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HEART OF THE HIGHLANDS

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NUMBERS GAME

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CRISIS APPEAL

The Caterer joins operators in supporting the Ukraine relief effort

BIG SHOT

On the hunt for ways to popularise game

Heart of the Highlands

Rohaise Rose-Bristow on creating a warm welcome as she refurbishes the gloriously isolated Torridon hotel





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News & Opinion

4 Perthshire hotel boss facing jail for sexually assaulting two female members of staff

8 News in brief The week's top stories

12 Openings The latest hotels and restaurants

Business

18 Cover story Rohaise Rose-Bristow on her sensitive refurbishment of grand country pile the Torridon hotel in the Highlands

22 Count the cost What you need to know about the new calorie labelling rules

28 Game changer Pheasant sushi and game sausage rolls at the Bulland shoot

Chef

32 Sow the seeds Ryan Chetiyawardana opens the Seed Library, a lo-fi cocktail bar in Shoreditch

34 Menuwatch The Glass House, County Durham

Products

40 Make a splash The latest ways to serve fish, from homely fishcakes to Brazilian moqueca

44 Product news What's happening in the world of suppliers

People

46 Pathways Emma Jones, venue sales director, eve and Venues by CH&Co



We must stand together in support of the people of Ukraine

My thoughts and those of the entire Jacobs Media Group family around the world are with the people of Ukraine currently.

Like so many others, I have been deeply saddened and disturbed by the shocking scenes that populate our rolling news coverage and front pages by this needless invasion.

I have spent my working life within the travel and hospitality industries, and the many brands within the Jacobs Media Group portfolio have a presence across six continents. Over the course of more than four decades, I have witnessed first-hand the ability of our industries to bring people and cultures together, broaden horizons and minds and break down barriers and conflict. And I believe that now, more than ever, we must stand together in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

In the darkest of times, we can see the best of humanity, and I have been pleased to see the willingness of the travel and hospitality industries to play their part in standing up to this unnecessary and unjustified invasion.

I can also give you my assurance that all the brands within Jacobs Media Group are supporting our own efforts to get aid to the people who currently need it most. We are making our own charitable donation to the aid effort and in addition the group has launched a campaign to support charities contributing to the Ukraine relief effort.

As someone with personal experience of conflict, my heart goes out to the Ukrainian people who are experiencing fear and uncertainty beyond the comprehension of most.

And while it should be stressed that the vast majority of Russian citizens are decent people with no desire to be at war, it is a painful truth that pressure must be brought to bear from every conceivable angle in order to drive change from within and save lives. National leaders must now show a strength which has too often been absent in recent times. But the responsibility to demonstrate our humanity and support the people of Ukraine goes beyond political figures and is the duty of us all.

The current situation has many ominous parallels in history, and nobody should be foolish enough to think that further escalation is not a possibility or that burying our heads in the sand is an option. We must all stand with the Ukrainian people in their darkest hour and exert whatever pressure we can to restore peace.



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Stirling hotel boss facing jail for sexually assaulting two female members of staff

Gary Adam “used his power as the boss” to intimidate and sexually assault employees at two hotels on the main street in Callander

By Tim Bugler

A co-owner of two hotels who preyed on and abused female members of staff is facing jail.

Gary Adam, 35, “used his power as the boss” to intimidate and sexually assault two women, an 18-year-old university student working as a waitress and a 23-year-old bartender, Falkirk Sheriff Court was told.

The incidents occurred at the Waverley hotel and the Craggs hotel, both co-owned by Adam, and opposite each other in the main street of Callander, Stirling.

Jurors heard the 18-year-old had been working for Adam for only a week when he made a pass at her while she was in another local pub playing pool, forcing her to tell him when she saw him at work that she “didn’t want to lose her job – or have sex with him”.

Within hours, however, he asked her into the office at the Waverley hotel on the “ruse” that she needed a new uniform T-shirt, pushed her against a wall, put his hand round her neck, kissed her forcibly on the lips, and tried to put his hand down the front of her jeans.

The woman told jurors he said he would “snap her like a twig”.

She said: “He’s quite strong, ex-army, and I’m five foot three.”

She left “in shock and disbe-



Sheriff Christopher Shead placed Adam on the sex offenders’ register

lief” and later that night Adam sexually assaulted her again, “touching her bum” in a darkened hotel kitchen as she bent over to get cutlery.

The incidents occurred on 8 December 2019, and the next day she gave two weeks’ notice.

The court heard Adam sexually assaulted the 23-year-old woman repeatedly in January 2020 while she was working at the Craggs hotel.

Weeping, she said he followed her into a walk-in cupboard, pulled the door so it locked behind them, then pinned her “forcibly” against the wall with two hands on her shoulders and tried to kiss her.

She said she was “frozen” and “scared” and didn’t know what to do, but a customer called from the bar, and she was able to leave.

Later Adam, who had earlier

been drinking with friends, returned alone and “a bit more drunk” and asked her for the key to one of the hotel bedrooms.

He then texted a demand that she deliver a Peroni beer to the bedroom, and after she left it outside he opened the door, grabbed her wrist, “dragged” her in, pushed her back onto the bed, held her arms above her head and tried to kiss her.

The court heard Adam later told the woman “it would never happen again”, but three weeks later he sexually assaulted her again in a car.

After a three-day trial, the jury found father-of-one Adam, a first offender, of Cambusmore, Callander, guilty of five charges of sexually assaulting the women.

He denied the offences, claiming that in some cases what the women had said did not happen, and when it had happened, it was with consent.

Prosecutor Cheryl Clark said Adam had “used fear, intimidation, physical strength, and his powerful role as their employer to manipulate the situation”.

Sheriff Christopher Shead continued bail for reports, placed Adam on the sex offenders’ register, and warned a custodial sentence would be considered.

Adam will appear again on 31 March. Defence advocate Wendy Hay reserved mitigation.

Elite Bistros set to buy first pub in Cheshire

Gary Usher’s Elite Bistros is set to acquire its first pub: the White Horse in Churton, Cheshire.

Admiral Taverns has put the freehold of the 2,375 sq ft site up for sale with a guide price of £495,000. The pub did not reopen following the onset of the pandemic in 2020 after former licensees Dave and Jackie Biles announced the business at the time was “unsustainable”.



Usher said an offer has been accepted on the venue and there was space upstairs in the pub for around five bedrooms.

The pub will join the group’s sites including Sticky Walnut in Hoole, Chester; Burnt Truffle in Heswall on the Wirral; Hispi in Didsbury, south Manchester; Wreckfish in Liverpool; Pinion in Prescott; and Kala in Manchester.

Usher has also recently teased plans to open a new tapas res-

taurant called Joya. Usher said on Twitter the group had its “eye on a few sites” and hopes to launch the concept this year.

The company is also seeking to raise £2m by selling shares to strengthen the business, create a new brand within it and open three further sites. Usher, winner of the 2021 Restaurateur of the Year – Independent Catey said the Crowdcube raise would launch on 4 April.

Hospitality fundraises for Ukraine

Hospitality operators are joining the #CookForUkraine initiative as well as hosting fundraising events and offering free accommodation to refugees to support those affected by the Russian invasion.

London operators including Imad's Syrian Kitchen in Carnaby Street, Los Mochis in Notting Hill, Bancone in Soho and Covent Garden, Brutto in Smithfield and Plants by de, Deliciously Ella's Mayfair restaurant, have joined the #CookForUkraine initiative, donating a portion of every bill to Unicef. The campaign had raised more than £10,500 at the time of writing.

Seven-strong London burger group Haché has partnered with British-Ukrainian chef and food writer Olia Hercules to donate £3 for every £13 spent on the Mamushka burger, designed by Hercules, to Unicef UK's Ukraine appeal.

Bar and restaurant group Drake & Morgan, which has 17 venues across London and Manchester, will be donating £1 of every chicken Kyiv sold to the British Red Cross this month.

Apartment group Vonder has offered free accommodation to Ukrainians and the #HospitalityHelps initiative, led by



Restaurants across the country are putting on fundraising dinners or donating money to Ukraine

Bench and PKF Hospitality, is linking hotel accommodation providers with displaced Ukraine residents.

Other big hospitality names are putting on fundraising events. On Sunday 13 March, Carousel in London's Fitzrovia will be handing over the kitchen to chef Yurii Kovryzhenko to host a Ukrainian Sunday lunch and raffle to raise money for the World Central Kitchen, which is offering food to refugees at Ukraine's borders.

On Monday 14 March, five of Rebecca Mascarenhas and Phil Howard's restaurants in Lon-

don will host fundraising dinners, including Elystan Street, Kitchen W8, Church Road, Home SW15 and Flour + Water, with guest chefs including Brat's Tomos Parry.

All donations will go to the British Red Cross Ukraine appeal and Unicef.

The Piano Works has launched a Hospitality Ukraine Appeal for the British Red Cross and its musicians are releasing a charity single cover of Mariah Carey's 'Hero'.

For the next three months, the Piano Works in the West End and Farringdon will also

be serving two cocktails, 'Sky Above Grain' and the 'Sunflower Power', with £2 from each drink going towards the appeal. Dining guests will also have the option to add a discretionary £1 per person to their bill.

And for wet-let operators, the #DrinkersForUkraine campaign is inviting breweries around the world to brew the Ukrainian Anti-Imperial Stout Resist, developed by displaced Ukrainian brewers, and to donate the proceeds to the Red Cross. The recipe is available online at www.drinkersforukraine.com.

JMG brands support Ukraine relief effort

The Caterer's parent company Jacobs Media Group has launched a campaign to support charities contributing to the Ukraine relief effort.

In addition to its own charitable donation, JMG is working with a number of companies which specialise in fundraising auctions and raffles to create a listing dedicated to luxury travel and hospitality prizes.

It has partnered with MHI Travel Media to facilitate the provision of hotel rooms and resort inventory to support the International Medical Corp, British Red Cross and Unicef UK.

JMG is urging operators keen to contribute to offer inventory which is then featured within a luxury

travel listing, hosted by auction sites Omaze and Charitybuzz, with 100% of the proceeds donated to the three charities.

The funds will contribute to providing food, first aid, clean water, shelter support, warm clothing, hygiene parcels and medicines, as well as supporting hospitals and healthcare facilities.

JMG chairman Clive Jacobs said: "With travel being impacted so deeply during Covid, we understand that for some businesses monetary donations aren't always possible. This campaign is a means for travel and hospitality businesses to make a meaningful contribution to the Ukraine relief effort and support the charities providing much

needed humanitarian aid.

"In the darkest of times, we can see the best of humanity, and I have been pleased to see the willingness of the travel and hospitality industries to play their part in standing up to this

unnecessary and unjustified invasion. I would urge all operators to consider what they can offer to this vital cause."

Those keen to donate inventory should contact Laura Schmidt at laura@weareconnections.com.



Pizzeria boss given eight-year ban after £50,000 Bounce Back Loan goes missing

By Sophie Witts

A Glasgow pizzeria boss has been given an eight-year directorship ban after he was unable to explain what a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan, issued to support businesses during the pandemic, was used for.

Ilir Bajrami, aged 61, from Glasgow, was the sole director of Kleida Pizzeria, which entered creditors' voluntary liquidation in July 2020 when it was unable to pay a substantial tax bill.

Investigators from the Insolvency Service found that Bajrami failed to co-operate with the liquidators and failed to provide company accounting records, despite numerous requests.

Due to a lack of records, no one could determine the real reason for nearly £650,000 worth of income into Kleida Pizzeria's accounts or what the company spent more than £736,000 on.

Further enquiries uncovered that the pizzeria also received



Ilir Bajrami's case was heard at Glasgow's Sheriff Court in January

a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan on 7 May 2020 to be used to help the business during the pandemic. But only seven days later, Bajrami caused the company to transfer £90,000 to an unknown account, which

included the £50,000 loan. The Insolvency Service launched disqualification proceedings and on 27 January 2022 the case appeared before Sheriff Reid in Glasgow Sheriff Court.

Bajrami was given an eight-

year disqualification after he failed to ensure Kleida Pizzeria maintained, preserved or delivered adequate accounting records.

The ban began on 24 February 2022 and means he is prevented both from directly, or indirectly, becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company, without the permission of the court.

Robert Clarke, chief investigator for the Insolvency Service, said: "The inability to account for the company's income and expenditure is made all the more serious by the fact that £50,000 of that income relates to government funds to support businesses during the pandemic, which have now disappeared."

"Ilir Bajrami has paid the price for his failure to account for that money, and has been removed from the corporate arena by the courts for a substantial amount of time."

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Female talent must be better nurtured, says Arena panel

Female talent must be better nurtured and encouraged to apply for senior roles to ensure equal gender representation in all levels of hospitality businesses.

That was according to a panel of hospitality leaders speaking at Arena's Face2Face event held last week at the Royal Lancaster London.

The all-female panel agreed that, although the sector had one of the most diverse front lines, there remained an imbalance of gender equality within leadership roles.

Oakman Group managing director Joycelyn Neve said that she often felt imposter syndrome when she started her own hospitality business.

She added: "We need to nurture female talent, and all talent, but with the awareness that women won't push themselves forward in the same way as men. We're introducing mentoring opportunities with Oak-



Kate Nicholls (fourth from left) said the fact that it was an all-female panel should not be newsworthy

man Group now so we can start having these conversations."

Aramark UK managing director Helen Milligan-Smith said she had repeatedly been asked: "How do you do the job that you do with the children?" A question, she said, that was rarely if ever levelled at men.

Sally Beck, general manager of Royal Lancaster London, added

that attitudes had to change with regard to men's responsibilities too. "Society doesn't allow men to be flexible," she said.

UKHospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls referred to the gender pay gap in hospitality, in which 58% of men are in leadership roles while 54% of women are in the lowest paid roles.

She said: "It's important to

remember how far we've come. We can see a more diverse workforce and, four years after the first report, we are much further ahead in terms of gender equality and tackling the equality in the boardroom, but we need to model the change we want to be.

"The job's not done until it stops being newsworthy that this is an all-female panel."

Eye-watering energy price hikes as operators struggle to secure provision

Some energy providers have refused to issue quotes to businesses as the Russian invasion of Ukraine causes gaps in supplies of oil and gas

By Emma Lake

Energy price hikes exceeding 200% are being reported by hospitality companies, with some energy providers refusing to even issue quotes to businesses.

Steep price increases in oil and gas, already threatening the viability of many business models, have been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Joe Cussens, managing director of the Bath Pub Company, was quoted £252,000 by his existing supplier when he came to renew the contract for the four-strong group – a 215% increase on his previous rate of around £80,000.

He said: “In normal times you go back to your provider and negotiate and you get a price a lot cheaper than what’s first quoted, but now when you speak to them they say we’re not even issuing quotes at the moment.”

“One issued a quote for two or three hours and then withdrew it again. There’s a palpable sense of panic and Ukraine is another factor disrupting the energy market. Right now, we can’t even find anyone to quote us.”

Alex Claridge, chef-patron of the Wilderness in Birmingham, has seen energy prices at his restaurant increase by 150% since 2020. On top of this he has faced a months-long struggle to find an energy supplier for a bar he is trying to open in the city’s jewellery quarter.

He told *The Caterer*: “We completed the lease in August, but it’s been carnage. We couldn’t get an electrical provider and couldn’t get a meter installed. In the end we had to hardball our landlord to pay a consultant to set up an electrical contract – it’s a 20-cover bar.”

Both operators said they feared the price hikes would make some hospitality businesses unviable. Cussens added: “I think we’ll be alright,



The hospitality industry is facing hikes in energy prices, causing operators to struggle to open venues

but this could wipe out all the profit we expect to make in the next 12 months. We will prevail, but I fear that for many other operators this could be the final nail in the coffin.

“The government spent a lot of money supporting hospitality, so it would be an awful waste to let market forces run rampant and decimate a number of those businesses now.”

The British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) has esti-

mated increased energy prices will add costs of £800m to the sector this year.

The BBPA’s chief executive Emma McClarkin said: “The pub and brewing sector is at a pivotal point in its recovery and the erosion of margins is impossible to sustain.

“We are urging the energy regulator, the providers and the government to work with us and take a more pragmatic approach with regards to the

provision of energy to the hospitality sector.”

A UK government spokesperson told *The Caterer*: “We recognise the impact rising global gas prices will have on businesses of all sizes, which is why we are in regular contact with Ofgem, business groups and energy suppliers to understand the challenges they face and see how they can best be supported.

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Ukraine invasion could impact UK food and drink prices

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could also impact food and drink prices in the UK, with the two countries making up approximately a quarter of the world’s grain exports.

In its latest market report, catering butchers Birtwistles said feed costs were expected to increase substantially, with “serious concerns” over the impact on milk and meat production in the UK, and increases already visible in EU-supplied poultry.

Dulcie Neal, buyer at craft beer retailer HonestBrew, warned the beer industry should be also prepared for further price increases or severe supply chain problems.

Svein Tore Holsether, chief executive of Norwegian chemical company Yara International, which produces nitrogen fertiliser used for food production worldwide, said that the most extreme calculations indicated that if Ukrainian farmers were unable

to add fertiliser to the soil this season, crops could be reduced by 50% by the next harvest.

In addition, 40% of Europe’s natural gas supply, which is also important to produce nitrogen, is coming from Russia, as well as 25% of Europe’s supply of nitrogen, phosphate and potash.

“The biggest sources of raw material to Europe’s food production are being subject to limitations, and there are no short-term alternatives,” warned Holsether.



RUTH HANSOM PARTNERS WITH BAXTERSTOREY TO MENTOR FEMALE CHEFS

BaxterStorey has announced the addition of Ruth Hansom to its list of chef partners, to support the training and mentoring of female chefs across the business.

Hansom, head chef at the Princess of Shoreditch in London, will work with BaxterStorey's Chef Academy to champion and inspire the next generation of women in hospitality.

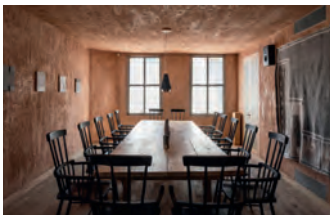
BaxterStorey will also be launching a 'women in hospitality' network for its female culinary teams, as well as opportunities for stages at the Princess in Shoreditch.

PANDEMIC WIDENS LOSSES AT DORCHESTER COLLECTION

The impact of the pandemic saw losses widen at the Dorchester Group, with revenue falling from £373.1m in 2019 to £128.9m in 2020.

This resulted in a pre-tax loss of £208.5m in 2020, having posted a £10.3m loss the prior year. The group's hotel occupancy rate was 18% compared to 60% in 2019, while the average room rate decreased from £672 to £566 and revenue per available room (revpar) decreased from £402 to £104.

MICHELIN-STARRED MÃOS RESTAURANT TO CLOSE AFTER FOUR YEARS



Michelin-starred London restaurant Mãos is to close on 30 April after four years of trading.

Owner James Brown said the restaurant had outgrown its 16-cover space in Shoreditch and the team felt they had "achieved all

that we set out to do".

Brown founded Mãos with chef Nuno Mendes in 2018 with a mission to "redefine the traditional restaurant experience" within a six-storey townhouse in Shoreditch. Its concept was initially more akin to an intimate supper club than a traditional fine dining restaurant.

Mendes stepped away from the project in 2019 and handed the reins to executive chef Edoardo Pellicano.

BOPARAN RESTAURANT GROUP TO OPEN 30 FOOD HALLS IN SAINSBURY'S STORES

Sainsbury's is to close 200 in-store cafés this spring and expand its partnership with Boparan Restaurant Group (BRG) as part of an overhaul of its in-store dining offer.

It follows the trial of the Restaurant Hub food hall at Sainsbury's Selly Oak store, which opened last July and included BRG brands Caffè Carluccio's, Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Ed's Diner and Slim Chickens.

Sainsbury's and BRG plan to open 30 more Restaurant Hubs in the next year, with the intention to accelerate the roll-out if the format remains popular.

JOHN SCANLON TO SWAP 45 PARK LANE FOR BEVERLY HILLS



John Scanlon, general manager of the Dorchester Collection's 45 Park Lane hotel in London, has been appointed to the same role at the group's Beverly Hills hotel in California.

Scanlon has been general manager of the five-red-AA-star, 45-bedrom 45 Park Lane hotel for seven years. He also managed the adjacent Mayfair Park Residences.

He will start his new role on 4 April. A successor at 45 Park Lane has not yet been announced.

SOHO HOUSE TO OPEN BRIGHTON MEMBERS' CLUB THIS MONTH

Soho House is to open its long-awaited Brighton members' club at the end of March.

Little Beach House Brighton will open in a Grade II-listed building

ROADCHEF SOLD TO MACQUARIE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Antin is selling Britain's third-largest motorway services operator Roadchef to a fund managed by Macquarie Asset Management.

Antin Infrastructure Partners has overseen the group for the last seven years. Sky News estimated the deal to be worth £900m.

Australia-based asset manager Macquarie, which formerly owned Moto, intends to support Roadchef to develop and accelerate the rollout of fast-charging infrastructure for electric vehicles across its estate.

Macquarie Asset Management's investment will also enable Roadchef to invest further in its sites, facilities and partnerships with brands such as McDonald's, Costa Coffee and Leon.



on Madeira Drive, close to Brighton Palace Pier.

It will be set over two floors and feature a Club Cecconi's restaurant, club space with bar, events spaces and a terrace pool looking out to the sea.

Planning permission for the site was granted in 2015 but updates on the status of the development have been scarce.

GORDON RAMSAY'S STREET BURGER TO OPEN FIRST RESTAURANT IN SCOTLAND



Gordon Ramsay's Street Burger brand is to open its first restaurant in Scotland in April.

The chef's company has secured a 5,600 sq ft site across two floors of Edinburgh's St James Quarter development. It will feature a games lounge and DJ booth alongside a dining area.

The Edinburgh site will be the ninth Street Burger to open since the brand launched in London's St Paul's in December 2020.

Gordon Ramsay Restaurants is on a major expansion drive, and in 2020 said it planned to open up to 50 new restaurants across the UK.

BOURNE LEISURE BUYS THE RUNNYMEDE

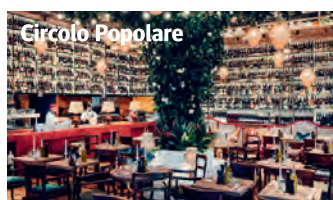
Holiday park operator Bourne Leisure has bought the Runnymede on Thames hotel in Egham, Surrey, from Ralph Trustees



for an undisclosed sum.

The Runnymede will join the group's Warner Leisure Hotels portfolio, which also includes the recently refurbished Studley Castle and Heythrop Park, which will reopen this summer following refurbishment. Bourne Leisure was bought by Blackstone last year and also owns Haven Holidays and Butlin's.

The 180-bedroom Runnymede will continue to operate as a standalone hotel prior to its relaunch under the Warner brand. Ralph Trustees had operated the property for 35 years.



BIG MAMMA GROUP TO OPEN KENSINGTON RESTAURANT

Big Mamma Group is understood to be opening a fourth London restaurant at 94 Kensington High Street.

The restaurant, to be located in what was formerly an HSBC bank, will occupy the ground, basement, mezzanine and first floors of the site. No further details have yet been confirmed on the concept or the name.

The new venue will join the group's other London restaurants: Gloria in Shoreditch, Circolo Popolare in Fitzrovia and Ave Mario in Covent Garden.

VARIOUS EATERIES POISED FOR GROWTH FOLLOWING 'YEAR OF SOLID PROGRESS'

Various Eateries, which operates the Coppa Club and Tavolino

brands across 13 locations, is poised for growth following "a year of solid progress", it announced in its financial results for the year to 3 October 2021.

Coppa Clubs in Haslemere and Bath are expected to open in the first half of 2022, with several further sites agreed or in advanced negotiation.

Various Eateries reported total group revenue for the year was up 36% to £22.3m; earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of £214,000; and a pre-tax loss of £3.7m.

THE CONNAUGHT GRILL REOPENS AFTER TWO-YEAR CLOSURE



The Connaught Grill in London reopened on 3 March after a two-year closure.

The restaurant, located in the five-red-AA-star Connaught hotel in London's Mayfair, relaunched in early 2020 but was forced to close due to the pandemic.

It is overseen by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, who also runs an eponymous restaurant within the hotel.

MOWGLI CLOSES MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY GREEN RESTAURANT



Indian restaurant group Mowgli has closed its Manchester Oxford Road restaurant following a drop in student footfall in the area.

The site opened as part of the University Green development in 2019, close to both Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan University buildings.

The group's restaurant at Manchester Corn Exchange remains open.

CONTRACT CATERING SALES STILL BELOW PRE-COVID LEVELS

Contract catering sales saw a modest recovery in the last quarter of 2021, according to CGA, but Covid-19 concerns continued to hold them well below pre-pandemic levels.

The latest edition of CGA's Contract Caterer Tracker showed sales from October to December 2021 were up by 37% on the same three months in 2020, a period when many venues served by caterers faced heavy restrictions.

However, sales were 26% below the fourth quarter of 2019, though this marked an improvement on a shortfall of 36% in the third quarter of 2021.

ROUX SCHOLARSHIP 2022 REGIONAL FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

Eighteen chefs have been selected to compete in two regional finals for the Roux Scholarship simultaneously in Birmingham and London on Thursday 24 March.

The chefs competing in London are:

- Luke Ahearne, Corrigan Collection, London
- Harry Donnelly, the RAF Club, London
- Oliver Dovey, BaxterStorey, London
- Luke Emmess, the Wykeham Arms, Winchester
- Nicholas Paul Fitzgerald, Nico Fitzgerald Restaurants, London
- Ruth Hansom, the Princess of Shoreditch, London
- Yiannis Mexis, Hide, London
- Kamil Nowak, the Dysart Petersham, Surrey
- George Ormond, Murano, London
- Liam Pride, Trinity, Cambridge
- Christos Sidiropoulos, Flemings Mayfair hotel, London
- George Whitelock, Angler, London

The chefs competing in Birmingham are:

- Kieran Bradley, the Vineyard, Stockcross, Newbury
- Michael Chwu, the Kitchen, Leith, Edinburgh
- Jonathan Ferguson, the Glenturret Lalique restaurant, Crieff
- Jake Hassall, Restaurant Martin Wishart, Edinburgh
- Steven Newton, Coast, Pembrokeshire
- Adam Pitfield, Driftwood hotel, Porscatho, Cornwall

The reserve chefs, should any finalists be unable to compete, are Fergus Wilford of London's Savoy Grill and George Fisher from Restaurant Twenty-Two in Cambridge.

The Observer

The Heathcock is a second venture from the team behind the Hare & Hounds at Aberthyn a few miles to the west of Cardiff. In its pleasingly straightforward approach to the business of feeding people well, it has a touch of St John about it. It feels as though the doctrine of chef Fergus Henderson has been read and fully understood – identify the good things, do them well – and then shaped for the space in which it finds itself.

In the evenings the food menu follows a classic starter-main model. There's lamb with Jerusalem artichokes and green sauce. There's venison with button mushrooms, roasted beetroot and blackberries.

We have butter-yellow ribbons of pappardelle with a ragu made from rabbit leg that has been braised unto collapse then given a helpful boost from handfuls of chopped tarragon. For texture it is topped with golden fried breadcrumbs. There are slices of salmon pascetti, with a dry, dense texture and a spiced and brown sugared edge, that has me dabbing at the plate for any last crumbs of the massive flavour bomb of a rub left behind on the plate.

Dainty pieces of grilled ox heart arrive perched on what has been



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Jay Rayner is pleased to return to Cardiff and discover the **Heathcock**

described as a duck fat chip. It turns out to be the same as the multi-layered, then deep-fried confit potato that we have ordered as a side. Having two portions of this on the table is no hardship. (Incidentally, I tried making these at home recently courtesy of a recipe from London's Quality Chop House, which is credited with inventing them. While delicious, they are an enormous, 24-hour faff and should be left to restaurant kitchens.) Our other side dish is hispi cabbage which, in a

radical departure, has not been chargrilled. It turns out you can just shred and butter hispi cabbage. Who knew?

For a last classical flourish, the kitchen knocks out a perfectly engorged rhubarb soufflé tasting brightly of its star ingredient. Even allowing for a pandemic-enforced gap, it's taken me a while to get back to Cardiff. After a lunch like this I can't fail but be delighted I've returned.

Price: mains (evenings), £15-£24; desserts, £7-£8.90; wines, from £19

Daily Mail

Tom Parker Bowles finds fresh fish for keen prices at **Crabshack, Worthing**

Worthing on a wan Wednesday afternoon. Sorrento, it ain't, but the place has a genteel, faded charm.

It's also home to Crabshack – a few steps back from the pebbly beach and slate-grey Channel – all bare bricks, distressed wooden flotsam and piles of paper napkins. The fish is as fresh as prices are keen, with daily specials scrawled on the board – whole plaice for £20. Flounder for £15. They pride themselves on using local fishermen, and the kitchen does justice to the quality of their catch.

Cockle and shrimp popcorn, crisp and clean, with a warm sigh of smoked paprika, is immaculate.

This is a kitchen that knows its way around the deep fryer. More prawns, cooked pil pil style with chorizo, bathed in a sprightly tomato sauce. A decent blast of chilli too. Whole dressed crab arrives on a red plastic tray, caught down the coast in Dorset (the crab, that is, not the tray), gloriously fresh and forensically picked. There are claws to crack and suck, while brown meat, all rum-swilling, sea-shanty slurping swagger, is mixed with ethereally sweet white. It's a seaside symphony of blessed simplicity.

Crabcakes contain more crab than potato, which is exactly how they should be, fat, gently fried and barely able to hold themselves together. Rather like me after a decent lunch. We drink ice-cold Muscadet, and dip good French fries into mayonnaise and watch the regulars, old and young, chitchat and hobnob with the waitresses.

Price: about £30 a head

KOFFMANN & Vines

Richard Vines and Pierre Koffmann find low-key excellence at **Wild Honey St James, London**

Wild Honey St James, which last month won a Michelin star, is a restaurant of low-key excellence, serving some of the best food in the city. Factor in reasonable prices – the lunch menu is £35 for three courses – and it's difficult to think of anywhere offering better value.

Pierre started with monk's beard agretti, soft-poached egg, sea herbs. It's basically a simple salad, but each component was well-judged, and the dressing of capers and anchovies was beautiful.

Richard's crisp Tamworth pig's head, conference pear, nduja was also 10 out of 10. These are humble, inexpensive

ingredients, but a lot of work and experience goes into a dish like this and elevates it to the level of gastronomy.

A main of Cornish cod, Jerusalem artichokes, brown butter, shrimps, aged vinegar, was also perfection. The cooking on the fish was superb, the texture exceptional. It's not something you are going to achieve through boil-in-the-bag cooking.

Roast haunch of fallow venison, grilled salsify, caramelised onion purée, wild mushrooms, was just as good. The cooking on the meat was precise, and the salsify was as good as Pierre's mother's in southwest France 60 years ago.

We just sampled the desserts, but classic lemon tart, chantilly, was exemplary, with wafer-thin pastry and only just enough sweetness. Choux craquelin bun (a cream-filled crispy choux pastry) with quince was also faultless and not too sweet.

The Daily Telegraph

I travel to Hampshire's 'Ulford' to look for a tapas place called Pulpo Negro and, to cut to the quick, so should you. It's a place of feverishly fabulous endeavour. You get that vibe the moment you walk in.

There's an open kitchen behind a tiled bar, with what I thought was an impressive number of chefs toiling in a small restaurant in a modest Hampshire town.

We began with charred bread and aioli, good enough as a dish on its own: bread, the way I like it, which at home they call burnt but I call charred, with a fresh, tangy – garlicky but not astringent – aioli. It was like a sedan chair for the accompanying plates of jamón and anchovies, the latter (boquerones de Nardin) a wonderfully decorative splash of silver, green and yellow; the oil, lemon zest and parsley generous but not glutinous.

There was a plate of mojama – salt-dried tuna – and crisp kale, the tuna too redolent of the technique than the end result for my liking. Maybe the dish would work better harbourside, in the blazing sun, firmly ashore after 10 days' hard fishing, with a sharp, cool manzanilla... but the kale was crisp and perfect.

There were also the most



glorious, fattest and supremely tasty croquetas, which were like a curtain call for the best dish of lunch: gambas al ajillo. These prawns came in an oily, rich sauce, the preparation of which ought to be the most famous thing that has ever happened in Alresford. They're that good. Ensure you have enough bread at this point and don't leave the building until you have mopped up every last drop.

They only just outshone the barbecued pulpo (octopus), as

soft as a dream with a crunch from the char and a lovely little dollop of potatoes and peas.

We did make an error in ordering a large plate of patatas bravas, drizzled with mayo and pepper and more vulgar American diner than delicate Andalucía. But our ordering was redeemed at the finish with impeccable churros: great baking, authentic, rich chocolate. I love a triumph and Pulpo Negro is that.

Price: lunch for two, £95 excluding drinks and service

William Sitwell says Pulpo Negro in Alresford is a triumph

London Evening Standard

Jimi Famurewa says the focus is on the food at London's Hawker's Kitchen

One of the first things I noticed on shuffling into Hawker's Kitchen was the tinsel. A ragged gold strip of it, twirled around a central pillar, and still somehow up despite the fact it was the end of February.

But then, if you linger in this place – a tiny Tamil Malaysian spot on Caledonian Road, open for a little while now and steadily amassing a good deal of hype – then you come to realise that those decorations act as a kind of visual humble brag; a clue that you are in the presence of a restaurant that knows it is on to a winner and duly reserves all its focus and attention for the food.

If the mention of roti canai puts you in mind of Roti King – Sugendran Gopal's reliably rammed, justly deified Euston classic – then your instincts are bang on. Hawker's Tamil Nadu-born founder Mano Muthu worked in the kitchen at that restaurant for many years.

But while the shadow of Gopal's business looms large, Hawker's doesn't take long to distinguish itself as more than merely an overflow car park for its more famous antecedent.

[The roti] are feathery-crisp and squidgy all at once: airy, multilayered delivery systems for a narcotic wave of ghee. The curries that they come with (especially the coarse lamb one,) possess a surging, brow-beating heat. I would direct you to the hallucinogenic sweetness of the scalding little cups of teh tarik.

Price: meal for two plus soft drinks, around £40

Daily Mail

Ted Thornhill vows to return to Cameron House hotel on the shore of Loch Lomond

Cameron House, a short drive north from Glasgow, is a vast property with over 600 members of staff, 140 rooms and a huge array of facilities. Still, during our two-night stay, the staff, no matter where we go, are consistently five-star friendly and attentive, seemingly sincerely proud of where they work.

Our inviting family bedroom has a room with a children's bunk bed that delights our four-and-a-half-year-old daughter, a small living room, complete with a vibrantly red sofa and matching armchairs, a master bedroom with a wonderfully luxurious king-sized

bed, a posh ensuite bathroom with separate rain shower, twin sinks and a bath (with a shower) and hipster vintage wallpaper throughout. The downsides? A slight lack of natural light. And there's a lack of a loch view.

Luckily, one can gaze upon it from several public areas, such as the swanky Cameron Grill, a two-AA-rosette restaurant that offers delicious crowd-pleasers for all ages. Our £65 three-course evening meal there is superb.

We sample two other dining options at Cameron House – the excellent Boat House (beautifully fresh oysters again), a short stroll away by a marina, and the hotel's new fine-dining venture, Tamburrini & Wishart. We go for the full tasting menu with matching wines (£175 each) and are taken into a gastronomic fantasyland.

We leave vowing to return.

Price: rooms from £295 on a B&B basis

Openings

The Joiners Arms

The Joiners Arms, a Grade II-listed building in the rural village of Bloxham, Oxfordshire, has reopened after a refurbishment by new owners Prospect Pubs.

The pub retains many of its original features and now includes an orangery restaurant, rustic bar areas and a private dining room with combined space for up to 130 diners. Outside, the terraced patio has been extended to seat 70 covers with a hidden garden and large children's play area.

The menu has been developed by head chef Mario James and is based around British pub classics and seasonal specials. The Joiners Arms also serves a Sunday roast with all the trimmings and 'old-fashioned' puddings. Drinks include local beers and ales, international beers and ciders and several locally-distilled gins, such as Cotswolds Gin.

The Joiners Arms is the sixth site for Prospect Pubs, which was founded by Dan Shotton and Mark Draper in 2019. The pair previously operated Redcomb Pubs before it was sold to Young's in 2019.

Opened 3 March

Typical dishes Braised beef cheek in red wine with creamed horseradish potato, braised shallots and roasted baby carrots; beer-battered fish and chips with mushy peas

General manager Sian Smith

Address Old Bridge Road, Bloxham, Banbury OX15 4LY

Website www.thejoinersarmsbloxham.co.uk



Extra openings



Stanwell hotel by Mercure

The 53-room Stanwell hotel by Mercure has opened close to Heathrow airport. It features a restaurant and bar, meeting rooms and offers a Park and Fly package, allowing guests to leave their car at the hotel for up to 21 days.

Opened 1 March

Room rate From £67 per night

Address 171 Town Lane, Stanwell TW19 7PW

Website <https://mercure.accor.com>



The Real Greek

The Greek restaurant chain has launched its first site in Manchester, at the Trafford Centre. It offers meze dishes, flame-grilled meats, souvlaki wraps, salads and Greek wine.

Opened 1 March

Typical dishes Lamb skewers; souvlaki with chips, tzatziki and a choice of grilled meat, halloumi, falafel or vegan jackfruit

Address Unit R8B, the Orient, Trafford Centre, Manchester M17 8EQ

Website www.therealgreek.com



Maldron hotel Manchester City Centre

The Maldron hotel brand has opened following a £43m investment. It features a restaurant, coffee shop, gym and meeting spaces.

General manager Carl Davies

Brand owner Dalata Hotel Group

Room rate From £139.20 (opening offer)

Address 60 Charles Street, Manchester M1 7DF

Website www.maldronhotelmanchestercitycentre.com



PHOTOS: TAMRACAVE NO FUSS PHOTOGRAPHY; NIC CRILLY-HARGRAVE; MARK WAUGH; PAUL CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

Please email your new openings to openings@thecaterer.com



Flesh & Buns

Japanese-style restaurant group Flesh & Buns is opening its third London site in Kensington. It will offer small plates, sashimi, ceviche, maki, poke don and its signature steamed bao buns.

Opening 11 March

Typical dishes Chicken yakitori cooked on a robata grill; smoked pork rib doused in tallow chilli honey glaze; fried squid with Japanese pepper, red chilli and lime

Address 1 Phillimore Gardens, London W8 7QB

Website www.fleshandbuns.com



Noci

Former Bancone and Locatelli chef Louis Korovilas is opening his own pasta restaurant overlooking London's Islington Green. Noci will serve a short pasta menu, the chef's take on Sicilian street food snacks and a 'seasonal spritz' priced from £5.

Opening 11 March

Typical dishes Gnocchetti with confit tomato and smoked ricotta; brown butter cacio e pepe

Address 4-6 Islington Green, London N1 2XA

Website www.nocirestaurant.co.uk



Butchies

Butchies is bringing its buttermilk fried chicken sandwiches to London's Ealing with a site in the Ealing Filmworks development this month. It will have space for 45 guests inside and 20 outdoors.

Opening 19 March

Typical dishes Butch 'hot shake' fries with hot chicken salt and spice blend; buffalo wings; halloumi fries with hot chilli honey

Address 14 Bond Street, Ealing, London W5 5AA

Website www.butchies.co.uk



David Moore
Founder and owner,
Pied à Terre

The customer is sometimes wrong

You've got to admire the lengths some people will go to for a free lunch, says, **David Moore**

Inside track

The Innkeepers Act of 1878 came in very handy recently. You'll be scratching your heads, saying what is Moore talking about now? Well, this particular Act has ridden to my rescue on two occasions in my career and it struck me that the wider industry might be glad to know of its existence.

I was informed of the Act while at Blackpool Catering College back in the day. It is the innkeepers entitlement, and that translates, in modern day hospitality, to having the right of lien; to be entitled to hold on to a customer's belongings if they fail to pay the contracted bill.

A few weeks ago, we had a very tricky couple dining with us who I suspect had planned

much. I guess he Googled and saw that this act was a real thing and his enthusiasm for sitting up all night faded.

He attempted to chip at the bill, but I was not in the mood for compromise. He then insisted on possession of the coats before paying; it turned into a Checkpoint Charlie situation, with the coats in close proximity held by a staff member while payment was made. You can imagine his language as he left.

Why do people bother trying this on? I have uncovered some weird attempts to defraud us. There was the table with the joke blood capsule and their claim of biting on glass, but I figured them out and they had to pay; our dine and dash customers featured in the *Evening Standard* – they did not pay, but

“I have uncovered some weird attempts to defraud us. There was the table with the joke blood capsule and their claim of biting on glass, but I figured them out and they had to pay”

to try and duck out of paying the full bill by complaining about the quality of our produce from the start. They were on course seven of the 10-course tasting menu when the gent started to complain about the meal. Please note that they had eaten everything up to this point.

He was particularly nasty and it was good that I was there to deal with him. When the waiter talked with him about our produce, the diner could not articulate what his problem was. He subsequently offered a derisory amount, saying that was what it was worth. This conversation went on for some time and his partner called the police during our exchange. He said he was happy to sit all night if need be and that they would not pay a penny more than his offer.

I then informed him of the Innkeepers Act of 1878, which allows me to hold belongings of a customer in response to non-payment and to sell them as needed without redress to the customer. I removed two coats, two hats and two scarves to the office, though they would not have fetched

he spent time in Pentonville prison. And then there is the woman who comes in twice a year with a dry cleaning ticket saying she had been told to pop in by a staff member to be paid for a spillage from some weeks before, and a Mr Bell, who wrote to Pied à Terre and L'Autre Pied with the same complaint, the same week, asking for dinner for one by way of compensation. How sad must they all be, but perhaps we make it too easy for them. Let's wise up.

We are about to celebrate International Women's Day as I am writing this, so I want to sign off with a huge thank you to the incredible women that make Pied à Terre what it is, day in and day out. The curtain goes up eight shifts a week and I have never been more proud of the food and service we offer. All the senior front of house roles are filled by an amazing bunch of women in the industry. Thank you all; I'm blessed to have you working with me.

And finally, our thoughts and prayers at Pied à Terre are with the people of Ukraine.



From left: Chanel Owen, sommelier; Emelyne Boutoille, head waiter; David Moore; Valerie Woods, accounts; Ciara Naughton, customer relations manager; and Suze Allen, operations manager



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How hoteliers can survive and thrive

Now is the time to throw off the restrictions of the past two years and concentrate on what we do best – being hoteliers, says *Giles Fuchs*

In its UK Hotels Forecast for 2021-2022, professional services firm PwC predicted that revenue per available room in London could return to 86% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year. And some hotels in the regions could (say it quietly) return to 100%.

But Covid has cast a long shadow and the end of the year can seem like a long way off for businesses that have already had so many setbacks to overcome. So how can hotels navigate 2022?

There are several steps hoteliers can take to survive and thrive, but their foremost considerations should be maintaining their awareness of guests' needs and looking at the sector's most urgent issues with a strategic, long-term view.

Prepare for challenges old and new

Ever-increasing oil and gas prices are creating concerns about energy costs for businesses and consumers alike this winter, while the phased changes in the rate of VAT have also affected hospitality firms. Hoteliers must unfortunately account for the impact of cost increases that may be beyond their control, at the same time as focusing on solutions to the issues they do have the power to resolve.

Labour shortages have blighted the sector throughout the past couple of years and have led to an above-inflation increase in wages that is likely to affect businesses this year. However, raising wages will only go so far in the fight to attract staff – employees will only stick around if they feel they have a career in hospitality.

Luckily, employers can provide precisely



“Few consumers will be drawn to a business that does not intimately understand their needs”

that. Supporting early-career workers to develop the skills they need to progress, providing continuing professional development opportunities for staff, and investing in formal training programmes that improve the esteem of the profession will

all help keep recruits engaged. These measures should be built into businesses' long-term plans so that staff can see they really are a priority.

Understand your audience

Knowing your guests is paramount before they even walk through the foyer. Indeed, few consumers will be drawn to a business that does not intimately understand their needs. As Omicron is tamed and international travel gathers momentum, UK hotels again face competition from overseas hotels. Marketing your hotel effectively to your core audience is vital for filling rooms.

And once you know the ingredients of your guest profile, you will be able to craft the recipe. At Burgh Island, for instance, we share our guests' growing appetite for sustainable cuisine, and therefore ensure that 80% of our products are sourced from within a 30-mile radius of the hotel. Special features such as this will help hotels stand out amid stiff competition.

Invest in the future

Developing an agile strategy and buttressing relationships with guests will be the twin pillars of hospitality businesses' recovery in 2022. Indeed, they have always been fundamental tenets, but after the tumult that the sector has experienced, wouldn't we all breathe a sigh of relief if the industry finally began to resemble its old self in 2022?

Giles Fuchs is the owner of Burgh Island hotel, Bighury-on-Sea, South Devon

Jobs of the week

This week we have a range of roles including at a luxury golf club and hotel in Loch Lomond and as a cleaning contractor manager in London. Chef roles are available by the sea on the island of Bermuda or closer to home in Herne Bay. Happy job hunting wherever you are!

Loch Lomond Golf Club has a clubhouse within a Georgian mansion, 51 suites, lodges and cottages, along with a spa and gym.

The club has a range of roles available, including for a **concierge**. This will involve taking care of the

members' private gated entrance and driving the on-site minibus. You should have previous similar experience and exceptional **customer care skills**.

The club is also looking for **full- and part-time spa therapists**. Therapists will set up treatment rooms and perform body treatments, facials and massages, along with some beauty treatments. You should have an **HNC and HND in beauty therapy** and experience in a luxury spa. Knowledge of Ishga and Germaine de Capuccini would be advantage.

The club is also looking for

four staff members for its golf operations department between mid-March and the end of October. You will welcome members and guests and park their cars, as well as **transport golf clubs and luggage** around the site. You should be able to provide five-star service.

Cleaning contractor business Sidekick requires **operational managers** with management aspirations. This is a mobile role as you will manage a workforce of 50 in **multiple central London locations**, with site visits forming part of the day-to-day role.

Bakers looking for a change of scene may want to apply for a role with the **Take Five group in Bermuda**. You will manage a team of pastry chefs, preparing dessert items and bread, and research and develop recipes. As the recruiter says, the quality of life on the island is high, and the **living taxes are low**.

The **Four Fathoms in Herne Bay in Kent** is looking for a **chef**. This role comes with the opportunity to **own 50% of the restaurant** with no financial outlay, in a role that promises long hours but great rewards.



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Loch and key

In the heart of the Highlands sits the Torridon hotel – a remote countryside getaway. *Karen Peattie* talks to owner Rohaise Rose-Bristow about recent refurbishments that honour the hotel's heritage



Rohaise Rose-Bristow

A long sweeping driveway leads to the Torridon – a striking 19th-century former hunting lodge – nestled in the remotest of landscapes.

It is the UK's most northerly five-red-AA-star hotel, deep in the Scottish Highlands near the village of Achnasheen in Wester Ross – and even that's half an hour by car. However, with Inverness just an hour away, it has the benefit of being both remote and accessible at the same time.

The Torridon overlooks the sea loch that bears its name, and with 58 acres of parkland it is an ideal destination for lovers of the great outdoors, offering opportunities to hike, bike and kayak, not to mention climb mountains – there are three ranges to the north of Glen Torridon, each boasting two Munros, meaning they have peaks of more than 3,000 feet.

Put simply, this area is one big outdoor playground, as Monica Galetti and Giles Coren discovered when they visited in series three of BBC Two's *Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby*. The episode screened in the summer of 2020, when the country was emerging from the first lockdown and, not surprisingly, it created huge interest and a resulting influx of bookings.

"It was fantastic to be on the series," says owner Rohaise Rose-Bristow. "We were privileged to be one of the hotels featured. It's

"If it gets people talking and gets that conversation going, then I'm happy"

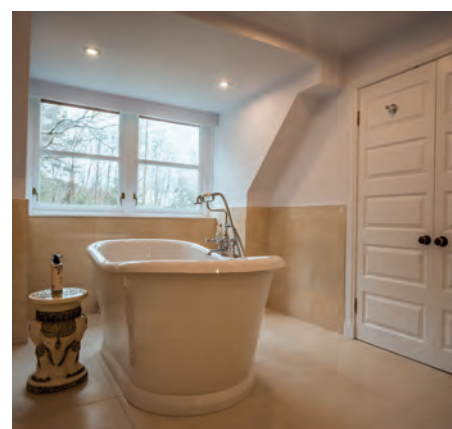
Rohaise Rose-Bristow

helped us – so has the North Coast 500 [touring route], which has always been there but with some clever marketing has really put the north-west Highlands on the tourist map. We're a proud pitstop for many drivers."

The North Coast 500 is Scotland's answer to Route 66. The Torridon sits on the scenic coastal drive, which starts and ends at Inverness Castle, looping round the Black Isle, Easter Ross, Caithness, Sutherland and then Wester Ross. NC500, as it is known, is described as one of the world's best drives. Indeed, the Torridon, in a collaboration with Morgan cars and Pride of Britain hotels, offers motor enthusiasts the chance to hire a classic car to drive it.

Inside the hotel Rose-Bristow is relieved that the recent design upgrade of three of its 18 bedrooms was completed in time for reopening in February. But she admits that finishing the project did come pretty close to the wire.





Tartan-free trimmings

Rose-Bristow's parents bought the Torridon in 1992 and, after managing the hotel for five years, she and her husband, Dan, bought it in 2004. Since then, the couple have completely refurbished the property and their current business strategy sees them redesign three bedrooms each year on rotation.

The expectation of a country house hotel is log fires and sumptuous sofas to sink into with a dram after a bracing walk in the hills or a long drive. Guests staying at the Torridon can certainly expect some of that – but don't expect to see tartan everywhere.

So, is she happy with the results of this

makeover? The answer is a resounding yes, given all the decisions are down to her. "If I'm not happy, I can't blame anyone," she laughs.

Twelve bathrooms have also been refurbished in the most recent tranche of work, which Rose-Bristow admits has been "challenging" for many reasons. "We're fortunate in that we have a good relationship with local tradespeople, although bear in mind that 'local' here means Inverness, which is 60 miles away, so everyone travels a fair distance to get here," she points out.

"The pandemic had a knock-on effect in that things were late in arriving and there were occasional delays and sometimes we've had

to deal with bad weather, but on the whole it went well as we'd planned carefully and had all the dates in the diary."

Are there any particular themes? "Ten years ago, I tended to go with what was on-trend, but now I'm keen to create classic designs that stand the test of time, with interiors that have longevity, prints that provoke a conversation and get our guests asking questions – that's what inspires me," says Rose-Bristow.

"I'm often asked where I get my inspiration from and the truth is it comes from everywhere: a magazine, Instagram, I might spot a piece of fabric I absolutely fall in love with or a picture will catch my eye in an antique or vintage shop in Beaulieu. It doesn't have to be expensive but if I like it and can imagine where it could go and how it might look, that's what inspires me."

Clearly, the location of the Torridon plays a part. "There would be something wrong with me if I wasn't inspired by our surroundings, so I always give a nod to what we can see when we look out of our windows. But, at the same time, we want to make the rooms contrast with what is outside."

Ultimately, though, it's all about comfort and practicality, she adds. "Our rooms have to have the wow factor but guests have to be able to relax. The room has to be functional and everything in it has to work for that particular space." That means Egyptian cotton sheets and duck down feather duvets as standard along with Cowshed toiletries and, of course, WiFi. ▶



Dan and Rohaise Rose-Bristow

PHOTOS: MATT BUCKLEY

“When someone complains, you can guarantee it’s about the WiFi – it’s always about the WiFi,” she laughs. “But that’s important to people, they might need to work, they need to keep in touch. Then again, we are in the middle of nowhere, so it might be difficult to get a signal and it is an old building.”

Rustic rooms

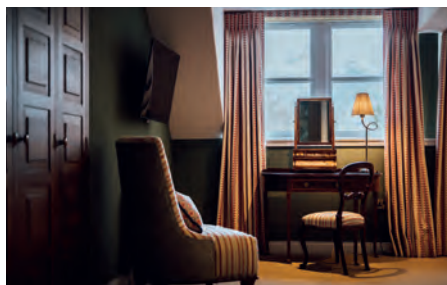
Dealing with an old building that requires constant maintenance is also a challenge – as is its geography. “No two rooms are the same; there are loads of nooks and crannies,” Rose-Bristow points out. “It can be a challenge working out what to do with an awkward space in a room that doesn’t have a conventional shape.”

That’s where skilled tradespeople come into the equation. For example, Dannie Rusling is a furniture maker who specialises in bespoke pieces and has been working with the Torridon for a few years now.

Rose-Bristow says: “I love working with people like Dannie who will throw their own ideas into the mix because the results can often far exceed your original expectations. It’s also about sustainability and upcycling, repairing items rather than replacing them,” she continues, referring to Emma Duff, a French polisher and furniture repairer who has a studio in Portmahomack, a village in Easter Ross.

“I’ve had two beautiful Victorian wardrobes – which were rattling – restored and they look amazing. Emma has also revitalised our stairs and antique floors. I think authenticity is important, particularly with an old building like this. It’s perfectly possible to find that balance between old and new.”

Rose-Bristow has also recovered sofas and chairs and uses the services of a local interior designer and upholsterer. “If they’re in perfectly good condition then there’s no need to



“It never stops. We never rest on our laurels”

Rohaise Rose-Bristow

replace them. I love combining different colours and textures – stripes and checks, florals and so on,” she says. “I don’t think anything is out of bounds. Ten years ago, we’d have maybe two or three colours in a room – now it’s 20.

“It’s fair to say that colour is definitely back and I think that while old buildings like this have a duty to retain and enhance their original features, who says you can’t have colour and experiment? I always accept that there will be people who love aspects of what we’ve done here and people who don’t, but if it gets people talking and gets that conversation going, then I’m happy.”

Wallpaper can be divisive but it can add warmth and interest to a room when it’s done well. In a nod to the hotel’s heritage, Rose-Bristow has chosen Cole & Son’s Byron wallpaper for the 1887 Master Suite, which is named



after the year in which the house was built.

“This is a very grand room with its own staircase, so obviously it’s going to be very special,” says Rose-Bristow. The original house was called Ben Damph House and was built by William King-Noel, the first Earl of Love-



Staff for success

Beyond design creating an elegant yet cosy environment requires knowledgeable staff. In torrid times for hospitality, which have seen people leave the industry because of the pandemic, Brexit or a career change, the Torridon's passion for training and nurturing its team has put it in good stead. Its five-star service programme and in-house leadership and management programme was put in place to help staff both professionally and personally. That foresight means that the core team is strong and settled.

"We encourage our people to develop with us, and if someone leaves the Torridon to move to a promoted post elsewhere, then that gives us much pride," says Rose-Bristow. Many staff live on-site and can enjoy a country lifestyle in the heart of the Highlands – definitely a bonus for those who enjoy outdoor activities.

The chefs also enjoy the freedom that the estate provides, with head chef Paul Green and his team able to use fresh produce in season from its two-acre kitchen garden, and Highland beef, Tamworth pork and chicken from the on-site farm.

The Torridon's website describes it as "a place like no other" and for Rose-Bristow the hope is that the latest refurbishment cements that statement. She's already planning her upgrade of three more bedrooms and there will be a refurbishment of the drawing room and the Bo & Muc Brasserie too.

"It never stops. We never rest on our laurels," she says. "We do a couple of big projects every year and although we put a couple of projects off during the pandemic, our view is that it's important to invest for the future."

lace, who married Ada Lovelace, the renowned scientist.

"I've picked up on that history in the 1887 suite and tapped into that era of peacocks and vibrant colours, with rich textures such as velvet," she says.

Each room has its own character. "We have many regular guests who always want to stay in the same room. The worry, though, is if they will still like the room after it's been refurbished. There is always feedback and we welcome that, but regulars do tend to consider that a room is 'their' room and are disappointed if it's not available – but then we do have just the 18 rooms."

The Torridon has a mix of superior and deluxe rooms and suites as well as the Stables, which offers 12 rooms, and the Boat House, which is available for private hire.





Count the cost

The new calorie labelling regulations are set to come into force in April, with some operators already ready to go and others despairing at yet more costly demands. *Rosalind Mullen reports*

In its bid to tackle obesity and make it easy for people to make healthier food choices, the government is introducing legislation this April to ensure that hospitality businesses who employ more than 250 people display calorie information on their menus (*see panel*).

Some might argue the timing is cruel; others that it is not the business of the hospitality industry to police what the public eats. Still others might say that consumers will eat what they want anyway.

There is even criticism that it may be detrimental to customers with eating disorders, with charities such as Beat saying it has potential for harm. Whatever you think, the new calorie labelling legislation is not going away.

The fact that it applies to those who employ more than 250 people means it mainly impacts fast-food empires, restaurant and pub chains, and contract caterers. But even for these bigger players it does add an extra layer of cost and red tape.

"The timing really couldn't be any worse," says UKHospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls. "This is a hugely challenging moment for the hospitality industry, with businesses already battling on several fronts as they strive to recoup Covid-19 losses: staff shortages, operating cost pressures, crippling debt levels and depleted cash reserves, not to mention the looming triple-whammy of April VAT, rents and business rates increases." Operators agree.

Penalty charge

Sally Grimes, equality standards manager at workplace contract caterer Bartlett Mitchell, now known as BM, says: "There is clearly a significant obesity issue in the UK and we welcome any measures to tackle this. However, the impact of this legislation, at a time when the hospitality industry is facing major financial and recruitment challenges due to the pandemic, isn't ideal."

The regulations will carry non-compliance penalties of £2,500, and while UKHospitality has been working to ensure the sector is able and prepared, it has long called for a delay to their implementation. It is pressing for an enforcement grace period of at least six months post-April to allow businesses that



Kate Nicholls, chief executive at UKHospitality

Need to know

Rules around the new Calorie Labelling (Out of Home Sector) (England) regulations

- The regulations are due to come into force in April 2022
- Any business with 250 or more employees has to provide calorie labelling on menus. This includes individual franchise outlets, provided that the wider franchisor has more than 250 employees
- It includes food and hot beverages that are sold on a website or mobile app
- Food that is sold through third-party delivery companies may need to display information at the point of choice, including: the energy content of the food in kilocalories (kcal); the size of the portion; and the statement that “adults need around 2,000 kcal a day”
- Calorie content can be based on manufacturer’s analysis, calculations from known or average values in ingredients, or calculations from generally accepted data sets
- Exempt food includes specials that are on the menu for fewer than 30 days and children’s menus
- Exempt businesses include hospitals, educational institutions for pupils below the age of 18, care homes and military establishments
- You could be served with an improvement notice and, if you fail to comply, you may have to pay a penalty of £2,500

For more detailed information, go to:
www.gov.uk or www.ukhospitality.org.uk

“The implementation of new labelling has no impact on our chef’s creativity or the diversity of menus we can offer”

Peter Kent, Baxter Storey

are only just starting to recover time to get to grips with the legislation and ensure they’re not unduly punished should they fall foul.

“It’s unfair to expect businesses that have barely survived the past two years to now implement complicated and costly new labelling when they’ve much more pressing matters to attend to, including filling the gaping hole of staffing shortages as they prepare – at long last – to recoup some of their huge losses,” says Nicholls

“There also needs to be candid dialogue between hospitality businesses and their local authorities, based on the recently published UKHospitality FAQs, with councils acknowledging the difficulties operators will surely face when trying to comply with the new rules. And there must be a consistent approach across the country. It would be wrong to see businesses in one region punished more harshly than those in another.”

Obesity matters

The government contends that the law, which requires large businesses to display the calorie information of non-prepacked food and drinks prepared for immediate consumption, will deliver benefits over the long term by reducing obesity and thus the demand on the NHS



Sally Grimes, equality standards manager at BM

– to the tune of £6.1b a year. To justify the legislation, it has stacked up the statistics – for instance, one-third of children in England are obese by the age of 11 and two-thirds of adults in the UK are overweight or obese, increasing the likelihood of developing Type 2 diabetes, cancers and other diseases.

It believes overconsumption can be exacerbated by eating out or buying takeaways, stating: “Research suggests that eating out accounts for 20%–25% of adult energy intake, and that when someone dines out or eats a takeaway meal they consume, on average, 200 more calories per day than if they eat food prepared at home. Data also tells us that portions of food or drink that people eat out or eat as takeaway meals contain, on average, twice as many calories as equivalent retailer own-brand or manufacturer-branded products.”

In addition, the government says there is public support for the move. A Public Health England survey found that nearly 80% of respondents were in favour of calorie labelling, while a survey from Diabetes UK showed that around 60% of the public said they would be more likely to eat at an establishment that offered calorie labelling on its menus.

Certainly, the pandemic has put health at the forefront of the nation’s minds, particularly in the wake of reports estimating that 63% of adults in the UK are at increased risk of disease and becoming seriously ill with Covid as a result of being overweight.

Many operators, however, already offer ►

healthy menu options and are sceptical that providing calorie information will curb obesity.

"The sector has been making great strides in voluntarily offering healthy options based on what diners want to see on menus," says Nicholls. "What calorie labelling can do, though – with the co-operation of our sector – is helping guide people gently towards healthier eating choices. This legislation will ultimately play a small part in the wider efforts to reduce obesity."

Grimes points out that BM already promotes healthy eating at its contracts, signing up to Peas Please to encourage customers to eat more vegetables and running its own Delicious and Responsible Eating programme: "We've worked hard over the years to ensure we are offering balanced choices alongside promotional activity that helps to raise awareness of healthy eating and overall wellbeing."

The new legislation will increase administration, requiring businesses to display the energy content of the food in kilocalories (kcal) and the size of the portion at point of sale, which will entail the reorganisation of processes, more training and further investment in software.

"It's unfair to expect businesses that have barely survived the past two years to now implement complicated and costly new labelling"

Kate Nicholls, UKHospitality

Grimes says it is even more far-reaching than that: "The impact [is] significant for all obligated catering settings – not just in funding systems to provide the information, but also supplier declarations, labour to support recipe systems, menu development, planning of recipes and so on. The whole industry



has spent a considerable amount of time and resource to prepare for this."

Calorie calculations

Certainly, software will help. Contract caterer Baxter Storey had started putting new systems and training in place ahead of the introduction of Natasha's Law in the autumn, including a Nutritics software system.

"This allows all our suppliers to input details of their ingredients to each product they supply," says regional managing director Peter Kent. "This information is uploaded onto a central system and our teams create menus using this extensive database. This technology has been in place across our business for some time now, and we will be using this to include calorie calculations based on cooking methods and ingredients."

The caterer also recently recruited a plant-based chef-consultant, Kirk Haworth, to strengthen training in how to promote wellbeing through cooking techniques and ingredients.

"The implementation of new labelling has no impact on our chef's creativity or the diversity of menus we can offer," says Kent. "Our chefs are entrepreneurial, monitoring food trends with a deep understanding of individual client and location needs... and we have seen the demand for healthy, nutritionally balanced options increase."

This chimes with Grimes's view that experienced operators have enough expertise to keep menus interesting, despite the legislation.

"Chefs in our sector are well-versed in adapting menus; this is where our training over the years has been crucial," she says, "but we will need to be mindful of the restrictions enforced by the legislation."

The big question is whether the new legislation will affect consumer decisions. BM has 20 years' experience of providing healthier options on its menus, so what has the business noticed about customer habits?

For a start, Grimes is sceptical about the approach. "Obesity is known to be an issue most often starting in childhood," she says. "The legislation hasn't included co-educational settings under 18 years. It's important to continue providing overall education in schools –

Case study: Itsu on why it's hard work but worth it

Chief customer officer Neil Miller on why Itsu has been displaying the calories in its Asian-inspired dishes since 2007.

Why did you start highlighting nutritional information?

It's important to us and our customers. We're on a mission to make delicious, nutritious food affordable and fast. We steam food and we use lots of fresh greens and omega-packed fish.

How easy is it to provide calorie labelling on menus?

Every Itsu has its own kitchen led by a team of graduated pros. Our pros ensure everything is correct to the recipe. This, in turn, ensures that the calories displayed on our menus are correct. We work closely with our fresh vegetable and protein suppliers to ensure all of our ingredient

specifications are kept up to date.

We often change dishes and ingredients, so it's an ongoing challenge, but we believe it's worth it. We are moving to digital kiosks, which mean we no longer have to reprint our fridge labels when ingredients or dishes change.

Should companies that haven't ever listed calories expect to make a financial outlay in software and staff?

Yes. It takes a huge amount of dedication and a lot of time, but it's worth it.

Does the extra work hinder any changes you make to dishes?

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Spring Cycle (Cycle) > Food Menu (Menu) > BURGERS (Section)

	Category	Dish	Retail	Menu	Claims	Status
3	Burgers	Cajun Chicken Fajita Burger Contains: Gluten, Sesame, Soya Cajun chicken breast topped with pan-fried peppers and onions in Cajun spices.	£7.45	BURGERS		
7	Burgers	Chippy Tea Burger Contains: Gluten, Celery, Crustaceans, Fish, Milk, Mustard, Sesame, Soya Half a hand-battered fish fillet, topped with mushy peas and two pieces of scampi. Served with chips, curry sauce and without lettuce and tomato.	£7.25	BURGERS		
1	Burgers	Classic Cheese Burger Contains: Gluten, Celery, Milk, Mustard, Sesame, Soya, Sulphites Beef burger with a breadcrumbed oozing mozzarella cheese slice.	£9.99	BURGERS	Award Winning	
6	Burgers	Crispy Buffalo Chicken Contains: Gluten, Celery, Milk, Sesame, Soya Three buttermilk chicken goujons coated in a kickin' Buffalo sauce.	£6.60	BURGERS	Farm Assured	

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◀ this is the foundation of the solution.”

As for customer habits, she says: “Guests will continue to choose to have healthier days and less healthy days – fish and chips Friday isn’t going anywhere,” says Grimes.

“Like all caterers, we’ve offered varied choices for quite some time. People are more informed and knowledgeable about their own health and wellbeing at work...They are able to make conscious decisions about what they eat. We don’t expect that putting calories on a menu will significantly change customer behaviours.”

Offering versus demand

Kent agrees that while the legislation might help customers to make an informed choice,

consumer demand is key: “The customer is in control of the choices they make, and we will continue to offer a balance of options, including a range of portion sizes, ingredients and cooking techniques,” he says.

This is backed up by operators that already provide calorie information voluntarily. A spokesman at Wagamama, which has long provided kilocalories per serving and per 100g on its website, says the law requiring the 130 noodle bars to now display the information at point of sale will have only a marginal effect on its customers’ decisions.

“[This is] partly because we are already open about the content of our food, including calories, and also because we know in most instances, eating out is a treat and people tend to balance things elsewhere on any given day.”

And he adds Wagamama has systems in place to update nutritional information, which means chefs don’t think twice about changing dishes. “Our chefs remain as creative as they ever were and will continue to innovate.”

Several other players also list calories. Wetherspoon has been putting them on its menus since 2012; KFC uses menu boards; Nando’s, Wagamama and PizzaExpress share information on their websites; and Itsu has been doing it since 2007 (see panel).

These chains chose to do it and clearly make it work. Ultimately, though, the legislation is yet another hurdle for many businesses that are just starting on the road to recovery post-Covid.

Grimes sums up sentiment across the industry: “For us caterers, while we welcome any widespread strategy to tackle obesity, the move is going to increase cost to a sector that has been decimated by the pandemic. The spirit of the legislation is fantastic, [but] the timing isn’t helpful.”

Case study: Alexis Gauthier on personal experience

Alexis Gauthier is no stranger to being ahead of the curve. In 2015, the former Michelin-starred chef started phasing in vegan menus and now offers a purely vegan menu at both of his London restaurants, the fine-dining Gauthier Soho and casual-dining 123V in Fenwicks on Bond Street in London.

But way before that, in spring 2011, he started publishing calories on his menus. The trigger was a health scare, after he was diagnosed with fatty liver disease.

“I realised it was due to my uncontrolled ‘chef’s diet’ of tasting very rich foods packed with hidden calories every day. I simply didn’t know the real impact of what I was consuming,” says Gauthier.

His doctor advised that he should regulate his calorific input, which improved his health.

“I thought, this is important and useful information, much like you find on any food labelling today in a supermarket. Surely this is my duty to give this information to customers? There is an impact on the body resulting from eating any food.”

He says adding calorie information has attracted “almost zero negativity” from customers. “Some people do ignore them. That’s fine. But for the people who find it useful, then it’s wonderful.”

And he stresses that he doesn’t compromise his creativity – in fact, some of his tasting menus can have 1,900 calories – almost a day’s intake. “I am not working for the calorie counting committee, I do this purely because I thought my customers might find it helpful,” he says.

Gauthier, who as a small operator will not have a legal obligation under the new law, says it is an easy enough process.

“Every ingredient has a calorific quantity. We simply work it out. Also, there are many apps that list everything and can do the work for you,” he says.

But he concedes: “We are small and factor this into the production. Other restaurants might find it more difficult.”



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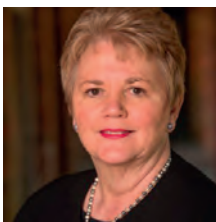


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Paul Matthews

Game

The hunt is on as *James Stagg* joins a shoot party to learn about game's credentials as a sustainable, nutritious and delicious protein

A horn rings out across Exmoor as a line of hunters raise their shotguns to the sky in preparation for a pheasant or partridge to cross their sights. These enthusiasts are taking part in a sport that has had a dedicated following for generations and become increasingly popular in recent years as people from all walks of life seek to experience something unique.

The targeted birds are reared sustainably and their presence on the land tends to have an environmental gain, while their habitats are conserved. Moreover, their meat is some of the most nutritious and healthy around and in the right hands can be delicious. So why does it appear so rarely on restaurant menus?

It's a question that Jon Ball, co-owner of the Bulland shoot near Taunton is keen to address. He hosts guns (which is how those who shoot game for sport are known) at a converted barn in the beautiful Somerset countryside, and he has invested not only in the local environment, but also in the hospitality to ensure guests



changer



Korean-style buttermilk fried pheasant



“We’re trying to educate people that it’s a healthy, lean meat from birds that are well looked after”

Jon Ball



have a relaxing experience and enjoy the game at its finest. To that end he has recruited chef Paul Matthews, an Acorn Award winner with high-level experience in fine dining, working at the likes of Restaurant Associates, CH&Co and Vacherin. Since joining, Paul has been developing creative menus that highlight the diversity of game meat.

“Historically game has been hung too long, which doesn’t suit people’s tastes,” Ball explains. “In years gone by pheasants were hung for a week to 10 days, but that makes it too strong. We’re trying to educate people that it’s a healthy, lean meat from birds that are well looked after. What we do shows that, with the right knowledge, the product can be fantastic.

“Most of our birds will go to the continent, which is a real shame. Game is affordable. Are chefs afraid of cooking it? Partly, chefs think it’s aggravation and the concern is people won’t eat it. The problem is that customers are scared away from it, as the last time they had game it had been hung for too long, having been left in the game larder for a week and had gone green.”

Game plan

To highlight just how versatile game can be Ball has employed Matthews to serve his guns dishes that celebrate the birds from the shoot. Matthews, who was previously head chef at contract caterer Vacherin, found himself out of work prior to the pandemic and started his own consultancy business just before being ►

Paul Matthews

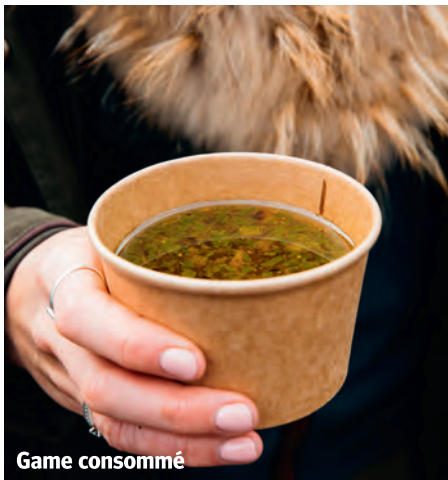
Paul Matthews’ career began as an apprentice at Roux Fine Dining, learning his trade under some of the finest in the industry. He then moved to Restaurant Associates where he held a number of roles, including playing a part in the launch of Roux at Parliament Square in London.

“I was working for a law firm with Vacherin for two years,” he explains. “Then I received my Acorn Award [in 2016] shortly after becoming a finalist of the Roux Scholarship and spent another four years with them.”

Matthews lost his job when CH&Co merged with Vacherin just before the pandemic, which put an end to any further opportunities for some time.

“That gave me the push to start my own company,” he adds. “And that was where Xpression Dining was born. During lockdown I was making sourdough from my house as well as doughnuts and sausage rolls – the demand was so high I couldn’t make enough of them. That’s when Glenn Shearing, the shoot manager of Bulland got in touch with me regarding a private dinner for his 30th birthday.”

That was last summer and since then Matthews has been impressing all of the guns at Bulland Shoot.



Game consommé



Game sausage rolls

◀ spotted by Bulland shoot manager Glenn Shearing when he catered for a private dinner.

"I took the job in September and went straight into the shoot season, literally on my own," Matthews explains. "I've never been in the shooting industry before. It was a shock to the system, but it was just incredible."

While Matthews was used to preparing game in his city roles, he never had the luxury of hand-selecting the very best produce, alongside being given the opportunity to use it across an entire menu. When the guns arrive on the eve of a shoot, they are presented with a feast of game, including canapés such as crumpets with confit pheasant, smoked Cheddar curd, caramelised onions and crispy shallots; game scotch eggs; mallard tartare on a beetroot tapioca cracker; porcini and partridge crumble; and bacon butter-roasted pheasant with black truffle mash.

Meaty cooking

While employing all his classical training to draw the most flavour out of the meat, Matthews is also mindful of making sure the game is as fresh as possible, thereby not displaying any of the 'funky' characteristics that some may associate with it.

"We defeather the birds ourselves and hang them for at least 12 hours, but we want to use them as soon as we can," he explains. "I like to use it after 12 hours but within 24 hours, as it's so much lighter in flavour and taste and it's

"There's limited carbon footprint on it, it's highly nutritious, full of protein and there's no waste"

Paul Matthews



Supporting the local economy

The sport of shooting can be a target for animal rights groups, but at Bulland they are seeking to dispel any outdated perceptions by working with the local community as well as ensuring impeccable animal husbandry and conservation.

"Shooting is seen as an elitist sport and one that only the rich do, which may put people off the meat," says shoot co-owner Jon Ball. "But we have so many different people on shoots, it's a day in the countryside with friends."

"Unfortunately some shoots go out all day and then return to cook a piece of beef. That's what people need to understand. If we're to go out shooting, we have to be eating it."

Shoots also bring a considerable amount of money to the local economy, typically in slower

times of the year outside of the tourist season.

"The beaters and the picker-ups are employed and all of the local accommodation gets booked too," Ball adds. "The pubs around here would otherwise be empty in the winter. For the guns it's their trip out and they like to enjoy themselves. They tend to spend far more money than your typical tourist and people need to understand what the shooting community brings to an area."

There's also a great sense of competition among the guns, with various challenges resulting in donations that benefit the local community.

"It's a great support to local business," Ball adds. "We always try and use everything local and really support the economy."



Nutritional value of game

Game is lean, high in protein, low in fat and typically more nutritious than other meats. According to the British Game Alliance (BGA) it's used both in hospitality and at home, and is on the rise as people look for different flavour profiles and healthy options.

"We set up the BGA in 2018 to promote, develop and assure the consumption of game meat," explains Louisa Clutterbuck, head of operations at the BGA.

The organisation also runs a traceability scheme offering operators reassurance that shoots are doing their best for the local environment, including looking after the welfare of wild birds and ensuring pheasants aren't crammed into pens. Since its launch it claims that game consumption has gone up by 10%. The BGA has also launched an Eat Wild division which features a number of recipes aimed at the hospitality industry.

Clutterbuck adds: "It's a myth that game is a posh person's food. This is available to everyone. We've found that now there is an assurance scheme in place more people are willing to use game".

"It doesn't take a lot of technique to cook it cooking, it just needs to be cooked for much less time than you would a chicken".

"We need people to understand it's a food product, not a by-product of the shooting industry."



Pheasant sushi

more palatable. I think the meat has a strong enough flavour and it doesn't need to be aged. Now I use some processes where you I brine in buttermilk. It lightens it, takes away the gamey flavour and tenderises at the same time. We've been doing a lot of brining and curing, and it really helps with seasoning and the flavour."

Matthews falls back on his French training by cooking the meat on the bone and resting it on the crown, but he has also been experimenting with other processes that highlight the versatility of the protein.

"I've been trying to use many techniques that I use with other meat, like buttermilk-fried pheasant, which is my KFC," he adds.

"I also make it into sushi and charcuterie and we make our own sausages. It's very similar to any other protein. But as far as what is best about it, there's limited carbon footprint, it's highly nutritious, full of protein, and there's no waste as we're using exactly what we want to use. And it couldn't be any fresher."

While out on the shoot the guns stop for elevenens and are served game sausage rolls and broth. However, it is after a morning on Exmoor that Matthews really lets loose, serving pheasant pizza, partridge maki rolls and a Korean version of his buttermilk-fried pheasant alongside venison satay.

Every care goes into ensuring that the meat

doesn't dry out and stays on the right side of gamey. "It's very delicate but suits different cooking. I do a combination of a confit pheasant leg and partridge leg that's been picked down and binded with a sauce or marinade that goes through the middle of a maki roll, or I sous vide a breast that's been cured and then that goes into the roll as well," he says.

"This is where marinating it in buttermilk works wonders. I debone the leg and leave it to marinate for two or three days in the buttermilk. It becomes even more tender, the flavour gets lighter and then it goes into the flour mix. It's exactly how you would do buttermilk chicken and we had in the summer on some of our crumpets – Korean buttermilk chicken. It has a slightly stronger flavour than chicken, but the buttermilk tones it down."

It's quite some spread and one that impresses even those that have been eating game for decades.

"I was getting high praise when I was working for a law firm, but it would come through as an email," Matthews adds. "But I have received a lot of applause this season, because people are blown away by what we've done with the game."

"I'm already excited for next season. We're going to start building the team, as well as building the whole customer experience even more. I've just touched on it so far and there's so much more that I want to do to show just how versatile and tasty game can be."

Sow the seeds

Mr Lyan has returned to London to open Seed Library in the new One Hundred Shoreditch hotel. *Millie Milliken* takes a seat at the bar

Ryan Chetiyawardana, aka Mr Lyan, is back on home turf. After a duo of international bar openings in Amsterdam (Super Lyan) and Washington DC (Silver Lyan) he's opening Seed Library, his first London bar since Lyaness in Sea Containers London.

Seed Library is described as having a lo-fi approach and the bar itself, designed by Lore Group's Jacu Strauss and located in the basement of the new One Hundred Shoreditch hotel, is reminiscent of 1970s-style homeliness. There's warm wood panelling, Fozzie Bear-feel furniture and a vinyl collection, all of which encapsulate this bar's overarching 'analogue' identity. "This bar has a fuzziness to it," explains Alex Lawrence, the group's global bar director.

Considering Chetiyawardana and Lawrence are two of the busiest people in the business (not only opening bars but also launching their own drinks brands and collaborating with other creators), my first question for the duo is simple: why on earth are they opening another bar? "When Ryan planted the seed of this idea, I was like, 'we have to do this'," says Lawrence.

What's in a name?

Seed Library cleverly encapsulates the ethos behind the drinks, as Chetiyawardana explains: "The 'Seed' part is about the knowledge that is held in seeds... 'Library' is about having communal, open repositories of knowledge and letting go of what we think we know... this bar is about stripping away."

"We wouldn't be able to open a bar like this without having been on the journey we've been on"

Alex Lawrence

Guests will find familiar drinks with less familiar ingredients, where cocktails take the constructs of classic serves and veer in another direction. For example, the perilla gin and tonic uses perilla leaves to bring a nutty edge and is served as a lowball; a martini uses sanchi leaves rather than an olive or lemon zest; and there's a coriander seed gimlet. The menu will change regularly too, as often as every two weeks, says Lawrence, which he says logistically will be "a fucking nightmare".

For Chetiyawardana, classics as we know them have never really been his style, but Seed Library is a real opportunity for him and his team to show how they can be reframed. "I still believe in the classics, but a lot of the time everybody just accepts them. It's very Western – cocktails exist in a lot of other places... It's exciting for us to ask what other things can we use while still making them accessible. We will still use them as a guide, as I don't want to erase them either."



Sancho leaf martini



Perilla gin and tonic



Ryan Chetiyawardana



PHOTOGRAPHY: CATLIN ISOLA

White sesame white lady



"We wouldn't be able to open a bar like this without having been on the journey we've been on... It's reflective of the immediate area – east London's grown up too."

Chetiyawardana's own connection to the area is a clear drive for opening Seed Library, something he says has been a decade in the making. "The first time I lived in London this was my home and it has been mapping and following along with our time and journey... [Seed Library represents] what it is to be in east London now. The area went from being a creative hub to a tech hub with big brands moving in, and now that's started to balance back – this is a bar in and for east London."

Calling it a cocktail bar, as we

know the term, isn't a straightforward definition for Lawrence. "There's a non-cocktail bar vibe to it. We talked about it as a pub using the US description of what a pub is." And that, he says, will be reflected in the service, with the floor team encouraged to eschew over-complicated or involved explanations of the menu and to leave guests to relax and explore the drinks at their own pace. Knowing some of the highly experienced staff already in place, this approach to service has and will, he admits, be a big change training wise.

There will also be low-intervention wines, sharing snacks and guest dishes appearing from chefs in east London and beyond – Lawrence even dangles the promise of potato smiles on the snack menu.

It certainly seems that the bar will feel like a home away from home. When I ask what they want the legacy of Seed Library to be, Lawrence's sentiment reflects this perfectly: "I want this bar associated with the memory of popping out for one drink but staying for four. It's not just about the cocktails either, it's about the good times. I want people to cancel their dinner reservations."

Curry leaf stonefence



Eastern promise

Opening a bar this stripped back is a bold move, but it's a product of the duo's experience and a project that is rooted in what east London stands for right now, says Lawrence.



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

MENUWATCH



The Glass House

Vegetables go straight from garden to plate at Wynyard Hall's dining room. *Ben McCormack* visits the Stockton-on-Tees stately home for a taste of this veg-forward menu

Wynyard Hall's new dining room might be called the Glass House, but it could just as easily be called the Garden. The plot-to-plate restaurant is located in a Victorian greenhouse within the kitchen garden of the former home of the Marquesses of Londonderry in County Durham. The property is now owned by the family of Sarah Antonopoulos, whose grandfather, property developer and former Newcastle United owner Sir John Hall, bought Wynyard in 1987.

The Glass House opened in August 2021 in a space formerly used for cookery demonstrations and retail, and has replaced the Wellington as Wynyard's flagship restaurant now that the main building is focused on weddings and events. "Our regulars would often say that the Glass House space was tailor-made for a restaurant," executive chef Kleo Tabaku says, "and they were right."

The chef was born in Albania and grew up in Italy. He moved to the UK in 1998 to attend Newcastle College, going on to become a senior sous chef at the city's Jesmond Dene House before senior roles at Nottingham's

"To have a kitchen garden like this would be a dream come true for any chef"

Kleo Tabaku

Saltwater and Lincoln's Old Bakery, then as head chef to the Bishop of Lincoln. He moved to Wynyard Hall in 2018 as senior sous chef, eventually being promoted to executive chef when the Glass House launched. Tabaku says that 60% of the vegetables on the menu come from Wynyard's garden in summer, with the ambition to make that 100% when two polytunnels are installed in late spring.

Winter, he admits, has been a challenge, but not an insurmountable one. "I can see beetroot, cabbage, carrots, celeriac and fennel all growing. We've also got two small greenhouses for herbs and micro lettuce, which helps us a lot."

Veg-forward small plates based on the produce of the garden include vegetable soup with house focaccia (£6), broad beans with thyme and tomato bruschetta (£8.50), burrata with grilled garden vegetables and sourdough (£8.50), and Tabaku's favourite dish of beetroot hummus with pitta (£7).

Beetroots are washed and vacuum-packed with local rapeseed oil, thyme from the garden and lemon juice and steamed at 90°C until tender. The beetroots are then peeled and, once



Burrata, grilled garden vegetables, sourdough



Kleo Tabaku, head chef



Salted caramel cheesecake



Smoked duck gnocchi and lemon ricotta salad



Sustainable cod, potatoes, peas, foraged sea vegetables

cool, made into a hummus with chickpeas. A salsa of apple, celery and toasted almonds is served on the side along with a slice of house-made pitta.

But there's more to the menu than veg. Fish comes from Hodgsons in Durham Market, while meat is from R&J near Ripon, which at 50 miles from Wynyard is the Glasshouse's furthest supplier. Tabaku sells around 120 portions a week of his herb-fed chicken main course with salad, courgette and ricotta (£14). The thighs are boned and skinned, lightly salted and sprinkled with lemon thyme from the garden, then steamed for two hours at 73°C before being crisped up under the grill. The chicken is accompanied by green and yellow courgettes, a mixed baby leaf salad and ricotta.

The signature dessert, however, looks further afield than the garden walls for inspiration. Tabaku's version of tiramisu (£7) is, he says, one he learnt from his mother. "This one looks a little bit more elegant than hers, but the taste is the same. We mix egg whites and yolks with mascarpone we get direct from Italy and add ladies' fingers soaked in espresso liqueur.

From the menu

Starter

- Calamari in chickpea and garden fennel pollen batter with lemon aioli £9
- Cauliflower, cumin and spinach fritters with minted yogurt £7
- Spiced local lamb kofta with tzatziki and garden salad £9

Mains

- Roasted hispi cabbage with chickpea curry and coriander £17
- Roast salmon with mussels, clams, potatoes and samphire £18
- Slow-cooked lamb ragout gnocchi with spinach and pecorino £15

Desserts

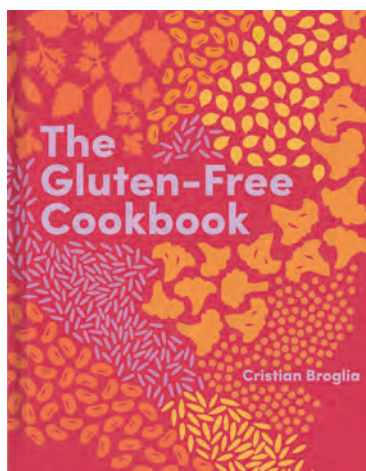
- Mixed berries and cashew cheesecake with raspberry sorbet £7
- Apricot and white chocolate bread and butter pudding with crème anglaise £6

To finish I sprinkle pistachios on top. We've had it on the menu from day one and it's sold amazingly well."

The one thing that you won't find on the menu is afternoon tea, which might seem odd given that stately Wynyard Hall looks the very picture of tea and cake territory. "There was a big discussion about serving afternoon tea when we opened, but we don't have the room," Tabaku says. "Also, it's been hard finding staff after the pandemic and I believe if you can't serve something at its very best, you should leave it. Never say never, though."

The chef's plan for the restaurant includes opening more growing areas and expanding his team with an ambition to bring poultry and livestock back to the property. For now, though, his dream has already come true. "Working in a place like this is not like a job," he says. "To have a kitchen garden like this would be a dream come true for any chef."

Wynyard Hall, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham TS22 5NF; 01740 644811; www.wynyardhall.co.uk



The Gluten-Free Cookbook

By Cristian Broglia

Phaidon, £35

One way to do a free-from menu is to take the dishes you would normally serve, select the sensitive ingredients and find a substitute or simply remove them, usually with some caveats from the diner, who asks for the chicken without the marinade and can you make sure the satay sauce doesn't get anywhere near the plate, thank you.

Or you can do away with the stress and just serve dishes that don't rely on substitutes and are already gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free, vegetarian or vegan. Cristian Broglia has taken the second route, realising that there are a host of global recipes that are naturally gluten free and all the more delicious for it.

The 350 recipes in *The Gluten-Free Cookbook* cover skill levels from high-street café-style easy to more complex, but all are aimed at the home cook, with some using five ingredients and others prepared in 30 minutes. It's a guide to gluten-free from around the world. Broglia's career started in Parma in Italy and he has since travelled constantly, collecting recipes along the way. As he says: "Today my work is a mix between innovation and history, creativity and rigour, respect for the rules and revolution."

There is a chapter on bread and wraps, which features Brazilian cheese bread; gorditas, a corn cake stuffed with pork and Oaxaca cheese; Ethiopian injera, a spongy flatbread made using three-day fermented teff flour, and deep-fried peanut crackers from Java.

Other recipes include bhujia, a crunchy Indian street-food snack of mashed potato and chickpea flour extruded through a potato ricer and deep fried, Jansson's Temptation, a creamy chip gratin garnished with anchovies, and Kentucky burgoo, which by law has to contain three types of meat along with tomatoes, butter beans and potatoes.

Desserts are a similar Jules Verne-style voyage, taking in cloudberry with whipped cream from Norway, Thailand's steamed layer cake, dyed a vivid green from pandan leaves; and Tuscan chestnut cake, served with fresh ricotta.

All are served up alongside homely recipes for Irish beef stew and chicken vindaloo: something for every menu.

By Kirsty Utting

Kimchi stew with pork



Kimchi jjigae is a spicy stew that is often served family-style from a stone pot (dolsot), accompanied by rice and banchan, the traditional Korean side dishes.

Serves: 4

7 large dried anchovies, heads and guts removed
100g Korean radish or daikon radish, thinly sliced
14g dried kelp

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
INFRAORDINARIO STUDIO FOR
DALCÔ EDIZIONI

1 medium white onion, sliced
160g kimchi
60ml kimchi brine
3 red onions, sliced
450g pork shoulder or pork belly, cut into 5 cm cubes
2tsp sugar
2tsp gochugaru (Korean chili flakes)
1tbs gochujang (Korean chili paste)
1tsp sea salt
1tsp sesame oil



250g tofu, cut into 3cm pieces
Cooked short-grain white rice,
for serving
1 spring onion, sliced on the
diagonal, for garnish

In a soup pot, combine the anchovies, radish, kelp, white onion and 710ml water and boil for 20 minutes. Reduce the heat and cook for five more minutes. Strain the anchovy stock.

In a pot, combine the kimchi, kimchi brine, red onions, pork, sugar, gochugaru, gochujang, and salt. Add the sesame oil and anchovy stock. Cook, covered, over medium heat for 10 minutes. Arrange the tofu on top of all the other ingredients, cover, and cook for 15 minutes longer, or until the tofu is soft.

Serve with rice and garnish with the spring onion.

Revelations

Guy Owen, chef, St Enodoc hotel, Cornwall



What was your first job in catering?

Working in a local fish and chip restaurant in a small fishing village called Mevagissey, where I was tumbling potatoes, making chips and washing dishes

What do you normally have for breakfast?

This massively depends on the day. Having two young children to get ready in the mornings dictates what you have and how much time you have. But ideally it would be porridge with fresh fruit and an espresso

What is your favourite restaurant?

There are so many great restaurants I could choose. In London the meals I have eaten at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay and the Harwood Arms have been incredible. More locally in Cornwall, what Jude Kereama does at Kota in Porthleven is on another level, also Ben Ambridge's food at the Fox's Revenge in Summercourt is incredible

What is your favourite drink?

A cold pint of Camden Hell's, but I also love a good iced tea

What is your favourite cuisine?

Asian, primarily Japanese. It's an incredible cuisine with so much attention to detail and skill



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

Anything that comes from poor farming practises. Very low standard meat, for instance, or poorly caught fish. We work really hard here to work with our suppliers to make sure everything we use is responsibly caught, reared or farmed

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

Probably something like working in the police. I did want to be a vet once upon a time, but you need a good grasp of academia, and that's not really me

Describe your ultimate nightmare?

Wearing a shirt and tie

Tell us a secret...

I have a stammer that only the people closest to me know about, and take the mick out of (which I love). I mask it by linking a sentence together by using swearwords... good job I'm a chef!

What's your favourite film?

The Lion King, the original. You tell me of a better beginning to any film

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

That's a tough one. Jack Nicholson



Going solo

From nightclubs in Mayfair to running the Artesian bar and working for hard seltzer brand Served, Anna Sebastian has done it all. Now, she's branching out by herself as an F&B consultant. *Millie Milliken* talks to her

How did you get started in the hospitality industry?

I started working in nightclubs in the Mayfair area in 2010. I saw that the Savoy was reopening and decided apply for a job as a host. That was when I really started to understand what hospitality was. When I left the Savoy I was the Beaufort bar manager and I then joined the Artesian at the Langham London in 2017 to look after the beverage programme for the hotel. Then, in May 2021, I joined Served, which was something really different.

Why the move to consulting and what does the job actually entail?

I think I had learned everything I could have learned, so going back to being a bar manager wasn't right. I'm not saying I'd never go back, but it would have to be a really big beverage director role and, coming out of the pandemic, there just aren't roles like that – consultancy gives you flexibility.

I get asked a lot about industry positioning and branding or how to get into the 'top 50' lists. This is the million-dollar question, but from experience I know the answer is to work on a mission statement and your service. I talk a lot about 'invisible PR', which is what people are saying about you when you aren't there.

What do you see as the main factors bars need help on?

I think mainly it's about creating a really good internal culture. For so long we've got away with last-minute rotas, for example, and I think we should go back to basics: the next generation has a very different outlook and the things deemed acceptable 10 or 12 years ago aren't now. It's about creating a safe place for people to work, taxis home – let's look internally; let's rebuild teams.

Can you tell me about your Celebrate Her project?

It started as one-off events, celebrating female bartenders from around the world, but the

“It's about creating a safe place for people to work, taxis home – let's look internally; let's rebuild teams”

response to it kick-started the idea that it could be more than an event or a party.

It's based around growing a community and providing education, and we're in the process of registering as a charity so we can fundraise. We want to raise half a million pounds, with the majority going to women around the world to provide financial grants. Women apply for the grant, go through a screening process and we pay for a training course. Another aspect we want to work on is recruitment.

We've partnered with a US consultancy company to take it on tour, so we will take a guest bartender from, say, Paris to Miami and host a three-day event with a guest shift, a seminar and a panel and then a wellness or mindfulness activity – something that isn't drinking! We've started building a team of board members and we have a structure.

What kind of venues are you excited to start working with?

For me, it is important that I feel passionate about these venues. I gravitate more towards luxury brands, although that isn't to say I wouldn't work for a pub group. I'm currently working with Adam Handling's group – the growth of that company is amazing and it's such a unique team. I want the development of what I do to be organic.

Seasonal food and drink pairing Nga Waka Pinot Noir 2016 with roast venison

This New Zealand pinot noir from Martinborough in Wellington's Wairarapa region screams dark red fruits with red cherries, matched with notes of liquorice and spice. Its refreshing nature means it pairs excellently with roast venison, which doesn't like tannins when it comes to finding the perfect match.



ERIC SISEL/SHUTTERSTOCK; LATEEF PHOTOGRAPHY



Cocktail of the week: the Death of the Lion

The Aubrey, Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park
Bar director: **Pietro Rizzo**

45ml Ki No Bi gin
45ml quinine and makrut cordial
15ml yuzu liqueur
2 dashes Japanese bitters
Method: stirred
Garnish: Kinome leaf

Quinine and makrut cordial

500g tonic water
50g caster sugar
0.5% citric powder
Makrut leaves

Reduce all the ingredients
until the perfect consistency
is obtained (five minutes)



Raise a glass with...



Sandia Chang, sommelier, founder of Bubbleshop and co-founder of two-Michelin-starred Kitchen Table, on grower Champagnes

Almost 10 years ago, when I put the concept for Bubbledogs on paper, I really struggled to find bottles of grower Champagne [small-scale producers].

At that time, very few consumers were interested in grower Champagnes or even knew what they were, so this meant that wine distributors weren't importing them and restaurants wouldn't list them. Fast-forward to today and I have just been told that one of the producers that I've been serving for nine years is now in such high demand that there's just not enough bottles to go around! It's a good problem to have, because it means that the palate for these smaller-scale Champagnes is gradually changing.

There has been a rumour that one of the big clubs in Ibiza has recently turned down its allocation from one of the grande marque Champagne houses to make room on their wine list for grower Champagnes. Although it's great to hear there's an appetite for these less well-known producers, I also worry about how much stock a club in Ibiza would need to meet demand. Moët & Chandon produces 30 million bottles of Champagne a year compared to some growers who can only produce 8,000 bottles.

I can understand why people are starting to see the value in grower Champagnes, like the ones that I sell in the Bubbleshop. People now want provenance

and authenticity in everything they consume. When we get a cup of coffee, we see where the beans are sourced from, who the roasters are and even which dairy the milk is from. So when it comes to Champagne, it's natural that we also want to know who made it, where the grapes were grown and how it has become what we are tasting.

For most grande marque Champagnes, this isn't something that they can offer. The grapes are bought in from different farmers and the wines are made in a central winery. With grower Champagne producers, they are both the farmers and the winemakers. This is the feedback I receive the most from those who buy from Bubbleshop, and it's so lovely to hear.

The passion and the care that comes with grower Champagne is what fuels my crusade to get big-brand drinkers converted. For me, there is just more soul in the glass when you know that the person who made that wine also cared for the grapes and tended to the vines. They have more freedom to create more interesting wines than commercial Champagne brands, and can be truer to the terroir as they are not as concerned about making a consistent product.

I'm thrilled to see such a shift in taste and more people supporting grower Champagne producers... just as long as I can still get my hands on my favourite bottles!

Make a splash

An unpredictable couple of years may have rocked the seafood industry, but you can still make waves with a good fish selection. *Anne Bruce* explores the options when it comes to selecting your seafood

Considering that you can't get further than 84 miles away from the sea anywhere in the UK, fish and seafood plays a relatively low-key role on restaurant menus.

To enjoy the majority of Scottish mussels you need to head to France or Belgium, where moules frites, made with mussels exported from the UK, are ubiquitous. But in the UK, tried and tested options such as cod, haddock, salmon and the great British fish and chip supper are the big hitters.

However, after the choppy waters of the past couple of years, a pandemic and Brexit to be precise, food prices and the supply chain are under pressure. Restaurants are looking at ways to make their menus more cost-effective and add an affordable but special touch.

Seafood and fish, presented in a consumer-friendly way, can play well with this agenda and chime with wider interest in healthy eating and sustainability. So, chefs are starting to drive forward with dishes that bring a variety of fish and seafood to the fore.

Battle the costs

James Baker, head of food and chef development for the south and southwest region at hospitality foodservice provider BaxterStorey, says that BaxterStorey chefs are encouraged to ask seafood suppliers for advice on what is good that day and consider less mainstream species, such as herring or sardines.

Costs are rising on all ingredients and fish won't be an exception, he says. Buying local and seasonal fish is a sustainable option which may also help control costs.

"With the well-reported labour shortages across hospitality, there has been an increased demand for value-added, quality seafood, including squid and prawns," suggests Martin Finegan, sales and marketing manager at Pacific West UK.

These products are simple to prepare, taking pressure away from busy kitchens, and they deliver high-impact, consistent dishes for consumers, he says.

With many outlets offering a reduced menu, having an unusual fresh fish choice on the specials board will drive customer interest, suggests Ian Nottage, head of food development at distributor Sysco Speciality Group.

Options such as Scottish loch-reared trout, Fowey mussels, MSC Dorset clams and Winterbourne chalk spring-reared trout don't need to be expensive, he says: "Including the name of the fishery or provenance of the catch on the menu is a good way to drive extra revenue as, generally speaking, consumers will pay for the story."

Macduff's wild-caught Hebridean langoustines are this sort of hero dish, either poached or pan-seared in olive oil, says John Ashmore, marketing director Europe, Middle East and Africa at parent company Clearwater Seafoods.

Laky Zervudachi, Direct Seafoods' director of sustainability, says customers are encouraged to use menu descriptions such as 'catch of the day' or 'market fish'. Varying the species can also help with cost. Alongside fresh options, frozen products, especially cod and haddock fillets, remain key for many operators. Particularly if landings of fresh fish are poor, adds Ian Nottage: "Frozen gives flexibility of stockholding and price points by allowing the chef to defrost their fish and seafood as and when required."

Using frozen seafood also means that chefs



Paramount 21 coated whitebait burger



Alaska pollock and pink salmon ramen

can offer a wider variety of species on menus year-round, adds Joel Carr, development chef at Young's Foodservice. This helps with menu planning, reducing waste and improving portion control as well. Chefs can add a twist to frozen favourites, such as fish and chips by, serving with a katsu curry sauce for a new take, he suggests.

With food prices rising, operators need to use all ingredients, whether frozen or fresh, efficiently. Stelios Theocharous, managing director of Ceres, says: "Fish is no longer a



Paramount 21 gluten-free
coated whitebait

cheap commodity. Compare it to the price of steak, gram for gram, and for many species there's very little difference right now."

Chefs should use every last scrap, he urges. Fish bones and heads can make great stocks,

Suppliers

Ceres www.worldofceres.com

Clearwater www.clearwater.ca

Direct Seafoods www.directseafoods.co.uk

EHL Ingredients www.ehl-ingredients.co.uk

KFE www.kfeltd.co.uk

Norwegian Seafood Council
<https://en.seafood.no>

Pacific West www.pacificwestfoods.co.uk

Paramount 21 www.paramount21.co.uk/

Sysco www.sysco.com

Young's Foodservice
www.youngsfoodservice.co.uk

"There has been an increased demand for value-added quality seafood, including squid and prawns"

Martin Finegan

while trimmings can be used in fishcakes.

The great thing about fishcakes, Theodorou says, is that they can be tailored to suit all sectors, from a classic cod and parsley for contract caterers to a luxury salmon and prawn for fine dining restaurants. "You can even make smaller versions and serve them as starters, canapés or children's options," he says.

In fact, the distinction between chippie and fish restaurant ranges is also blurring, says Paul Williams, managing director of supplier KFE, which specialises in frying ranges. "Whereas 10 years ago, there were seafood restaurants and there were fish and chip restaurants, there's now a much bigger crossover between those markets as there is value in extending menus."

Choosing familiar serving formats for



Paramount 21 MSC
battered cod goujons

fish makes it more accessible to consumers, whatever the venue. Dishes such as fishcakes and goujons make a great starter, Zervudachi says, while fish curries and fish tacos are a great fit with casual dining menu formats and enable chefs to use a broader range of species according to availability.

Consumers do need to be gently encouraged to try new fish species. Baker suggests describing what the fish tastes similar to on menus. ►



Direct Seafoods' Cornish megrim sole



Young's fish pie

“Consumers also expect sustainability to be factored in by chefs planning menus”

**Laky Zervudachi,
Direct Seafoods**

◀ A tusk fish, for example, tastes like monkfish, and can be treated like one by the chef, serving it curried or wrapped in Parma ham. “If it’s an ugly fish, don’t put a picture of it up!” Baker advises.

Spice it up

Chefs can encourage diners to try new seafood produce with small plates or amuse bouches made with fish, Baker recommends. Tying in with flavour trends can also make fish dishes more approachable. Flavours



Norwegian cod with patatas bravas

Smoked haddock fishcake



such as Korean gochujang red pepper paste or serving fish with miso, seaweed or samphire is on-trend, says Baker. Ceviche and escabeche, both south American marinated fish techniques, are becoming increasingly popular, Nottage says. And Asian seared and tataki-style tuna is finding its way onto mainstream menus and is no longer the preserve of sushi and robata restaurants.

EHL Ingredients offers on-trend spice blends for fish soups such as moqueca (Brazilian fish soup), chowders, cioppino (San Franciscan fish and shellfish) and maeuntang (Korean fish soup), says Tasneem Alonzo, joint managing director at Lähde at EHL Ingredients.

Hawaiian poké bowls commonly feature Ahi fish or tuna, but other species of cubed and marinated seafood are also an option for light bite menus or for informal dining.

Healthy eating

One big selling point for fish, as consumers turn away from meat, is its health credentials. Since the pandemic consumers have been focused on healthy eating and “obsessed with protein”, a big selling point for seafood, Baker says. The benefits of oily fish, such as its omega-3, protein, amino acids and low fat, are well documented. Chefs can use plant protein such as lentils alongside fish in dishes, which allows it to stretch further, chiming with the plant-based trend, he adds.

For a premium healthy option, Skrei, as Norway’s migratory cod is known, has reached the shores of northern Norway after its 1,000km journey from the depths of the

Barents Sea, and is in season until April, says Hans Frode Kielland Asmyhr, UK director of the Norwegian Seafood Council. Skrei has great nutritional value: a portion provides the recommended daily amount of omega-3, as well as vitamins A and B12. And for the fourth year in a row, Norwegian aquaculture companies have come out top for the world’s most sustainable protein production, adds Frode Kielland Asmyhr.

Zervudachi at Direct Seafoods adds: “Sustainability and health concerns go hand-in-hand. As more younger consumers in particular adopt a flexitarian or pescatarian approach to their diet, they are reducing meat and increasingly opting for fish choices. These consumers also expect sustainability to be factored in by chefs planning menus.”

This consumer shift from meat is an opportunity to increase the scope of the seafood menu and offer a more plant-based menu overall, says Dr Daniel Sanchez, fish welfare research manager at Compassion in World Farming. Restaurants must encourage a more diverse, sustainable seafood offering, such as mussels, clams or fish reared and caught using methods regarded as sustainable, he urges.

By sourcing fish from Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)-accredited sources, or other internationally recognised sustainable fishing standards, you can encourage the management of global fish stocks and help to protect vital ecologies, supplier Paramount 21 echoes.

For aquaculture, the phrase ‘RSPCA Assured’ covers welfare parameters for salmon and trout, Sanchez explains. Friends of the Sea now have certifications that cover welfare parameters for a multitude of species; while other certifications, Global GAP and ASC, are in the process of improving their policies. Organic production standards can also be good references. MSC is the biggest certifier for wild-caught fish, but it does not cover fish welfare.

For chefs, a knowledge of the supply chain is crucial in serving fish, and keeping close to the supplier is probably the key to navigating issues of sustainability. If chefs have a firm grip on how to prepare the variety of species on offer, the opportunity won’t slip from their grasp.

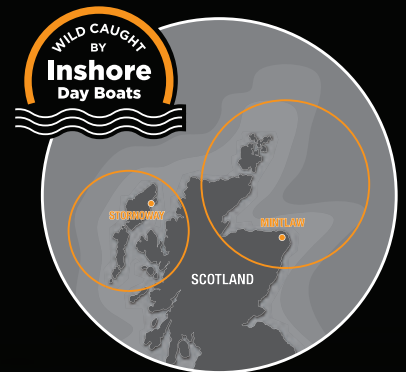


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Bespoke Caviar goes wholesale to service growing hotel demand

Bespoke Caviar has expanded its operations to include a wholesale division aimed at the hotel and restaurant market.

The business was established by Jamie Lee when he began selling caviar to friends at Christmas five years ago. He identified a gap in the market for good caviar at competitive prices, and the business is now expanding from retail into foodservice.

The brand offers four varieties of caviar, including its classic Siberian sturgeon, which is a smaller egg with an intense caviar flavour, Imperial, which is the same fish but the higher grade of egg, Royal Oscietra and Beluga.

Lee said: "We wanted to be sure our supplier was extremely ethical and only sourced from responsible farms in the UK and Italy. All caviar is farmed these days. There is no wild anymore."

"Sturgeon are considered an endangered species, so they are 100% protected, so all caviar bought now is from farmed stock."



Lee says that hotels will receive caviar the same day they order it

"We went out to find the best caviar we could in terms of quality, that was also sensibly priced."

The classic starts at £1 a gram, going up to £3.50 for the Beluga. But I'd say if you want to spoil

yourself the Royal Oscietra at £1.40 is fantastic. But we also offer a wholesale price."

He is currently in talks with a number of London hotels and expects to have supply deals in place soon so that the public can enjoy the product in a hospitality environment.

Lee added: "The thing about hospitality is that it is feast or famine. Caviar might be a small garnish on a menu, but equally you could have a guest who wants kilos of it. Hotels just can't hold the stock. But with us if you put the order in before 2pm you'll get the caviar by close of business the same day."

The Bespoke Caviar founder said that demand was as high as it had ever been, particularly for luxury goods.

"People have disposable income and the world is becoming more sophisticated," Lee said.

"They are aware that if you're spending money on food you can't get any better than caviar. The great thing is that it's more affordable now too."

IFEX 2022 serves up 40% more new exhibitors

IFEX will return to the Titanic Exhibition Centre in Belfast from the 29-31 March with at least 40% new exhibitors.

Established as Northern Ireland's leading trade event for those in the food, drink, retail and hospitality sectors, IFEX has attracted exhibitors including Lynas Foodservice, Henderson Foodservice, Stephens Catering Equipment, Sysco, Hugh Jordan and Golden Glen, which will sit alongside successful Northern Ireland- and Ireland-based companies such as Andrew Ingredients, SD Bell, Suki Tea, Middleton Foods and Johnson Brothers.

Jim Nash, director of the Wild Atlantic Distillery, which is exhibiting at IFEX for the first-time, said: "As a new and award-winning distillery, we are excited and delighted to be part of IFEX, which this year celebrates its



IFEX chef Sean Owens with Jean-Christophe Novelli and judge David Close

25th anniversary. We are particularly excited to be part of the new IFEX Bar, which will showcase the very best in Northern Irish

spirits to many of the key decision-makers in the food, drink and hospitality sectors across Ireland and the UK."

Matt Salisbury, chief executive and co-founder of interiors and lifestyle firm Domaine & Demeure, added: "IFEX is the leading foodservice and hospitality trade show in Northern Ireland, and one which we're excited to be involved with for the first time in 2022."

"It provides us with a fantastic platform to meet with our existing partners and forge relationships with potential new customers and key decision makers."

IFEX will also provide visitors with a forum to research what's hot in the industry, as well as live talks and demonstrations presented by industry figureheads and market experts, and live ChefSkills competitions.

For more information and to register, go to www.ifexexhibition.co.uk

Opinion Offering a flavour of the north



Thom Hetherington, chief executive of Holden Media

“Northern Restaurant & Bar 2022, taking place on 15-16 March, provides hospitality professionals and operators with the opportunity to catch up with colleagues old and new, to meet 300 suppliers from across all categories, to be inspired by live food and drink demos, and be part of the whole industry coming together.

“It’s a platform for the best of northern hospitality and is free to attend to those working in the industry.

“What’s makes NRB different is that it is unashamedly rooted in its industry and its geography. That means that despite being of a scale comparable to many London shows, we have a real sense of focus and community and commitment to the people and businesses who make the



PHOTO: JOEY CATTO

NRB will showcase suppliers that are suited to its local businesses

industry tick. They know us and we know them. We bring inspiring national names and suppliers to the region, of course, but everything we do on-site is relevant, respectful and specifically curated to work for local hospitality operators. From the Lake District to the Peak District, north Wales to the north-east, NRB is very much a product of its environment.

“All of our content is new, and we’re capturing arguably the two biggest stories of the year – Soho House coming to Manchester and

L’Enclume’s third Michelin star – with exclusive live Q&As with Nick Jones and Simon Rogan.

“We also have a Bruntwood NRB Debate panel tackling the issue of diversity within the upper echelons of hospitality, and the new Kuit’s NRB Top 50 power list alongside a new cohort of emerging hospitality entrepreneurs in our NRB Future programme.

“The inaugural NRB Safari will take a host of leading operators from London and beyond on an ‘under the skin’ tour of Manches-

ter, seeing the venues and meeting the operators shaping the city.

“The show will take place among continuing struggles in the industry – and the world. Like everywhere we have our headwinds, but it can’t be denied that the northern hospitality scene is arguably the strongest it’s ever been. Our rural tourism hotspots like the Lake District are booked solid; our cities suffered less and have bounced back faster than London (some areas now have more hospitality businesses than pre-Covid); and the number of new sites, concepts and entrepreneurs powering the sector is unprecedented.

“Four of the top five restaurants in the UK are now said to be in the North of England [in the National Restaurant Awards], as are four of the top five gastropubs [in Estrella Damn Top 50 Gastropubs 2022].

“Challenges remain, but ambitious operators up here are determined to kick on, and diners and drinkers, whether locals or tourists, are enthusiastically reaping the benefits.”

For more information, go to www.northernrestaurantandbar.co.uk

The Ethical Butcher launches wholesale business

The Ethical Butcher has announced the launch of its wholesale business to offer regeneratively-farmed meat to restaurants, pubs, and hotels.

Founders Farshad Kazemian and Glen Burrows are working with chefs and restaurants including Silo, Native and the Warehouse at the Conduit in London.

The Ethical Butcher only works with farms that are actively improving the environment by using their animals to rebuild ecosystems and restore nutrition to the soil, locking carbon into the ground. In the best cases these systems can lock away more carbon than the animals release, making this carbon-negative production.

The Ethical Butcher supplies only 100% pasture-fed beef and lamb that is certified by the



The Ethical Butcher says all of its meat is from regenerative farming

Pasture-Fed Livestock Association and from farms that use regenerative farming practices.

Parkland venison is sourced from Packington Estate, where the animals are culled to main-

tain a balanced ecosystem. Also on offer will be free-range, outdoor-reared pork and chicken from farms that use a soy-free feed. The UK imports 3.3 million tonnes of soy annually, almost

90% of which is used in animal feed, with the majority being used for poultry and pork. Most of the soy comes from South America, where soy plantations are a key driver of deforestation.

Head of business development Tom Cripps said: “We’re aiming to change the food system for the better by creating a new supply chain for small-scale regenerative farmers around the UK.

“We source whole carcass beef, lamb, pork, poultry and venison from the most ethical, regenerative food producers we can find and give them access to market through our online retail operation and now our wholesale offering.

“We hope that operating at wholesale scale is what is really going to change the industry for the better.”



Emma Jones

The venue sales director of eve and Venues by CH&Co talks to *Lisa Jenkins* about her recent promotion and how to develop in your career

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

No, I didn't. I graduated university with a dual honours degree in history and sociology. I worked part-time during the holidays in bars, restaurants and hotels, and this is what sparked my interest in the industry and inspired my career.

What was your first job?

When I left university, I was still unsure about what I wanted to do as a long-term career. My new flatmate at the time had just started on the Marriott Hotels' Graduate Scheme and she told me about some of the opportunities available at the hotel she was based at in Cardiff.

Within days I had secured a role as part of the reception team and I immediately felt at home. I've always loved delivering fantastic service and finding solutions to challenging situations and, thanks to the hotel's location in the centre of a bustling city and its busy calendar of sport, there was never a dull moment.

How did you decide on your career direction?

My initial hotel experience could have taken me down several pathways. This is what I love about our industry; the opportunity to develop and learn new skills is always there, no matter what stage your career is at. However, the buzz I got from selling 'the dream' to event bookers, securing a contract and seeing it all come to life, confirmed that event sales was the pathway I was destined to follow.

Could you talk me through the other steps in your career?

After becoming a sales executive with the event sales team in Cardiff, I then transferred to one of Marriott's properties in Hampshire to be closer to my family. Keen to make the move to London, I landed my next role as business development executive at the



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

London Eye, working as part of the event sales team.

The opportunity to work as business development manager at Ascot Racecourse then presented itself and I took it. With two Royal Ascots under my belt, I was ready to move back to London and I returned to the London Eye when the role of event sales manager came up, and with it the opportunity to lead the sales team and collaborate with some amazing brands such as Sipsmith, Red Bull and Hotel Chocolat.

In 2015, I joined Harbour & Jones as sales and marketing manager at RSA House, and after

two years, with Harbour & Jones now part of CH&Co, I was promoted to head of venue sales.

In January of this year, I was promoted to venue sales director of Venues by CH&Co.

Have you embarked on any additional personal career development that has supported your progression?

I joined the Elevate Mentoring programme in 2021 as a mentor. As well as giving me the opportunity to mentor someone from another part of the industry, it really helped me assess my own areas of strength and identify those for development. It was also a great networking opportunity for me.

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

Without a doubt it's been these past couple of years. Keeping a brand alive, active and engaging,

and upholding excellent service standards, all with a reduced team and constant changes to guidelines to contend with.

It's been a very challenging time, but we have come out of it so much stronger and more focused. One of the great initiatives born out of this time is our Sales and Marketing Academy by eve: a bespoke training plan focused on the development of our venue sales team across eve and [CH&Co's event platform] Venues by CH&Co. We are so proud to be investing in the formal development of our sales teams.

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

While working with Marriott I had the opportunity to be promoted and I turned it down because I thought I wasn't ready for it. The fact that someone very senior, with all their years of experience, saw something in me at that time and thought I could do it should have dispelled any hesitation on my part. I should have gone for it, but we live and learn...

What advice would you give someone starting in the industry?

Be open to every opportunity that comes your way. The best companies will always offer personal learning and development. Some roles may not seem right at the time and, of course, that could be for the best, but consider the bigger picture and how you want to shape your career. The fuller your experience (learning as well as work experience), the wider you can cast your net in the future.

What are your future career goals?

Having just been promoted, I'm really excited for what the future holds for eve and for Venues by CH&Co. All the signs are there for a great year and beyond. I'm looking forward to our business growing and, with that, my role too.

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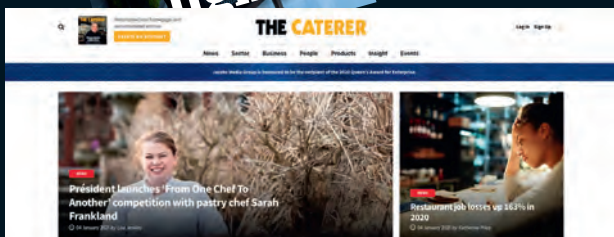
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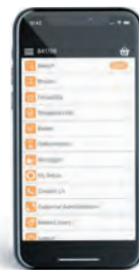
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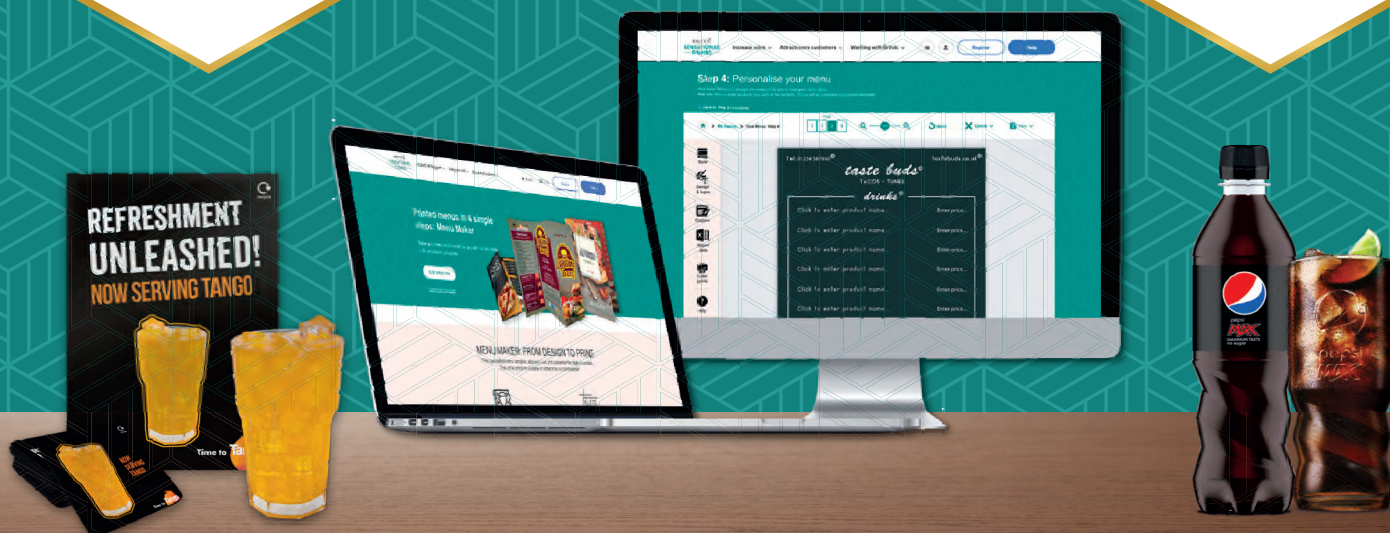
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