. A third party could be

appointed to carry out the work and manage the site. This would apply even if the land was held under a lease.

## Checklist

- Investigate unused areas of land on your estate. Of particular value will be areas with poor current biodiversity
- Review your title (or lease if you hold land under one) to see if there any limitations on use
- Be aware this is a long-term commitment, – at least 30 years
- Consider the impact on the day-to-day usage of your site

## Beware

This aspect of the act is not yet in force, therefore be mindful for possible restrictions and potential for guidance to change.

**Robert Walton is a partner in the real estate team at RWK Goodman, with specialist knowledge in the renewable energy sector and environment, and holds a master’s in conservation biology**  
[www.rwkgoodman.com](http://www.rwkgoodman.com)

# Own label

Emily Scott is putting her brand on everything, from her eponymous restaurant to her second cookery book. *Lisa Jenkins* talks to her about work, wellbeing, and meal planning for Joe Biden

**E**mily Scott is a fierce, gritty, determined chef and businesswoman. She has fought hard for her success and weathered many storms, through which food has always been a lifeline.

She's laughs when I ask about the fashion videos that also have turned her into an Instagram influencer, sent clothes to model by independent designers.

"The videos are a bit of fun, and I'm aiming not to take myself too seriously – but fashion and putting outfits together is something I love. It's the creativity."

We talk about diversification, and how operators have had to be savvy to spread risk. Her first book (a second is on its way), food festivals and sponsored projects have all helped to top up the cash reserves in leaner times.

Times are not lean currently. Emily Scott Food on the sea wall at Watergate Bay in Cornwall is consistently full. The restaurant started as a pop-up in the former site of Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, launched in partnership with Will Ashworth, the chief executive and owner of Watergate Bay hotel. In 2021 Scott took on a three-year lease for the nearby Watchful Mary site, while Ashworth turned Fifteen into new hotel suites.

**"Whatever has happened to me in my life, work has always been a positive"**

"The pop-up at Watergate Bay was successful and it was a new experience for me as I put my name to it and it suddenly became very personal. I'm involved in every decision across the business. We're all used to brands and names, but this is me. I take it very seriously and I'm going to do it as well as I can. I'm not going to just put my name on something and then just do whatever.

"It's good. I feel very humble and lucky to be in a position where I've made some big changes to the way we run in order to remain in business. It's all worked in a very positive way."



Padstow crab, pickled heritage carrot, brown crab hollandaise

## From the menu

- Pavilion bakery, whipped cod's roe
- Escabeche of Porthilly, soused vegetables
- Padstow crab, pickled heritage carrot, brown crab hollandaise
- Tea-smoked Cornish trout, creamed pumpkin, lobster, verjus and walnut dressing
- Baked plaice, caramelised shallot, roast chicken and black truffle sauce
- Seaside days: saffron soft-serve ice-cream, PX-soaked raisins, saffron bun
- Chocolate pavé, 70% chocolate, hazelnut, sea buckthorn and milk sorbet
- Café and petits four

Six courses, £75



The decision to focus on a six-course tasting menu, rather than an all-encompassing offering, including sharing plates and a children's menu, has made a big difference. "We have control over waste and the ingredients we use," she says.

"We cook within the seasons, and we can be so specific from a sustainability perspective. Our magic number is 55 for dinner and we're not trying to turn tables. We could do more, but tend not to so we stay consistent, which is important.

"We've got a full kitchen team now too and they are all so talented. If one person is unwell, the show goes on. That's been the most incredible part of the changes we've made. I now have people who want to work with me in serious roles, doing some serious cooking, and very much within my ethos."

### Team time

Mark Hellyar, Scott's partner in life and also in the restaurant, is fundamental to its success, she says: "Working together and living together can work well."

Kye Byford, her head chef, has been with her for four years. "Kye and I work so well together and he really gets my style and ethos of cooking. We have another exciting year ahead. My restaurant manager, Tiago Sarzedas Sebastião, has worked with me for over three years and is passionate about hospitality and being part of the team. My team is everything and it is important to know what you can achieve by yourself and what you can achieve with a great team."

Recruiting staff is still tough so the focus is now on retention. "All the team are on three-and-a-half day weeks with three splits and a late and early shift. I guess I'm a bit old school, ▶

### Cornish Wrecker: Clotted cream gin, coconut rum, gorse flower syrup and soda on the rocks



PHOTO: SEAN NEWTON



◀ but not in a bad way. I work hard, and you're going to come and work hard for me, it's like, let's get on board with this.

"I'm a great believer that work is important for your mental health as well. Whatever has happened to me in my life, work has always been a positive. I've always been able to get up and get out, and the days where I didn't were always much harder. For me, work-life balance is about understanding that not everyone is living the same life and we're not always OK. There are lots of challenges thrown at us all."

### French connection

Scott trained in Burgundy after being sent to France for her health as a teenager while suffering from anorexia, a fact she hasn't shared publicly before. "I'm beginning to talk about it because I'm at a point in my life and career where I can maybe inspire other people that you can get through things in life," she says.

"Yes, it can be hard, but it doesn't mean it's over. Recovery is possible. It's just ironic that I've ended up working with food – but maybe not! I was very poorly and was sent to France for a change of scene as I'd been in and out of treatment. I was at the beginning of recovery, but it had been quite difficult, and when I got to France it was like a light switched on. I was suddenly in an environment that I felt good in; I felt valued.

"I started finding my place at the stove, cooking in this amazing provincial restaurant in the heart of Burgundy. I learnt a way of cooking that brings people together with happiness and joy. It was the sense of positivity that got to me, I think.

"Eating disorders are negative things but I was so switched on by this amazing food experience and, although I was very unwell, I had to step up. I then started helping to run L'Etape restaurant with John Christophe and Sophie Slowik. John had worked with Marco Pierre White in his early days and had a background front of house which was incredible. It gave me so much experience and taught me so much, that when I did come back to London, I went on to train at the Tante Marie cookery school. I did a year's diploma and then set up my own business at the age of 23."

**"I feel very lucky to be recognised now, but with that comes expectation"**

Finding herself back in the UK, in Port Isaac in Cornwall, Scott met her ex-husband, a fisherman, and opened Browns in 1989, which she describes as a simple kind of tea shop. "We had the first coffee machine in the town; it was a simple bistro-type place". The Harbour restaurant followed, which she owned for about nine years before selling it to Nathan Outlaw in 2013, just after she was named Best Chef by the southwest's *Food* magazine.



### Scott on positive recovery

Scott describes anorexia as "my drug of choice". She clearly remembers the moment she decided to stop eating, when she was 15, about to do her GCSEs and with the overwhelming feeling that she was going to fail.

"Not eating was the only thing I could control," she says. She adds that anorexia has nothing to do with losing weight, which is a symptom, but rather that she was good at not eating.

"I was good at something, and I was in control of it. But I've learned to take the negative things I might think about myself and turn them into positive things or focus on other people. There's a saying when you're anorexic,

that you like feeding people, and there is truth in that. Now though, I genuinely enjoy eating food as much as I enjoy cooking it. So, I think that saved me, actually. I was in and out of hospitals a lot back then and a lot of the people I knew aren't alive today. It's an awful disease, but it's about choice. I'm a great believer in choice."

She describes recovery as looking after yourself, whether that is through exercise, getting enough sleep or spending time by yourself.

"Anorexia is about disappearing – it enables you to hide behind it. What I'm able to do now is step forward and accept myself. We could all do with a big

dose of self-love. If you look after yourself, you have the ability to look after other people around you.

"I don't feel embarrassed that I've suffered from an eating disorder. It's something that happened to me, but it's not an easy subject to talk about. I hope that by talking about it, it might be helping other people. There's so many people struggling with so many things."

**For more information, visit mental health charities Mind at [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/eating-problems-for-friends-family](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/eating-problems-for-friends-family) or Beat [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)**



Baked plaice, caramelised shallot, roast chicken and black truffle sauce. Inset: Douglas fir soft-serve ice-cream, clementine and 24 carat gold

After she had her three children, Scott's next venture took her and her family inland to the St Tudy Inn, where she stayed until taking on the pop-up at Watergate Bay in 2020, while the St Tudy Inn was still closed due to Covid.

#### TV or not TV

Scott had been invited on *Great British Menu* in 2017 but had turned it down as the St Tudy Inn received a Bib Gourmand and business was brisk. When she was invited again a year later, she agreed. "It was a great experience, but it is a competition, and it was hard," she says. "I think I showcased myself well – and I have been asked back since," she laughs.

We're back to that sticky subject of exposure and attention. "*Great British Menu* did give me a good platform, but as I said, I'm this funny mixture of wanting to be on my own and be quite antisocial and just quietly get on with it, and then there's this other side to me that's fiercely ambitious and driven and business-minded. So that pushes me on to pursue things that I'm not comfortable with.

"I've failed at lots of things and that's OK. My failures have turned into my successes now. Sometimes we judge failure or success on what

other people think, and it should be more about how I feel about what's happened.

"That time was incredibly tough. I had three children running about in a busy pub and it was full-on. Running a pub is a way of life – we lived above it and I tried to be the landlady, the chef, the caretaker, the team builder, and you can't sustain that long term. When Covid hit, I was given the opportunity of taking on the pop-up and of course I had to say yes. It was a lot of pressure because everyone had loved Fifteen, but it allowed me to keep my team in work through the pandemic and it raised my profile again with all the amazing reviews we received. We absolutely rocked it there."

Then, along came Biden. Scott won the cooking gig for the G7 Summit, held in Cornwall in 2021. "I just received a phone call from the Eden Project saying they had some clients that would like to talk to me – and that ended up being the Cabinet Office. I had a Zoom call with them and made it from a long list to a short list. Eventually they asked me what I would do if I was given

the job of cooking for the world leaders, so I just told them. It finally went down to two people and then they took five days to come back to me.

"Cooking at the G7 was incredible and an important moment in my life, but we treated it like any other outside catering job in some ways. We focused on the detail, the seasonality, the provenance and bringing people together. We wanted to bring them joy. I do remember a few Foreign Office eyes rolling when I told them we were going to use tea towels as napkins, mismatched glassware and flowers from the garden and that it was going to be relaxed and beautiful."

Scott and her team pulled it off, and she agrees, the experience and attention it bought had a positive impact on her business. "I feel very lucky to be recognised now, but with that comes expectation. So, you then have to up your game and make sure that you deliver what you're talking about."

Scott continues her appearances on TV, cooking on *Saturday Kitchen* with Matt Tebbutt and an episode of BBC2's *Rick Stein's Cornwall*, where she recreated the meal, she cooked for president Joe Biden and former prime minister Boris Johnson.

It's all good for business, she says, but she constantly reminds herself and her team to remain consistent. "I know what it's like to have no money. I know what it's like not to be able to pay my VAT bill. To be on my own and to

think I have no options, so, this is a much better place to be, but I don't take it for granted for one second. I think hospitality is wonderful and I think that needs to be celebrated, but it has had such hardships lately."

Recognition from her fellow chefs is important, she admits. "To cook for Rick Stein in my restaurant last year. I mean, that was a huge moment.

Hospitality is accessible to everybody. You can come in with no skills, with the right mindset and passion, and a willingness to learn, and you can turn it into the most extraordinary career."

As for the future, it's all about focusing on the restaurant. She's just finished her second book (her first was *Sea & Shore: Recipes and Stories from a Kitchen in Cornwall*) which will be out sometime in summer. And she has a couple of exciting projects up her sleeve, which she hints at, to yells of excitement (from me).

Overall, Scott is trying to enjoy what she's doing on a day-to-day basis. "In hospitality, you get flurries. So, for me it was the G7, then my book came out, and there was a bit of TV, but then it can go quiet again, and you think, 'oh my God, that's it, nothing's happening'. But it's those times you need to cherish – to just look around and really focus on the things that bring you all those exciting moments."



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

MENUWATCH



Cheese bread rolls with caramelised onion butter

# Sao Paulo Bistro

Caroline Martins has brought her brand of homely Brazilian sharing plates to Manchester, picking up a few local flavours along the way. *Louise Rhind-Tutt* pays a visit

Caroline Martins spent more than a decade working as a plasma physicist in Brazil before pursuing her lifelong dream of becoming a professional chef. “In my twenties I was busy with a career in academia, but I couldn’t wait to get home to cook,” she says. “It was a way of being creative after spending my days focused on logic.”

Developing her creativity in the kitchen led to *MasterChef Brazil*, setting the wheels in motion for Martins’ new career, which began at Le Cordon Bleu cookery school followed by a stint at two-Michelin-starred *Trenkerstube* at Hotel Castel in Italy.

The budding chef then moved to the UK, where she worked at two-Michelin-starred *Kitchen Table* and one-Michelin-starred *Galvin La Chapelle*, before launching the *Sao Paulo Project*, her own British-Brazilian fusion concept with a 10-month residency in Ancoats, Manchester.

In late 2022, after appearing on the BBC’s *Great British Menu*, representing the north-west, Martins launched the *Sao Paulo Bistro* at Exhibition, a new dining space housing three restaurants in the Grade II-listed *St George’s*

**“You can travel all over Brazil without leaving your chair”**

**Caroline Martins**

House in Manchester. The menu is a more relaxed spin on her Ancoats pop-up, celebrating Brazilian cuisine with a focus on local suppliers and producers through sharing plates.

The menu starts with snacks and canapés, including crisp Brazilian beef croquettes, created with dough made from mashed potato, which are “very Brazilian, a little savoury treat we often eat at parties”, says Martins. Coated in breadcrumbs and deep-fried until golden, they’re served with a biquinho pepper mayonnaise, flavoured with the “aromatic and fruity” Brazilian pepper.

The salmon for a smoked salmon mousse canapé is from the local Manchester Smoke House. “The white part is a Brazilian cream cheese called *requeijão*, and it’s topped with Exmoor caviar and cucamelon, which we use a lot in Latin America,” says Martins.

Chicken liver parfait comes with Brazilian prickly pear gel and edible flowers, while the delicate cheese mousse for another canapé is made with Crofton cheese from Cumbria. Martins says the goats’ cheese works because it’s not too earthy, and is topped with black walnut purée and Wiltshire truffles.





Clockwise from above: Sao Paulo steak sandwich, garlic flatbread, Brazilian beef croquettes and cheese bread rolls



Baked Garstang white cheese and baguette toasts



Cheese bread rolls



Sao Paulo steak sandwich

A Brazilian cheesy bread – pão de queijo – is made with cassava starch, milk and eggs. “It puffs up because of the expansion of the air bubbles created by the cassava starch – and it’s gluten-free, too. It’s crispy on the outside and chewy on the inside. I use mature Cheddar to make it and serve it with a caramelised onion butter topped with Maldon salt and crispy onions.”

Martins sources her Brazilian ingredients from “the godfather of Brazilian food” in the north, Mais Brasil in Salford, while also supporting local suppliers such as Northern Cure, who supply her charcuterie board.

Hand-dived Orkney scallops (“I sear the scallops then confit them in smoked butter made locally by the Crafty Cheeseman”) come with heart of palm and a cassava mousseline, while a celeriac and leek velouté is dotted with little cubes of coalho, a Brazilian vegetarian cheese.

The Sao Paulo steak sandwich with cassava crisps and guava ketchup is Martins’ best-selling dish. The sirloins are from WH Frost Butchers in Chorlton, where they’re dry-aged for 45 days in-house. “I barbecue them to medium rare, and they’re served on ciabatta

### From the menu

#### Canapés (selection of three) £8.50

- Whipped Crofton cheese, passion fruit and black walnut purée, black truffle
- Chicken liver parfait, Brazilian prickly pear gel, autumn flowers
- Manchester smoked salmon pâté, Brazilian cream cheese (requeijão) Exmoore caviar

#### ● Northern Cure charcuterie plate £7.50

- Baked Garstang white cheese, baguette toasts, guava jam, mixed nuts, grapes £13.50

- Sao Paulo steak sandwich, Garstang Blue sauce, horseradish emulsion, watercress, cassava crisps and guava ketchup £12.50

#### Afters

- Liquid nitrogen Dormouse chocolate mousse, meringue, marshmallow, coconut granola, salted caramel sauce, basil custard, coconut yogurt, coconut candy £8.50

with earthy, salty Garstang Blue cheese sauce,” says Martins. “I wanted to give a Brazilian twist to the sort of British steak sandwich you might have in the pub for lunch.”

An elegant dessert is a mousse made using Dormouse chocolate, another Manchester supplier, with basil-infused custard, coconut yogurt, salted caramel sauce, coconut candy, meringues, marshmallows and coconut granola

“Dormouse imports the cocoa beans from Brazil and grind them and make the chocolate themselves. I really wanted to do something with Brazilian chocolate, but I also wanted to link it to Manchester,” she says.

Martins’ dream is to launch her own restaurant “with a fine dining tasting menu, something smaller with just a few tables”, she says. “But we also want to keep the Sao Paulo Bistro going, and perhaps expand it across other cities. It’s all about simple, delicious food. You can travel all over Brazil without leaving your chair.”

**Exhibition, St George’s House,  
56 Peter Street, Manchester M2 3NQ  
www.exhibitionmcr.co.uk**



### Le Cordon Bleu Bakery School

By Le Cordon Bleu

Grub Street Publishing, £35

Le Cordon Bleu's latest book release, *Bakery School*, lives up to the reputation of its namesake, offering the professional baker what they call a "new culinary adventure" through bread-making and the art of viennoiseries.

The book is divided into seven sections – from kneading to oven, traditional breads, aromatic breads, regional breads, international breads, snacks and viennoiseries – making it easy to navigate for bakers looking to expand their repertoire in a particular area.

In introducing this book, technical director of boulangerie chef Olivier Boudot says Bakery School's mission is to "explore the world of France and international baking and viennoiserie making, as taught at Le Cordon Bleu, and to take on new culinary challenges". The book is true to its word, providing 320 pages of culinary challenges with all the practical tips needed to help take bakes off the page and onto the plate.

It is apparent from the turn of the first page that each of the 80 recipes in Bakery School have been curated with budding pastry chefs in mind. Each section offers a detailed breakdown of processes involved in making each item, with more complicated recipes accompanied by a step-by-step visual of techniques needed to master a bake.

The 1,450 photographs make for a pleasurable reading experience and keep the creative eye occupied through the many steps of bread-making, from dough-kneading to the final bake.

The recipe for bicour folded brioche is one of the shiniest jewels in *Bakery School's* crown as it is set over two double-page spreads, offering fine detail on the technique involved in creating the neatly striped pastry creation.

Many of the recipes take the reader on a trip through Europe, from explaining how to bake a perfectly risen Italian focaccia to expert guidance on perfecting the seamless plaits of the Polish babka and mastering the seemingly simple French delicacy the pain au chocolat.

Whether the baker's portfolio is calling for a sophisticated savoury bread or a sweet pastry to serve on their breakfast menu, *Bakery School* has them covered.

By Katie Daly

## Spinach-goats' cheese bars with dried apricots, pumpkin seeds and rosemary

### Makes 10 bars

250g T45 flour  
50g baby spinach leaves, washed and stalks removed  
5g salt  
10g sugar  
10g fresh compressed yeast  
50g water  
30g unsalted butter

### Filling

130g fresh goats' cheese  
60g dried apricots, chopped into small pieces  
1g chopped rosemary

### Finish

1 egg and 1 egg yolk beaten together  
Roasted pumpkin seeds  
Olive oil

### Kneading

Put the flour, spinach, salt, sugar and yeast into the bowl of a stand mixer. Mix for 4 minutes at low speed until you obtain a smooth dough, adding the water little by little. Knead at high speed to obtain an elastic dough. Add the butter and knead again at high speed until the dough is elastic again.

### First rising and fermentation

Cover with a damp cloth and leave to ferment for 45 minutes at room temperature.

### Dividing and shaping

Divide the dough into two pieces and pre-shape each piece into an oval. Cover with a damp cloth and leave to rest for 20 minutes.

Using a rolling pin, roll the dough into 32cm x 20cm rectangles. Moisten the edges, spread one of the rectangles with goats'



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DELPHINE CONSTANTINI

cheese, then sprinkle with dried apricots and rosemary.

Cover with the second rectangle. Place on a 30cm x 38cm baking tray covered with baking parchment.

Cover with cling film and place in the freezer to harden;





to make it easier to cut the bars. Cut into 18cm x 3cm bars and arrange on a 30cm x 38cm baking tray.

### Second (final) proofing

Leave to proof for 30 minutes in a proving oven at 25°C.

### Baking

Preheat the oven to 155°C. Brush the bars with egg wash and sprinkle with pumpkin seeds. Place in the oven, then lower the temperature to 140°C and bake for 15 minutes.

Remove from the oven, transfer to a wire rack and brush with olive oil.

## Revelations

Dipna Anand, chef, author and restaurateur, Brilliant Restaurant and Dipna at Somerset House, London



### What do you normally have for breakfast?

Usually just a bowl of cereal or a banana and a green tea. If I am on holiday, however, or feeling naughty on the weekend, it's usually a fry-up or aloo paratha

### What's your favourite hotel?

JW Marriott in Mumbai

### What is your favourite drink?

Fresh coconut water

### What is your favourite food/cuisine?

Lebanese and Japanese, I love both equally

### Which ingredient do you hate the most?

Hate is a harsh word but I dislike olives

### Are there any foods/ingredients that you refuse to cook with? If so, why?

Just beef – I don't eat beef for religious reasons

### What irritates you most about the industry?

The chef and staff skill shortages and high labour turnover. It's hard in the UK to find chefs and front of house staff for catering businesses, yet punters still expect the best food and service

### What flavour combinations do you detest?

I do not like the taste of saffron or cinnamon

### What do you always carry with you?

When going to a pop-up, I always take my cooking paddle – large flat spoons to cook with – when I use a bratt pan

### Which person gave you the greatest inspiration?

My mum, who has Parkinson's. She is a soldier who never gives up. Seeing her strength inspires me to further succeed in my field

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

My mobile phone for socials and my masala box

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

None! Instagram and Twitter instead

### Describe your ultimate nightmare?

Getting locked in a walk-in fridge or freezer as I can't take the cold at all

### Tell us a secret...

I may be getting married soon!





# The Drinks Doctor

In our new regular column, we introduce you to the experts who will be answering your questions on all things drinks related

**F**rom cocktails to Champagne, beer to Bacardi, whisky to wine and everything in between, our panel of Drinks Doctor experts will answer your burning questions about improving your drinks offering.



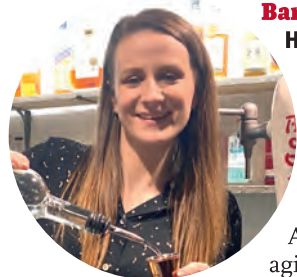
**Flavour expert**  
**Zoe Burgess,**  
**consultant**

Zoe Burgess, founder and owner of independent drinks consultancy Atelier Pip, is one of the UK's most renowned flavour experts and founding partner of east London cocktail bar Untitled. With a career spanning more than 10 years, she has developed cocktail menus for chefs including Heston Blumenthal and has collaborated with sensory scientists, including Oxford University's Charles Spence and University of London chemist Andrea Sella.

Her passion lies within pushing the boundaries within the sensory- and flavour-led sectors to create an immersive and memorable drinking experience. She continues to work with Blumenthal's creative team and has worked with clients such as Soma Soho, the Standard hotel and Be-oom tea rooms in London.

Most recently, Burgess published her book, *The Cocktail Cabinet: The Art, Science and Pleasure of Mixing the Perfect Drink* (Mitchell Beazley/Octopus Books).

**Bar manager**  
**Hannah Lawson,**  
**Heft, Cumbria**



After 10 years working in pubs and hotels in the Lake District, dabbling in the industry in Australia and managing a popular bar in the centre of Kendal, Lawson joined Heft in the autumn of 2021. She now heads up all things bar at Heft, from serving loyal locals pints to mixing and curating cocktails.

Her favourite aspect of being bar manager is the flexibility to think outside the box and run with her creativity, but she is also passionate about zero-waste practices, making mocktails

taste just as good as the real thing, and welcoming her customers' four-legged friends.



**Champagne aficionado**  
**Martin Dibben,**  
**Searcys**

Martin Dibben is the newly appointed head of Champagne at Searcys, having worked with the company for some time on the event side of the business while running his own restaurant, Dibben, in Smithfield Market in London.

With a career spanning 30 years, Dibben started his career within the Royal Household, working his way up to food and beverage manager across the estate, from Buckingham Palace to Sandringham and Balmoral. He then went to work with the queen of baking, Prue Leith, within her event business. During the pandemic, he moved into film, working as an advisor on etiquette, period food service and royal procedures in filming productions.

Dibben built up his knowledge of all things fizz from studying at L'Academie du Champagne and graduated in 2000. In 2016 he became chairman of the academy and he has also recently been selected as the consul of the south of England for the Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne.

For Searcys, along with working as the head of Champagne, Dibben became a chevalier of the confrérie du sabre d'Or, devoted to promoting the act of sabrage (opening a bottle with a sabre) and he is often seen encouraging guests at Searcys' Champagne experiences to participate in this historic practise.



**Pub landlord**  
**Gordy McIntyre,**  
**Hicce Hart, London**

Hailing originally from north of the border, Gordy McIntyre entered the world of hospitality in 2000 on top of Alpes d'Huez in the French Alps. Following a whistlestop world tour in

2003, he found himself in London where he joined the Conran Restaurant Group. In the three years he was there his role in the management team evolved as the business transitioned into La Florida.

He then moved away from the corporate world and into the independent pub sector. Nick Pring and Malcolm Heap's Real Pubs gave him the platform he needed to hone his skills and ideas, while growing professionally in a multitude of roles.

In 2018, along with business partner Pip Lacey and with the initial investment from Angela Hartnett, Hicce opened its doors in King's Cross. Four years later, McIntyre finds himself back in his beloved independent pub sector with the pair's second venture, Hicce Hart, which recently opened in Chapel Market in Islington, London.



**Sommelier**  
**Audrey Annoh-Antwi,**  
**Planque Restaurant**

Curiosity brought wine into Audrey Annoh-Antwi's life and Wine & Spirit Education Trust studies anchored

it permanently. She has now worked in front of house roles with a focus on wine for seven years, and has been the sommelier at Planque restaurant in Haggerston, London, since it opened in late 2021.

The best thing about being a sommelier, she believes, is the ability to bring delight. Restaurants have their own rhythm and every day is different, offering a new adventure. Guests leave their house to dine at a good restaurant seeking an experience, and Annoh-Antwi takes great pleasure in being a part of that.

In addition Annoh-Antwi partakes in judging wine competitions, writing and event hosting, while also being an ambassador for Be Inclusive Hospitality.

**If you have a question about how to improve your drinks offering, send your questions to the surgery via [drinks@thecaterer.com](mailto:drinks@thecaterer.com) or ask us on Twitter using the hashtag [@catererdrinks](https://twitter.com/catererdrinks) @caterertweets**



## ‘How can I jazz up my no- and low-alcohol drinks menu?’

Don’t concentrate on the lack of alcohol but rather the addition of flavours, says *Zoe Burgess*, founder of Atelier Pip and beverage consultant at the Standard, London

**“Don’t underestimate aromatics, they provide a first impression and add complexity and length to the flavour experience”**

‘Non-alcoholic’ and ‘no and low’ are some of the terms used to describe mixed drinks that contain little or no alcohol. It’s interesting that these names focus on what is not there rather than what is – flavour.

Can we shift our understanding of drinks that contain little or no alcohol as having something that is missing, to drinks that provide as equal and as valued a ritual as their alcoholic counterparts?

### Find a balance

Tastes such as sweet, sour, bitter, umami and salt become vital as they deliver the reward we crave and drive that repeat sip. As always, ensure the taste of your drinks is balanced and consider exploring more savoury and bitter tastes for a more refined offering. Vegetables can be a great resource here because of their complex flavour as well as slightly more bitter botanicals.

### Scent of success

Don’t underestimate aromatics, they provide a first impression and add complexity and length to the flavour experience. Pay atten-

tion to the aroma of your ingredients and the resulting liquid you make from them. Ensuring the first impression of your liquid is aromatically enticing is key. Pay attention to the aromatic profile of garnishes, ensure they bring something to your liquid.

### Add textural interest

Texture will need attention, as when we remove alcohol we remove a specific sensation on the palate. While this technically is not texture, working with texture will provide mouthfeel and create a ‘fuller’ experience. For example, tomato juice has a richer mouthfeel or fruit purées that can be whipped up bellini-style with an alcohol-free sparkling wine substitute to fill the void.

### A sense of occasion

Pay attention to the visual. Your liquid, garnish and glassware will make an impression that can enforce a ritual and create a desirable experience to look forward to. We expect certain glassware shapes and weights for cocktails and this should follow through in your non-alcoholic offering. There is so much amazing glassware available now, look at refining your offering through smart choices here and making guests feel like they are a part of the occasion.

### Make it bespoke

Dedicate time to craft your liquid offering and understand your guests’ preferences. Personalisation, just as we would with a traditional cocktail, can make all the difference to a guest and how they value their experience with you.

**W**hat is a cocktail? It’s a question I often get asked and it is becoming more difficult to answer. With bartending techniques and approaches to flavour construction changing, the traditional structures we use to classify a cocktail are starting to be questioned and a new point of view is emerging – the importance of flavour, rather than alcohol, as a ritual.

Rituals are automatic – we wake up in the morning and move through the kitchen to prepare coffee. Rituals involve time – they take place at a certain point or require a dedication of time. Rituals involve appreciation – the vessel we drink from, an aromatic first impression and the effect of the first sip provides an overall flavour experience. These rituals are led by our preferences, but what happens when we want to create new liquid rituals? What do we need to think about?

### Cocktail of the week: Virgin Mary

This iconic, umami-rich cocktail is a great format to explore personalisation through spice and aromatics.

150ml spiced tomato juice	2.5ml to 5ml hot sauce
15ml Worcester sauce	Long lemon zest and pickle
15ml dill pickle juice	

Fill a highball glass with cubed ice. Add the Worcester sauce, pickle juice and hot sauce to the glass and stir three times to combine. Ensure the ice reaches the top of the glass. Top up the drink with spiced tomato juice and gently stir. Garnish with half of a long lemon zest and pickle and serve.

Taken from *‘The Cocktail Cabinet’* by Zoe Burgess (Mitchell Beazley/Octopus Books, £20).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDRE AINSWORTH

### Seasonal food and drink pairing Monkfish and Casal di Serra

Created from 100% Verdicchio grapes from the Marche, Verdicchio Hills in Italy, Casal di Serra from Umani Ronchi is a rich and velvety dry white wine. Boasting subtle notes of wild flowers and yellow fruits including peach, apricot and golden apples, Casal di Serra pairs perfectly with the mild and sweet flavour of monkfish, which is best enjoyed November to

SPONSORED BY

UMANI RONCHI  
VITICOLTORI IN MARCHE E ABRUZZO



MARIA KUTUZOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

# Labour of love

It's time to mix up the Champagne cocktails, blow up the heart balloons and turn up the Barry White. *John Porter* has a crush on Valentine's Day



Valentine's Day marks the first big 'occasion' of the year for operators, a night when they hope significant numbers of customers will be persuaded to put start-of-the-year caution behind them and treat themselves and their significant other to a meal out, accompanied by a glass of something sparkling or a fancy cocktail.

The plan seems to have worked in 2022, when, after a dip in January, the Coffer CGA Business Tracker of managed restaurants, bars and pubs showed total sales in hospitality up 6.7% in February and like-for likes up 2.9%. Comparisons were made with February 2019 due to the impact of Covid trading restrictions in 2020 and 2021. On that measure, restaurants increased like-for-like sales by 9% in February 2022, just ahead of 7% growth for bars, with Valentine's menus and drinks making a significant contribution to the upturn.

This year, the sector will be hoping more than ever that consumers will overcome caution about the state of the economy and their own spending power, and show the out-of-home sector the same love they did in 2022.

However, with inflation substantially higher than a year ago, the cost of living, as well as its impact on hospitality, is front of mind for both operators and consumers. In that context, 14 February falling on a Tuesday in 2023 isn't the most auspicious of days for the sector, giving operators the choice of extending Valentine's Day menus across one of the weekends either side of the day itself, which risks spreading the available trade thinly, or going all-out to drive covers on a normally quiet evening.

## Time for treats

However, Joel Carr, development chef at seafood specialist Young's Foodservice, points to a flicker of hope in consumer research by CGA, which found that two in three adults say they are reluctant to stop eating and drinking out due to the cost of living crisis, and seven in 10 consider it the treat they most look forward to.



## Show some love for Valentine's Day

**Ben Bartlett, chef and menu consultant, offers 10 romantic ideas for a successful Valentine's event.**

- Display posters and sell Valentine's food and drink vouchers in advance.
- Theme the room with banners, bows and hearts. Light some candles, have floating balloons in red, pink and white, and yards of sheer red fabric draped over the tables.
- Offer a menu for two and use the descriptions to make the dishes Valentine-themed. For example, Cupid's Combo, a Seafood Sensation of Oysters, a Secret Rendezvous Steak, Delectable Sizzling Duck Breast, Cuddly Curry, Between the Sheets Roasted Vegetable Lasagne, In Love with Chocolate or Tantalising Treacle Sponge.

- Invite an cosmetics agent or other company to set up in the venue on the night.
- Offer a free gift, such as a rosé on every table.
- Have romantic atmosphere music wafting through the room. Break out the Andrea Bocelli, Marvin Gaye and Barry White!
- Offer special drinks, such as passion fruit Champagne cocktail, pink Champagne and liqueur coffees.
- Hold a raffle with a prize such as a holiday weekend for two. A local travel agent or hotel might support the event.
- Offer a combined dinner/room package, in partnership with a local hotel if you don't have accommodation.
- Take a memorable photo of the couple as a gift. A digital camera picture can be printed and put into a card.

For Valentine's menus, "there are a few things operators can consider to help with their own costs, such as offering set menus, sharing plates or maybe winning over customers with amazing dishes for an indulgent splurge," says Carr.

"Valentine's Day is well known to be one of the most popular consumer dining out occasions of the year. Consider a sharing platter. Young's Foodservice Scottish smoked salmon can help to create a romantic sharing board, used as a piping mousse on canapés or as edible plate art, or even wrapped and shaped into roses. With its mild oak-infused flavour and smooth velvety texture, chefs have the opportunity to get creative and explore different flavour combinations."

Another suggestion is a twist on a classic prawn cocktail, serving Young's gourmet wholemeal scampi with a cayenne prosecco mayonnaise sauce on a bed of crispy lettuce. Carr makes the point that "using frozen products allows chefs to plan menus, reduce waste and buy in bulk to prevent out of stocks".

## "If you can't share a pudding with a partner on Valentine's Day, when can you?"

**Gordon Lauder, Central Foods**

### Keep it on ice

Desserts are a key part of any Valentine's menu, with many customers who might normally skip a dessert more open to ordering something indulgent to finish their meal.

With hospitality businesses likely to be unclear on the levels of trade to expect until close to the day itself, Gordon Lauder, managing director of Central Foods, also emphasises the value of plan-

ning Valentine's menus around frozen dishes. "If staffing is an issue, or if you're unsure of the number of covers you'll be having on Valentine's Day, it makes sense to purchase ready-prepared frozen desserts. Just defrost what's needed and avoid unnecessary waste.

"Any desserts not used can be saved to serve after Valentine's Day. It's much easier to calculate costs and margins if you buy in ready-prepared desserts instead of making them from scratch."

Dishes can be customised appropriately for Valentine's Day, such as adding berries and rose petals, while "another good idea is to cut individual portions of desserts into smaller sizes to make a romantic sharing dessert platter", says Lauder. "This will appeal to those diners with smaller appetites and help encourage extra sales. It's the chance to offer rich and indulgent desserts that really suit this most romantic of occasions. If you can't share a pudding with a partner on Valentine's Day, when can you?"

Samantha Rain, development chef for ►

## Suppliers

### Aimia Foods

www.aimiafoods.com

### Central Foods

www.centralfoods.co.uk

### Diageo

gb.diageo-one.com

### Henley Bridge

www.hbingredients.co.uk

### Wise Bar Trader

www.wisebartrader.co.uk

### Young's Foodservice

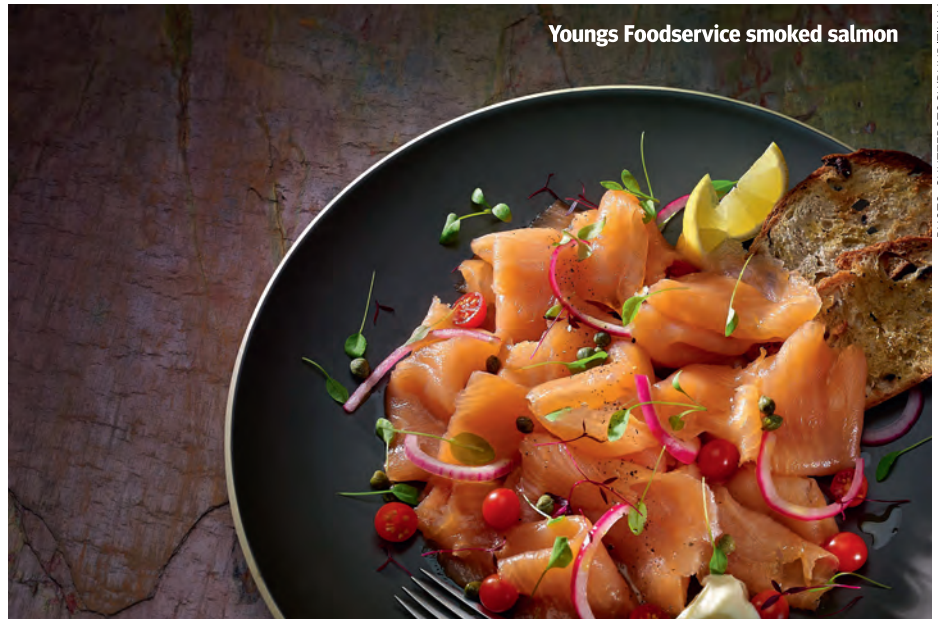
www.youngsfoodservice.co.uk

### Chocolatree heart





Captain Morgan strawberry daiquiri



Youngs Foodservice smoked salmon

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/BUNDTINAY

◀ ingredients supplier Henley Bridge, advises: “A chocolate-themed dessert is guaranteed to get anyone in the mood for love, and there’s lots of innovative chocolate decor products to tailor your creations to the most romantic day of the year.

“A chocolate mousse or cheesecake can be elevated simply by adding a few chocolate hearts or white chocolate roses.” For added wow factor, Rain suggests spraying cakes and desserts with Chocolatree’s red velvet cocoa butter spray, or encase a dessert in a red heart couple chocolate shell supplied by Dobra.

**Drink it in**

With indulgent drinks also very much part of the consumer appeal of Valentine’s, Karen Green, marketing manager, Aimia Foods, suggests extending the shareable dessert format to “a drinkable treat, such as a dessert cocktail or Valentine’s-themed freakshake served with two straws”.

Supplied by Aimia, Shmoo thickshake powders make thick, textured shakes which can be topped with squirty cream, pink sprinkles and edible hearts, and can also be blended with spirits to make dessert cocktails.

“It’s a combination that consumers are sure to fall in love with,” says Green.

CGA’s recent Mixed Drinks Report found that 62% of consumers enjoy varying their cocktail choice according to the time of year, creating an opportunity for love-themed drinks menus during February. With good timing, Diageo has added Captain Morgan strawberry daiquiri to its portfolio of draught cocktails, supplied in a 10 litre bag-in-box format for bartop dispense. The striking red cocktail serve adds to a draught range that also includes Smirnoff passion fruit martini cocktail, Smirnoff espresso martini cocktail and Gordon’s pink martini cocktail.

Catharina von Franck, commercial director, on-trade at Diageo, says the new variety is “perfect for enjoying together”, adding that offering draught cocktails made with its familiar spirit

**“A chocolate mousse or cheesecake can be elevated simply by adding a few chocolate hearts or white chocolate roses”**

**Samantha Rain, Henley Bridge**

brands has a strong appeal “as consumers look for consistency, quality and speed of service”.

One important consideration, even on Valentine’s Day, is for drinks menus to appeal to those customers not drinking alcohol, advises Tom Ward, founder of alcohol-free drinks supplier Wise Bar Trader. He says: “Making everyone welcome to celebrate the occasion should include having options available for anyone who is unable to drink or whose love doesn’t extend to alcohol.

“The range of delicious alcohol-free drinks is continuing to grow, and many can be used as base ingredients for cocktails without alcohol, so operators can be imaginative, creative and make sure that everyone is included.”

**Wise Bar Trader’s alcohol-free serves for Valentine’s Day**



- 25ml clementine juice
- 170ml Bemuse ginger and cardamom non-alcoholic mead

Pour the Bemuse mead into a flute. Add the clementine juice. Garnish with a slice of fresh clementine and a sprig of thyme.

**Frosé**

Nothing says love more than a fresh, fruity and flavoursome rose-coloured frozen cocktail.

- 1 bottle of alcohol-free rosé such as McGuigan Zero Rosé
- 250g strawberries
- 1 tbsp honey
- Juice of 1 lemon

**Mimosa**

For simplicity and speed, a mimosa is one of the easiest cocktails to make with just two ingredients, and it remains a popular choice. Or try substituting Champagne for a lightly sparkling non-alcoholic mead to create a refreshing cocktail with aromatic, slightly spicy warmth.

Pour the rosé into a pan/tin and freeze overnight. The following morning, mix the strawberries with the honey, adding a dash of sugar if you want your cocktails extra sweet. Leave the strawberry mix to sit for 30 minutes and then blend the frozen rosé, strawberries and lemon juice together. Pour into a large serving jug ready to pour for your guests.

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## New products

The new Convotherm mini combi oven has a compact footprint of just 51.5cm wide, low water and energy consumption, and a cloud-based networking system.

Price From £6,630

[www.welbilt.uk](http://www.welbilt.uk)



The latest Scotsman DXN 207 self-serve ice dispenser allows customers or staff to pop the vessel under the dispense tap and a portion of ice is automatically dropped.

The dispenser has a daily capacity of up to 100kg.

Price £6,751

[www.scotsman-ice.co.uk](http://www.scotsman-ice.co.uk)

Taylor UK is now supplying Idea Hi Line vacuum-pack machines from Orved. The Idea 32 Hi Line is a 415mm wide x 603mm deep x 460mm high countertop unit. The vacuum chamber is constructed from a single piece of stainless steel that is easy to clean, with a blue-tinted, high thickness Plexiglass lid that allows operators to see the food being processed. It can accommodate bags with a maximum size of 300mm x 400mm.

Price From £3,995

[www.taylor-company.co.uk](http://www.taylor-company.co.uk)







The Yorkshire Baking Company has added the Lemon Crunch Mega Loaf to its range of Mega Loafs, which also come in chocolate, cherry and Madeira varieties. The Lemon Crunch Mega Loaf is a soft madeira cake with a tangy lemon flavour finished with nibbed sugar.

Price £2.50 per loaf  
[yorkshirebakingco.com](http://yorkshirebakingco.com)



Family-owned winery Hattingley Valley has launched two new English sparkling wines. The limited release King's Cuvée 2015 is a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier with flavours of brioche, vanilla and creamy oak. The brand's first King's Rosé 2015 is a pale pink mix of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier with a crisp acidity and flavours of red apple and strawberries.

Price King's Cuvée 2015, £85; King's Rosé 2015, £95  
[www.hattingleyvalley.com](http://www.hattingleyvalley.com)



Britvic has added to its Tango Editions series with Tango Paradise Punch Sugar Free. The orange, mango and tropical flavour sugar-free blend is available in a 330ml can and 500ml bottle.

Price Case of 24 x 330ml cans, from 75p per can  
[www.britvic.com](http://www.britvic.com)



Funnybones has expanded its plant-based range with three new vegan products: a beef-free burger, spicy chick\*n fillets and Italian (not) meatballs. The (not) meatballs are made using plant protein derived from soya beans and a blend of herbs and spices.

Price Italian (not) meatballs, 14p each  
[www.funnybones.co.uk](http://www.funnybones.co.uk)



# Thomas Leatherbarrow

The founder of contract catering company the Thomas Leatherbarrow Corporation is grateful to his mentors for guiding him through the kitchen from a young age. *Lisa Jenkins* reports

## Did you study a hospitality-related course at school, college or university?

Yes, I did my VRQ Levels 1 to 3 and a masters in world cuisine, bakery and confectionary.

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

Yes, at 13. I was still in high school when I got my first job in the industry, working in the Queen's Head, a gastropub and carvery.

## What initially attracted you to working in hospitality?

I have always loved food and cooking from a young age, when I cooked with my mother and grandparents in their seafood takeaway and restaurant.

## Who was your first mentor in hospitality?

I loved a lot of cooking programmes growing up, from *Ready Steady Cook* to *MasterChef*. Then, as my passion grew, I followed my food heroes – the likes of Jason Atherton, Gordon Ramsay, Marco Pierre White, Pierre Koffmann, the Roux brothers and Guy Savoy.

## How did you decide on your career direction?

The biggest influence was my own drive and passion to be successful and grow in an industry I loved, making a mark that would then inspire others to do the same. I took a lot of inspiration from Atherton and Tom Aikens, who have both had an incredible influence on my career and still inspire me.

## Could you talk us through the roles in your career in hospitality to where you are now?

From preparing vegetables and washing-up in my very first job, I progressed to a commis chef role in the pastry section of a high-end hotel and spa. I then jumped to chef de partie, pastry sous and then



head pastry chef before returning to the main kitchen as a sous chef. I then worked my way up to head chef, executive chef and culinary head of food to my current role of international culinary operations director/managing director of my own contract catering firm.

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

The Craft Guild of Chefs, the Association of Pastry Chefs and the British Culinary Federation – all of which opened many doors for contacts for me through my career, introduced me to different areas of the industry and gave me further insight.

## Have you embarked on any additional personal career development?

I have done a few higher learning and vocational courses on different cuisines, as well as UK and international competitions for both hot kitchen, cold kitchen and pastry, achieving gold, silver and bronze medals, best in class, showpiece awards and international

**“It is a hard and challenging industry to work in, but it is also an industry full of life, love, friendships, honour and integrity”**

awards, including European 30 under 30 Business Entrepreneur of the Year. I am now a candidate judge for World Skills.

## What are the biggest challenges you've faced?

I think when I first joined the industry the challenge for me was being accepted. I was very young when I started working in a kitchen and the majority of people there were 15 to 20 years my senior. The other challenge back then was a financial one. When I first moved to London the cost of living was as expensive as it is now, but

salaries were nowhere near what they are now, so it was a struggle.

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

Be a sponge and absorb as much knowledge as possible and work as hard as you can. You are never going to get it right first time but never give up. Even when you feel like throwing in the towel just tell yourself don't quit today, just do one more day. It is a hard and challenging industry to work in, but it is also an industry full of life, love, friendships, honour and integrity that is worth all those long days.

## What are your career goals?

To continue the same journey, to grow and develop professionally and personally. I'm also working on my first cookbook and have plans for four more to follow.

## Who inspires you in the industry?

Jason Atherton will always be my biggest inspiration and mentor and I am so thankful for the opportunities he has provided me.

## PRODUCTS & SERVICES



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become the South's top heritage destination for relaxation, hospitality and experiences that surprise and delight.

As we emerge from the pandemic we are now embarking on a process to explore our options for managing day, event and accommodation guest catering. We are looking for best in class specialists with ambition.

We would particularly welcome expressions of interest from regional and local suppliers for both the event catering and day visitor operation, but encourage all interested parties to get in touch.



In the first instance email our consultant Mark Hobbs for more information: [mark@kendrickhobbs.co.uk](mailto:mark@kendrickhobbs.co.uk)

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