

MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL

24-28 APRIL
2019

The Marylebone Food Festival
is brought to you by
The Howard de Walden Estate and
The Portman Estate.





The Marylebone Food Festival returns on 24-28 April 2019

Over the course of the festival, dozens of Marylebone's food and drink establishments—from neighbourhood cafes and wine bars to Michelin-starred restaurants—will be hosting special dinners, tastings, masterclasses, collaborations, food tours and talks, and creating menus and offers that help throw a spotlight on the gastronomic wealth and diversity of the area.

In this special supplement, you will find full listings for the festival and a deep delve into the stories of the people and places involved.

marylebonefoodfestival.com
@marylebonefoodfestival
marylebonefoodfestival

4-13

WHAT'S ON

A comprehensive guide to the events, activities and special menus on offer during the Marylebone Food Festival

Brought to you by
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Publisher
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13.2.1 The Leathermarket
Weston Street, SE1 3ER
020 7401 7297
lscpublishing.com

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Printing
Warwick

"DON'T USE ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T TASTE GOOD. IT SOUNDS OBVIOUS, BUT YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MANY GUYS DON'T FOLLOW THAT ADAGE"

SIMON ROGAN

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"YOU HAVE TO DO THE JOB— YOU CAN'T BE A SLACK-ARSE—BUT WE'RE A FAMILY HERE. WE ALL MUCK IN TOGETHER"

PETER GORDON

WHAT'S
ON
24-28
APRIL

24



THE MARYLEBONE MENU

St Mary's Church London
Wyndham Place,
York Street
W1H 1PQ
marylebonefoodfestival.com

Like a convention-busting chef serving up a massive main course before the hors d'oeuvres, the Marylebone Food Festival kicks off its five-day tenure with its biggest and boldest event. For The Marylebone Menu, chefs from seven of the area's finest restaurants—Michelin-starred restaurants Texture and Trishna, newcomer Xier and established local favourites The Providores and Tapa Room, Chiltern Firehouse, Roux at the Landau and Bernardi's—will be serving up a multi-course menu that demonstrates the depth of talent and breadth of inspiration found within the local dining scene.

The dinner—tickets for which sold out within hours of its launch—will be accompanied by bread from GAIL's Bakery, concluded with cheese and port from La Fromagerie, chocolates from Rococo and coffee from The Montagu Kitchen, and washed down with drinks from The Coach Makers Arms, 108 Brasserie, Marylebone Gin, Philglas & Swiggot, Le Vieux Comptoir, Vinoteca and Daylesford. And all of this will happen not in some large, soulless purpose-built catering unit designed to accommodate such an undertaking, but in St Mary's Church London, a beautiful Georgian church. In this atmospheric setting, guests will dine on long, elegantly-decorated communal tables, and their feasting will be soundtracked by live music from the Marylebone Music Festival brass quartet.



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SECRET LONDON BOOK SIGNING

The George Bar
Durrants Hotel,
32 George Street,
W1H 5BJ
durrantshotel.co.uk

With its wood-panelled walls, plunging leather seats and club-like atmosphere (of the private members', rather than night, variety), it's little wonder the cosy George Bar at Durrants Hotel has featured in the newly-published Secret London—a guidebook to the capital's more unusual bars and restaurants. For the festival, the book's co-author Hannah Robinson will be at the hotel signing copies between 12:30–2pm and 6–7pm.

LEBANESE FOOD AND WINE MATCHING

Levant
76 Wigmore Street,
W1U 2SJ
levant.co.uk

In a showcase of the restaurant's home-style Lebanese cuisine, Levant will transport you to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean with a special £40 menu, including Ksara wine pairing. Expect dishes such as moutabal (fried aubergine with tahini, strained yoghurt and garlic); fattoush (parsley, mint, tomatoes, radishes, baby cucumber and spring onion, with a pomegranate and sumac dressing); and lamb sambousek (spiced minced lamb and pine nuts-filled pastry parcels).



The George Bar

FOOD MATTERS SUPPERCLUB

The London Clinic
20 Devonshire Place,
W1G 6BW
thelondonclinic.co.uk

The London Clinic, one of the country's top private hospitals, is hosting a series of supper clubs themed around the nutritional benefits of food. Running over four consecutive nights and priced at £30 (excluding drinks), these intimate meals will be led by the hospital's executive chef Paul O'Brien, who, together with his team, will introduce the dishes and offer his insights, both scientific and culinary. The food will be good for body and soul—look out for white asparagus with Cornish goat's cheese panna cotta and mushroom duxelles, and pan-fried Atlantic hake served ramen-style.



The London Clinic



Buongiorno e Buonasera

CHOCOLATE & WINE TASTING

Philglas & Swiggot
22 New Quebec Street,
W1H 7SB
philglas-swiggot.com

Over the past few years, food lovers have become ever more attuned to the nitty gritty of how food gets from our fields to our plates—and what's done to make it delicious in the process. Chocolate is no exception: single estate, 'craft' chocolate makers have been displacing the familiar nothing-but-fat-and-sugar confections with something wholly more creative—not least The Cocoa Runners chocolate club has scoured the world to bring us the best bars from these artisan producers. Here, co-founder Spencer Hyman joins food and wine writer Francis Percival in leading four sessions that explore the work of 10 chocolate makers, and pairs it with a selection of classic reds from Philglas and Swiggot. Each session lasts 45 minutes and costs £15 each, or £25 for a pair.

EATS AND TREATS FOOD TOUR

Baker Street Quarter Partnership

bakerstreetq.co.uk

Baker Street Quarter Partnership is leading a tour of the area's restaurants, offering participants a chance to sample plenty of food while walking at least some of it off. Starting at 6pm and lasting around two hours, the tour will visit several of the organisers' favourite venues, covering everything from the south Indian fare of Ooty, to the authentic Italian pizzas Buongiorno e Buonasera, to the British staples of Bills. At each spot, attendees will get to try tasters of the food and drink and hear from the host. Booking in advance is required on the Baker Street Quarter Partnership website, and the booking fee of £5 will be donated to The Springboard Charity.

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MEET THE NEIGHBOURS: COFFEE WITH DINNY HALL

The George Bar
Durrants Hotel,
32 George Street,
W1H 5BJ
durrantshotel.co.uk

Join neighbourhood jeweller Dinny Hall for a morning of good coffee and even better conversation at Durrants Hotel, as she talks about the creation of her eponymous jewellery brand, the inspiration behind her designs, and what Marylebone means to her. Tickets cost £12.50 and the event begins at 11am.

SEYMOUR PLACE LUNCH SAFARI

Marble Arch London
marble-arch.london

Marble Arch London leads an epicurean expedition visiting three of Marylebone's most loved hotspots—all within your lunch hour and for only £10: cheaper than Pret and far tastier than any meal deal. Kicking off at midday with a starter at vegetarian restaurant The Gate, the tour will proceed to Bernardi's for an Italian-inspired main course, before heading back up Seymour Place for dessert at The Portman. The meal (including the short between-venue scurry) should take 60 minutes. Places are limited—visit the Marble Arch London website for details.



Fucina

DROP-IN GIN SAMPLING**Philglas & Swigot**

22 New Quebec Street,
W1H 7SB

philglas-swigot.com

You may well have seen gin-maker Johnny Neill's copper still, sat squat and gleaming in 108 Bar, distilling Marylebone's very own gin. You may also know that each of its iterations has been of exceptional quality. Now's your chance to give them all a try. Marylebone Gin's global brand ambassador Chris Dennis will be stationed at Philglas & Swigot from 4-8pm, ready to talk you through the range in an impromptu tasting session.

SUPPER CLUB**31 Below**

31 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4PP

31below.co.uk

Curated by 31 Below's chef-director Chris O'Neil, this café-by-day, buzzing-bar-by-night hosts a five-course supper club for £50. Dishes include cured sea trout tartare with pickled cucumber, crème fraiche, fried duck egg, oyster mushrooms and truffles; and Galician octopus with piquillo peppers and smoked paprika mayo. The food will be accompanied with a selection of carefully chosen wines.

FIVE-COURSE SEAFOOD & CHAMPAGNE BANQUET**Fucina**

26 Paddington Street,
W1U 5QY

fucina.co.uk

Jordan Sclare serves up a seafood-suffused five-course menu, featuring classic European dishes with an Italian twist: barbecued langoustine tails and queen diver scallops with Amalfi lemon; lobster-stuffed tortelloni with a rich seafood bisque; tuna belly tartare with mustard, pomegranate and crispy capers. For £90, guests will feast at banquet-style tables (and for £130 they will do so with free-flowing Lauren Perrier champagne). A group of 10 can also book a chef's table experience at a discounted price of £70 per head.

COCKTAIL MASTERCLASS**The Coach Makers Arms**

88 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2PY

thecoachmakersarms.co.uk

Brush up on your mixology skills and learn how to make a selection of classic cocktails. Held in The Coach Makers' speakeasy-style basement bar, tickets (at £60 per couple) include three cocktails, as well as enough bar snacks to keep you on your stool.

SOUFFLE DEMO CLASS**La Cucina Caldesi**

4 Cross Keys Close,
W1U 2DG

caledsi.com

Souffle is perhaps not the dish most readily associated with Italy, but the Italians do good things with eggs and they do good things with cheese, so under the tutelage of La Cucina Caldesi you're sure to produce something bellissimo. Learn to make both a savoury and sweet version, before sitting down to enjoy them with a glass of wine and a coffee. Runs from 6:30-9pm and costs £60 per person.

CHEESE AND WINE TASTING EVENING**Boxcar Baker and Deli**

7A Wyndham Place,
W1H 1PN

boxcar.co.uk

Boxcar Baker and Deli—sister to the Butcher and Grill on New Quebec Street—opened its doors last year, initially serving the likes of house-made bread, cakes, pies and pastries. Now it's launching a sit-down evening menu of small plates, including charcuterie and cheese boards—which it'll be celebrating with an evening of cheese and wine. Four La Fromagerie cheeses will be paired with a selection of wine, in a tasting led by Marc-Andrea Levy.

FOOD MATTERS SUPPERCLUB**The London Clinic**

20 Devonshire Place,
W1G 6BW

thelondonclinic.co.uk

A supper club themed around the nutritional benefits of food. For details, see listing for 24 April.

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MIXOLOGY MASTERCLASS FEATURING MARYLEBONE GIN**Marble Arch London**

marble-arch.london

Marble Arch London hosts a cocktail-making masterclass at The Pickled Hen on George Street. From 6-7pm, the bar's expert bartenders will be teaming up with Marylebone Gin to help you master (and sip on) some speciality cocktails. All attendees will also be offered a 20 per cent discount on dinner that evening and there will be live music in the bar from 6:30pm. Tickets for the class cost £25, with all proceeds going to the Springboard charity—visit the Marble Arch London website for details.

DINNER WITH STRANGERS: SEVEN-COURSE AUSTRALIAN FUSION FEAST**London from Scratch**

londonfromscratch.co.uk

Chef Michelle Francis opens her Marylebone apartment to 16 strangers for an evening of good food and conviviality. Guests will arrive to a welcome cocktail, enjoy seven courses of Australian fusion food, and then leave at the end having made a few new friends. Guests will be seated across two communal tables, and the conversation will hopefully flow as easily as the BYO wine. Tickets cost £40, with no corkage fee.

PISCO SOUR MASTERCLASS**Pachamama**

18 Thayer Street,
W1U 3JY

pachamamalondon.com

Anybody who's ventured into the subterranean space that is Pachamama and perched atop a bar stool will know that these guys know a thing or two about pisco sours. In an in-depth masterclass, learn how to make several versions of this classic Peruvian cocktail—at its most basic, a combination of pisco liqueur, citrus and egg whites—to sup on alongside a feast of complementary dishes. Tickets are £85 all-in.

FOOD MATTERS SUPPERCLUB**The London Clinic**

20 Devonshire Place,
W1G 6BW

thelondonclinic.co.uk

A supper club themed around the nutritional benefits of food. For details, see listing for 24 April.

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Pachamama



Marble Arch London at The Pickled Hen

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PASTA-MAKING WORKSHOP

Carousel

71 Blandford Street,
W1U 8AB

carousel-london.com

Learn how to knead, roll and shape pasta like a true Italian nonna. Priced at £55, in a two-hour class led by Carousel's expert chefs you'll be taught how to make two types of classic dough, egg and semolina, and turn them into tubes of garganellie and dinky cavatelli, as well as tips and tricks on pairing each type of pasta with the perfect sauce—which you'll then make, before sitting down to enjoy the fruits of your labour with a glass of wine. Tutees will take home a box of fresh pasta, a cavatelli board—and the ability to nail perfect pasta at home.

THE GRIT & THE GLAM: MARYLEBONE FOOD TOUR

London from Scratch

londonfromscratch.co.uk

This three and a half hour food tour with chef Michelle Francis will explore the diversity of Marylebone's food scene, from artisan producers, hidden foodie gems and the cult of coffee to authentic Syrian fare. Michelle will fill you in on the history, architecture and culture, while your tastebuds enjoy their own little adventure. Tickets cost £69, including all food and non-alcoholic beverages.



31 Below

TACOCAKE BRUNCH

The Cavendish

35 New Cavendish Street,
W1G 9TR

35newcavendish.co.uk

It is highly unlikely that anyone will leave the TacoCake brunch at The Cavendish either hungry or thirsty. For £50, tuck into two starters and four tacos (including a vegetarian, a fish, a meat and a sweet taco), washed down with bottomless margaritas.

SUPPERCLUB

31 Below

31 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4PP

31below.co.uk

Curated by 31 Below's chef director Chris O'Neil, this café-by-day, buzzing bar by night hosts a five-course supperclub, for £50. Dishes include cured sea trout tartare with pickled cucumber, crème fraiche, fried duck egg, oyster mushrooms and truffles; and Galician octopus with piquillo peppers and smoked paprika mayo. Dishes will be accompanied with a variety of carefully selected wines.

WINE PAIRING MASTERCLASS

Vinoteca

15 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BE

vinoteca.co.uk

Pairing interesting wines with inventive dishes is what Vinoteca does best. Starting at 1pm, for £45 you'll be talked through (and given the opportunity to guzzle) five dishes paired with wines, including asparagus, soft egg and parmesan with IGP d'Oc chardonnay; confit pork belly, borlotti beans, walnuts and rosemary with a glass of Argentinian Serbal pinot noir; and Devon blue cheese with onion jam and oatcakes, washed down with tawny port.

FOOD MATTERS SUPPERCLUB

The London Clinic

20 Devonshire Place,
W1G 6BW

thelondonclinic.co.uk

A supper club themed around the nutritional benefits of food. For details, see listing for 24 April.

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FARMERS' MARKET

Boxcar Butcher and Grill

Aybrook Street, St Vincent Street
and Moxon Street

lfm.org.uk/markets/marylebone/

Between 10am and 2pm, around 40 food producers will be selling their wares on Marylebone's streets. Try oysters for breakfast from Norfolk based Longshore, or a mushroom sandwich from The Mushroom Table. Look out for raw milk from Hurdlebrook, meat and poultry from Flitteriss Farm, Galileo Farm and Layer Marney Produce and a huge range of seasonal vegetables and fruit from Manor Farm, Perry Court Farm, Riverdale Organic Farm, Chegworth Valley, Wild Country Organics and the ever popular Potato Shop.



Donostia



Boxcar Butcher & Grill

GIN AND TONIC SUNDAY BRUNCH

The Montagu Kitchen

Hyatt Regency London—The Churchill, 30 Portman Square,
W1H 7BH

themontagurestaurant.co.uk

For £75 per person, enjoy a gin and tonic and a three-course meal, chosen from a menu of classic British dishes made with local, seasonal produce: think Whitstable oysters, homemade pork pies, and roast beef, followed by apple and walnut pie with clementine fool. The afternoon will also include live entertainment—watch this space.

BASQUE CIDER AND PINTXO FESTIVAL

Donostia

10 Seymour Place,
W1H 7ND

donostia.co.uk

Cider seems to have fallen foul of the craft drink revolution on these shores—but in Basque country, love of this straw-coloured sustenance is as strong as ever. The official season runs from January till April, and at Donostia it's being celebrated in true Basque style: with live music, and plenty of good food, including the restaurant's famed aged beef steaks. Tickets cost £10 and come with two pintxos (small plates), a bottle of cider and a commemorative glass and pourer.

TXAKOLI FESTIVAL

Lurra

9 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BA

lurra.co.uk

Over at Donostia's sister restaurant, you'll find a celebration of the Basque Country's other beloved beverage: txakoli—a dry and often slightly sparkling white wine. Your £40 ticket gets you half a bottle per person (as well as a glass and the traditional pourer), plus sharing plates traditional Basque fare. Sample dishes include bonito tuna, boquerones (anchovies) or jamon Iberico, and grilled hake with bilbaina sauce (a garlicky chilli number).

MENUS & OFFERS

24-28

APRIL

PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI WINE TASTING

Delamina

56-58 Marylebone Lane, W1U 2NX
delaminamarylebone.co.uk

A tour of the world's oldest wine region, the Middle East, with wines from Kishor, a boutique winery within a village for people with special needs; Cremisan, a convent in Bethlehem that constitutes the only producer in Palestine; and Lahat, led by top Israeli sommelier and oenophile Itay Lahat. Tickets are £15 and include nibbles.

THE SECRET VEGAN SUPPERCLUB

The Gate

22-24 Seymour Place, W1H 7NL
thegaterestaurants.com

Tuck into a five-course plant-based menu at famed veggie restaurant The Gate, featuring finely sliced British asparagus and sauce vierge; courgette flowers filled with ricotta, pesto and semi-dried tomatoes; and caramelised Yorkshire rhubarb tart served with crème patisserie. Tickets cost £49.50, including a wine pairing with each course.

BAA-ROLO EVENING OF SPRING LAMB AND BAROLO TASTING

Boxcar Butcher and Grill

23 New Quebec Street, W1H 7SD
boxcar.co.uk

Priced at £55 per person, in this celebration of spring you'll receive a glass of prosecco and snacks on arrival, followed by a tasting board of three cuts of north Yorkshire texel lamb—chargrilled rack, slow-cooked lamb shoulder, and pan-roasted neck—with Jersey royals, purple sprouting broccoli, homemade mint sauce and gravy alongside. Tickets include a taste of three biodynamic and organic barolos from Piedmont, each of a differing style.

Bernardi's

62 Seymour Street, W1H 5BN
bernardis.co.uk

Elegant neighbourhood Italian Bernardi's is offering 20 per cent off the food from its a la carte menu for the duration of the festival. Highlights include creamy burrata cheese with blood orange, crisp heirloom radicchio and pistachios; grilled yellowfin tuna with spring asparagus, olives, and a datterini (tomato) and caper dressing, and roasted lamb loin with bagna cauda (a hot dipping pot of garlic and anchovies), baby artichoke, wild garlic, broad beans and peas. Quote 'Marylebone Food Festival' when booking, or simply mention the deal on arrival for walk-ins.

Blandford Comptoir

1 Blandford Street, W1U 3DA
blandford-comptoir.co.uk

On Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th April, Mediterranean restaurant and purveyor of fine wine Blandford Comptoir is offering two seasonal dishes for £24—or £35, including an aperitif and wine pairing. Expect the likes of mackerel tartare with horseradish yoghurt and rye crisp breads or hake with lardo, artichoke barigoule (artichokes braised in white wine broth, Provençal-style), roasted quail, truffled leeks, sweetcorn and pickles.

Caffè Caldesi

118 Marylebone Lane, W1U 2QF
caldesi.com

Of all Europe's cuisines, Italian can make a reasonable claim to be the most adept at creating wonderful food from its native vegetables, with plants often used as the star of the show rather than an afterthought. At Caffè Caldesi, a little corner of Italy at the top of Marylebone Lane, seasonal veg will be very much front and centre for the festival, with a vegan set menu offering two courses for £18.50, three courses for £22.50 and four courses for £26.

Carousel

71 Blandford Street, W1U 8AB
carousel-london.com

Carousel might be famous for its rotating roster of guest chefs, but its in-house team—who knock up fresh and seasonal lunch offerings every day—are equally worthy of notice. For the festival, they'll be dishing up a dish of pasta and a glass of wine for just £10, including bucatini with Aylesbury duck ragu and pecorino, or agnolotti with grilled calçots (a Catalonian veg reminiscent of a giant spring onion) onion broth and wild garlic. Quote 'Marylebone Food Festival' on arrival to bag the deal.

The Cavendish

35 New Cavendish Street, W1G 9TR
35newcavendish.co.uk

The downstairs of The Cavendish restaurant has become one of Marylebone's most characterful European-style bars. With every first drink purchased between 5pm and 8pm during the festival, guests will receive complimentary aperitif bar snacks, designed to celebrate the culinary diversity of London.

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Carousel



Bernardi's

MENUS & OFFERS

24-28 APRIL

Chiltern Firehouse

1 Chiltern Street,
W1U 7PA

chilternfirehouse.com

It's not often you can roll up to Chiltern Firehouse—one of the swankiest establishments in town—and expect to chow down on three courses from head chef Andre Balazs for £35. We suggest you make the most of the opportunity and book in fast. Choose from slow poached egg with wild garlic and spring vegetables or halibut crudo with gordal olive, apple and cucumber to start, followed by either short rib, asparagus and wild garlic chimichurri or hake and morel mushrooms with a seaweed hollandaise, topped off with chocolate and milk ice cream.

Cocoro

31 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2NH

cocororestaurant.co.uk

Marylebone Lane's long-established Cocoro restaurant specialises in sushi, izakaya dishes and ramen. For the festival, the restaurant will be offering a menu of special Japanese sandwiches, including salmon teriyaki, yakiniku (grilled meat) and pork cutlet, costing £10 each. In the evening, a premium chiashi sushi menu will be available for £28.



Chiltern Firehouse

Daylesford

6-8 Blandford Street,
W1U 4AU

daylesford.com

Celebrate the quality and provenance of high-welfare, pasture-raised organic meat with a dining experience that puts the art of the butcher front and centre. Female butcher Sammy will be preparing cuts to order, while sharing knowledge about Daylesford meat. Chefs will prepare the chosen cuts and personally serve each table, and a wine specialist will be on hand to recommend wines from Château Léoube, Daylesford's organic vineyard in France. Available between 12-4pm throughout the festival, the menu is priced between £24-49. Walk-ins are welcome, but to guarantee a table email wendy.mubaiwa@daylesford.com at least 24 hours ahead.

Fischer's

50 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 5HN

fischers.co.uk

Lauren Kerr joined Fischer's as head chef in December last year. Aged just 23, what she lacks in age she more than makes up for in ability—and for the food festival, she'll be whipping up a special that makes the most of the season's offering: asparagus with fried duck egg, wild garlic and girolles, priced at £15.25.

Hankies

The Montcalm Hotel
61 Upper Berkeley Street,
W1H 7PP

hankies.london

Bringing the best of Delhi's street food to London, the Montcalm's Hankies restaurant serves Indian food tapas style: in the case of the Marylebone Food Festival, that means 15 dishes for £29.50, including the signature roomali roti (a classic Indian roti flatbread, hand spun till thin and folded into 'hankies'); spicy chicken and spring onion mantu (ravioli) served with chilli oil, yoghurt and a lentil salsa; steamed mustard fish in banana leaf; and mutter choley (spiced, braised chickpeas with mango powder).

Il Baretto

43 Blandford Street,
W1U 7HF

ilbaretto.co.uk

At this popular neighbourhood Italian, for £48 a head diners will receive a cocktail and three courses from a set menu: to start, choose from tuna tartare with avocado and salted shallots, or burrata with cherry tomatoes; follow that with maccheroni with black truffle, giant spaghetti with pecorino and black pepper, or tagliolini with lobster, tomato, sweet chilli, garlic and wine sauce for a main (supplement £4)—or, the 'pezzo di resistenza', a whole baked sea bass in a salt and herb crust to share. If you've room for more, round things off with a traditional tiramisu or petit fours.

Jikoni

19-21 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DH

jikonilondon.com

Ravinder Bhogal's Jikoni, whose inventive 'mixed heritage' menu plays with the flavours and cultures of Asia, the Middle East, east Africa and Britain, is offering a two-course lunch for £19.50 throughout the festival. In the early evening, £27.50 will buy you a Jikoni signature drink and a three-course menu, featuring Franca's chickpea chips and fenugreek Bengali tomato chutney, followed by tiger prawn khichdee, lemon rice, moilee broth and coconut chutney.



Daylesford



Le Vieux Comptoir



Jikoni



Il Baretto

Le Vieux Comptoir26-28 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EUlevieuxcomptoir.co.uk

Le Vieux Comptoir's wine cellar, deli and cafe, located in a quiet Moxon Street townhouse, gets you as close to France as it's possible to be without jumping on the Eurostar. Here, throughout the festival, you will be able to sup on a flight of two extra brut grand cru champagnes—Assailly Grand Cru 'Brut Nature' and Arnould Grand Cru 'Extra Brut'—for just £20. Or for £10, try two gluten-free beers—a blonde and a blanche—from the Brasserie de Vezelay microbrewery, located in the Morvan Regional Natural Park in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region of central France.

Ooty66 Baker Street,
W1U 7DJooty.co.uk

Ooty, Baker Street's attractive new south Indian restaurant, named after an idyllic hill-station in the state of Tamil Nadu, has a three-course festival menu for £40 (including a cocktail). Downstairs at Ooty Club, the luxurious Colonial-style basement bar, festival-goers can enjoy three cocktails and three accompanying bar snacks for £25.

Opso10 Paddington Street,
W1U 5QLopso.co.uk

Opso serves up modern Greek-inspired small plates, based on high quality ingredients. Its festival menu offers four courses for £28, featuring favourites such as Opso hummus with pumpkin seeds and chilli oil, and the souvlaki bun—grilled slow-cooked pork belly, tzatziki tomatoes, red onion in a mini pitta bun, served with hand-cut chips.

The Pickled HenThe London Marriott Hotel,
134 George Street,
W1H 5DNmarriott.com

The Pickled Hen has teamed up with Marylebone Gin and Rubies in the Rubble—a sustainable food brand that makes high quality relishes and jams out of surplus produce that would otherwise go to waste—to offer a set menu for the festival. For £18, you will get to enjoy a Marylebone Gin G&T and a choice of signature dish: the Pickled Hen burger with Rubies in the Rubble relish, garnish and fries; fish and chips with mushy peas and Rubies in the Rubble piccalilli; and Tom's chicken pie with creamy mash, and gravy.

The Portman51 Upper Berkeley Street,
W1H 7QWtheportmanmarylebone.com

The Portman, a characterful London pub with an attractive upstairs dining room where chef Ben Wood serves up seasonal British dishes, is offering two courses for £16 or three courses for £19, featuring heirloom tomato salad with wild garlic pesto and black olives, and a tart of king oyster mushrooms with rocket, pickled shallot and truffle.

The Providores and Tapa Room109 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4RXtheproviders.co.uk

The Providores barman Roberto has collaborated with Marylebone Gin to create a special Marylebone Food Festival cocktail. Priced at £10, the 'MGR', as it's been dubbed, comprises fresh and floral Marylebone London Dry Gin, infused with the fruity flavours of rhubarb, cointreau, cranberry and lemon juice, and rhubarb tapioca.

Roganic5-7 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DBroganic.uk

Any guests ordering Roganic's long tasting menu during the festival will be offered a complimentary glass of the exceptional Exton Park with Simon Rogan, a bespoke sparkling rosé, made from a blend of 70 per cent pinot noir and 30 per cent pinot meunier grapes, created by the Hampshire-based English wine estate Exton Park in collaboration with the restaurant's chef. Quote 'Marylebone Food Festival' when booking.

Trishna15-17 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DGtrishnalondon.com

Every year, to mark the arrival of spring, the skies of Basant Panchami are streaked with flashes of colour: the sight of the annual kite festival. In homage, Trishna is running a special tasting menu, celebrating the new season's produce and flavours of coastal India. Have three courses for £28.50, or four for £35 with a choice of beer, wine, or lassi.

Twist Kitchen42 Crawford Street,
W1H 1JWtwistkitchen.co.uk

Established near Bordeaux 20 years ago, Sturia has been a pioneer of sustainable sturgeon farming in France. Its exceptional caviar is being showcased at Twist Kitchen throughout the festival on a special menu that features several of the producer's caviar styles—10g of Classic Baerii for £19, 10g of Classic Oscietre for £24, 10g of Vintage for £27—as well as caviar-based dishes such as bio egg yolk 62° and aged Parmesan with Classic Oscietre and Perigord truffle essence, and Ora king salmon tartare with pickled courgette and Vintage caviar £21.

Vinoteca15 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BEvinoteca.co.uk

Vinoteca Marylebone, which offers an expertly-compiled list of high-quality, characterful wines and pairs them with a selection of dishes that optimise their impact, is staying true to this ethos by preparing a special dish for the festival—beef ragu, panne carasau and gremolata—designed to couple perfectly a glass of Egri Bikaver 'Bull's Blood' 2015 from Eger in Hungary. The food and wine together come for just £16.



The Portman



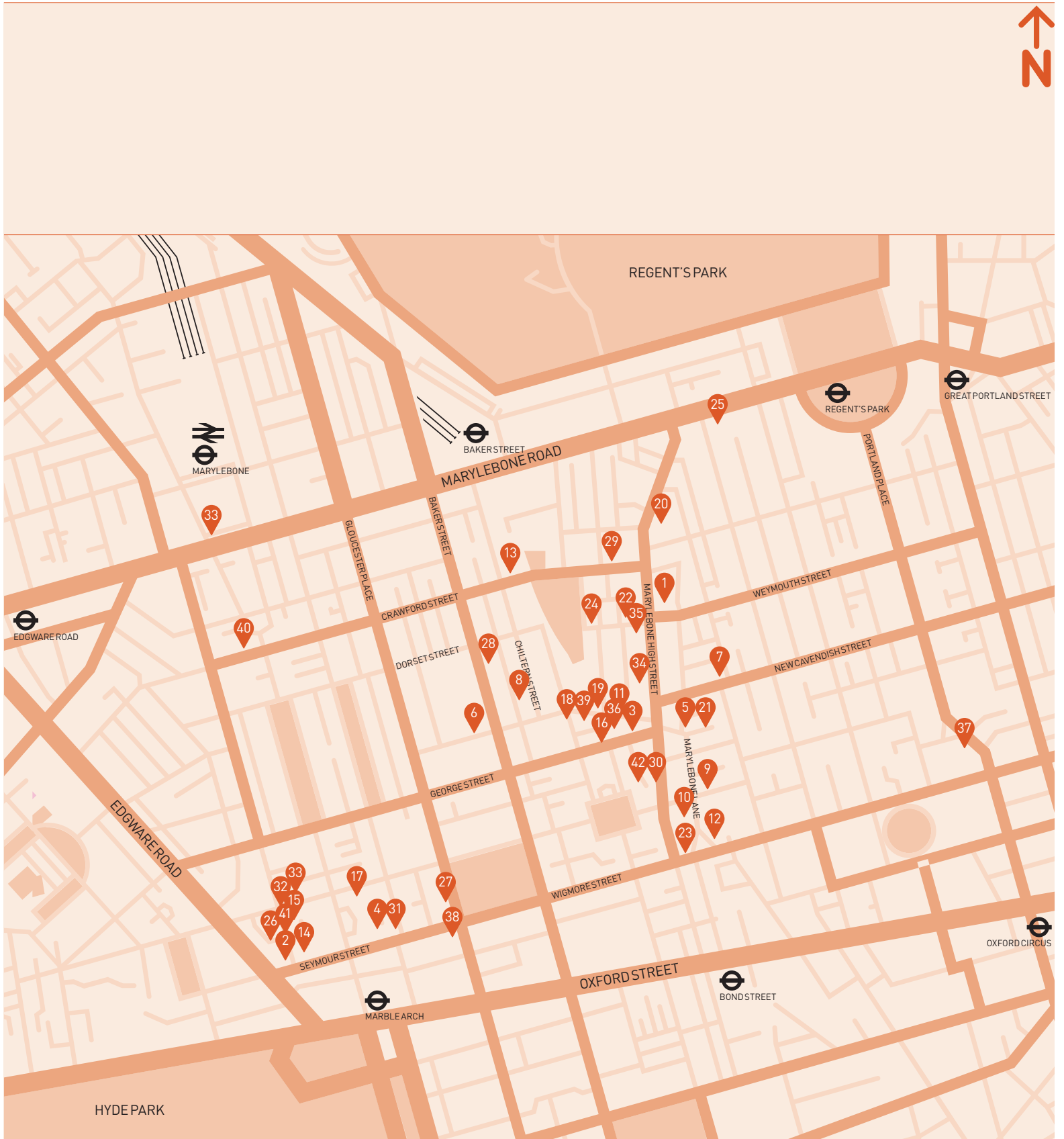
Twist Kitchen

24-28

Dozens of the area's food and drink establishments are participating in the Marylebone Food Festival. This map includes all those confirmed at the time of publication, but check the website for up-to-the-minute listings and details of how to book if needed.

marylebonefoodfestival.com
 marylebonefoodfestival
 marylebonefoodfestival

1. **31 Below**
31 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4PP
31below.co.uk
2. **Bernardi's**
62 Seymour Street,
W1H 5BN
bernardis.co.uk
3. **Blandford Comptoir**
1 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DA
blandford-comptoir.co.uk
4. **Boxcar Butcher and Grill**
23 New Quebec Street,
W1H 7SD
boxcar.co.uk
5. **Caffè Caldesi**
118 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2QF
caldesi.com
6. **Carousel**
71 Blandford Street,
W1U 8AB
carousel-london.com
7. **The Cavendish**
35 New Cavendish Street,
W1G 9TR
35newcavendish.co.uk
8. **Chiltern Firehouse**
1 Chiltern Street,
W1U 7PA
chilternfirehouse.com
9. **The Coach Makers Arms**
88 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2PY
thecoachmakersarms.co.uk
10. **Cocoro**
31 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2NH
cocororestaurant.co.uk
11. **Daylesford**
6-8 Blandford Street,
W1U 4AU
daylesford.com
12. **Delamina**
56-58 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2NX
delaminamarylebone.co.uk
13. **Fucina**
26 Paddington Street,
W1U 5QY
fucina.co.uk
14. **GAIL's Bakery**
4-6 Seymour Place,
W1H 7NA
gailsbread.co.uk
15. **The Gate**
22-24 Seymour Place,
W1H 7NL
thegaterestaurants.com
16. **The George Bar**
Durrants Hotel,
32 George Street, W1H 5BJ
durrantshotel.co.uk
17. **Hankies**
The Montcalm Hotel,
61 Upper Berkeley Street,
W1H 7PP
hankies.london
18. **Il Baretto**
43 Blandford Street,
W1U 7HF
ilbaretto.co.uk
19. **Jikoni**
19-21 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DH
jikonilondon.com
20. **Fischer's**
50 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 5HN
fischers.co.uk
21. **La Cucina Caldesi**
4 Cross Keys Close,
W1U 2DG
caldesi.com
22. **La Fromagerie**
2-6 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EW
lafromagerie.co.uk
23. **Levant**
76 Wigmore Street,
W1U 2SJ
levant.co.uk
24. **Le Vieux Comptoir**
26-28 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EU
levieuxcomptoir.co.uk
25. **The London Clinic**
20 Devonshire Place,
W1G 6BW
thelondonclinic.co.uk
26. **Lurra**
9 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BA
lurra.co.uk
27. **The Montagu Kitchen**
Hyatt Regency London
—The Churchill,
30 Portman Square,
W1H 7BH
themontagurestaurant.co.uk
28. **Ooty**
66 Baker Street,
W1U 7DJ
ooty.co.uk
29. **OPSO**
10 Paddington Street,
W1U 5QL
opso.co.uk
30. **Pachamama**
18 Thayer Street,
W1U 3JY
pachamamalondon.com
31. **Philglas & Swiggot**
22 New Quebec Street,
W1H 7SB
philglas-swiggot.com
32. **The Pickled Hen**
The London Marriott Hotel,
134 George Street,
W1H 5DN
marriott.com
33. **The Portman**
51 Upper Berkeley Street,
W1H 7QW
theportmanmarylebone.com
34. **The Providores
and Tapa Room**
109 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4RX
theprovidores.co.uk
35. **Rococo Chocolates**
3 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EW
rococochocolates.com
36. **Roganic**
5-7 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DB
roganic.uk
37. **Roux at the Landau**
1C Portland Place,
W1B 1JA
rouxatthelandau.com
38. **Texture**
34 Portman Street,
W1H 7BY
texture-restaurant.co.uk
39. **Trishna**
15-17 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DG
trishnalondon.com
40. **Twist Kitchen**
42 Crawford Street,
W1H 1JW
twistkitchen.co.uk
41. **Vinoteca**
15 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BE
vinoteca.co.uk
42. **Xier /XR**
13-14 Thayer Street,
W1U 3JR
xierlondon.com





FOOD PHILOSOPHY

SIMON SAYS

Simon Rogan, owner of Roganic, on farming, simplicity and embracing London

Interview: Clare Finney

"BEAUTY IS SIMPLICITY. BEAUTY IS ONE AMAZING INGREDIENT THAT YOU FOCUS ON, AND ONE OR TWO THINGS TO SUPPORT IT"

1. The farm is central to everything we do. Everything revolves around what it gives us.

2. We don't use anything that doesn't taste good.

That sounds a bit obvious, but you'd be surprised how many guys don't follow that adage. We do forage, but it has become a very over-

used medium recently and there are people using stuff which to be quite honest doesn't taste particularly nice.

3. For me beauty is simplicity. Beauty is one amazing ingredient that you focus on, and one or two things to support it.

That is the way I like to cook: I am not interested in over-fussing, and when ingredients are as amazing as we get from our farm, there's no need.

4. In my early days as a chef, the idea of London scared me. I had always worked in the Home Counties or along the south coast. Working for Jean-Christophe Novelli

showed me there was more to life—that I should experience London and Paris. You go where the most amazing job is. You find the chefs you admire and you work with them, no matter where they are or what it's like. JC opened my eyes as a restaurateur as well as a cook.

5. We are not a vegetarian restaurant, but vegetables

QA:

MELTING POT

Ravinder Bhogal, founder and head chef of Jikoni, on mixed heritage, female chefs and the joys of unexpected spiciness

Interview: Clare Finney

Q: You describe your menu as ‘mixed heritage’. What’s in the mix?

A: **My own heritage is so mixed: east African, British, Indian—even Persian, because I am north Indian and we share culinary heritage and cooking techniques. My father was an aeronautical engineer, so we travelled a lot and from an early age I was exposed to many different flavours—and of course, we’re in London, so our menu is a nod to this diverse, multicultural city too.**

Which of these influences were you most exposed to?

My mum cooked a lot of traditional north Indian dishes, and the staple that you have in every north Indian house is dal. You have it at least once a week, but you don’t get bored of it because there are so many different kinds. When we lived in Kenya, we lived in an extended family of grandparents, uncles and aunts, all in the same big, beautiful house built by my uncles. There’d be anything from 15 to 25 people at the table for lunch and dinner, so we all had to get

are the star of the show.

The vegetables come first, and the meat or fish is only ever an accompaniment. As for the vegetarian dishes, what I think makes our restaurants special is that you don’t miss the meat or fish. We are big exponents of not eating a lot of animals, because of the impact on the environment.

6. I will grow anything.

Anywhere I travel I find seeds to bring back and try to grow. We don’t just grow indigenous plants on our farm; we grow saffron, sunflowers, wasabi, and we are looking at growing vanilla and hemp. Funnily enough, the hardest thing is carrots. They always seem to be eaten by something.

7. There is, of course, a lot that goes into the three items on your plate.

A simple plate of food has a story to tell. The sauce might have been made with a rotary evaporator. The oil might have been spun on a centrifuge. A lot of hard work goes into it—but we do things to help the flavour rather than change it: to try to keep it in its natural state.

8. One of the greatest things I’ve been involved with on the farm is our waste management system. It’s a closed circle system: the fruit, herbs and vegetables are grown alongside the animals. The waste from the restaurant gets eaten by the pigs, chickens and ducks. They convert it to green waste, which goes back into compost.

Roganic
5-7 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DB
roganic.uk



**MICHAEL MCGRATH,
RESTAURATEUR**

Eating in

The Ginger Pig would be a great place to go for a really nice cut of meat. Or some sausages. I really like their sausages.

Eating out

For something casual but tasty, The Real Greek. We went there having been turned away from everywhere else, and we had such pleasant rustic food. The waiters were sweet, the atmosphere was human, it wasn’t overpriced. I really liked it. For something a bit more special though, Fucina.

our hands dirty—from the age of four or five I remember podding sacks of peas for this matar masala mum used to make. She was director of proceedings: petite to look at it, but very disciplinary in the kitchen. She got the job done.

Is she your biggest culinary influence?

Definitely. She just has such a command of Indian food and such intuition, too. She could just throw things in pots and make something incredible—she never used a recipe book. She never wrote anything down. She didn’t teach me like that, either. It is gospel, the way these recipes are sung down the generations from mother to daughter. I try to encourage that here in the kitchen. I have grown up with this very generous kitchen of women who always shared their wisdom, and I’m glad to be replicating it.

The pale pink walls, plush patterned cushions and beautifully styled dishes have led many people to describe Jikoni as ‘feminine’. Do you agree?

I have a male business partner who, when I said I wanted to paint the back wall pink, turned white. “Do you think this place is too feminine?” he kept asking and I’d have to say, “Stop saying ‘feminine’ or ‘maternal’ like it’s a negative thing.” I don’t see them as negative. If this was an industrial restaurant with bare brick walls and filament lighting, it just wouldn’t be authentic. It wouldn’t be me.

How gendered is cooking these days?

I do think men and women cook in different ways. I could be wrong—that could be a massive generalisation—but from my experience, I find women cook very intuitively, whereas men are more methodical and scientific. They cook to show off a bit; women cook to nourish and nurture. It’s neither better nor worse. It’s just different. I raise my eyebrows in disbelief when they have specific awards for female chefs, but I think that’s changing. I know so many amazing female chefs at the fore: Angela Hartnett, Romy Gill. I think their names are becoming as common now as their



male counterparts, and it brings me absolute joy.

And yet a restaurant kitchen is still widely perceived to be a place that demands a thick skin and a slightly bullish nature—not traditional ‘feminine’ qualities...

I understand that kitchens can be tough, ‘masculine’ environments, in which a woman can feel like she has to behave like a man, but mine isn’t. On the contrary, one thing I feel very strongly about is supporting those women who have been part of the restaurant industry, left to become mothers and wish to return. We are facing severe chef shortages, yet there are some incredible chefs

out there who we are losing when they become mothers because the lifestyles are incompatible. For me, if staff want to do part-time work, that is fine. I would far rather people have a work-life balance. If they come in exhausted, it will show in the food.

You have partnered with the Refugee Council to train women in the Jikoni kitchen. What prompted that project? When we arrived in this country, I was seven and my mother couldn’t speak English. She couldn’t write and had never been given an education. It was such a frightening and alien place for her. I feel very much like she was marginalised, and that if someone had only given her the chance, Jikoni would be hers today, so I feel the plight of these refugee women very personally. It’s about giving confidence, more than anything: they already know how to do many things in the kitchen, but when you show up in an unknown country you need someone to answer your questions and believe in you. One of the ladies we have in is an amazing baker, and she dreams of opening her own bakery or market stall. My dream is to be able to help someone like that. If those women were in kitchens, running their own restaurants and stalls, how great would the world of cooking be?

“I HAVE GROWN UP WITH WOMEN WHO ALWAYS SHARED THEIR WISDOM, AND I’M GLAD TO BE REPLICATING THAT HERE”

What is the hallmark of the Jikoni style of cooking?

I think the backbone of my cooking is spices—the use of spices in ways which are interesting or unexpected. I like to cook something quite familiar, then subvert it with a pop of unexpected spice. Recently I did a rhubarb crumble recipe for a magazine and I put in some pink peppercorns. It just gives it a little something else. Without spices, I sometimes think my cooking would be the equivalent of lift music: inoffensive, but a little bit boring.



Jikoni
19-21 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DH
jikonilondon.com

DOUGH NUTS

Five of Marylebone's most intriguingly off-piste pasta dishes

1. Carousel

Put anything other than the prerequisite pecorino and black pepper atop pasta in Italy and you'd be hard pressed to call it cacio e pepe without causing a major incident—thankfully, Carousel isn't bound by the threat of familial excommunication, and can chuck in anything they like (so long as it's delicious, of course). Here that means smoked eel, woven among strands of bucatini.

2. Caffè Caldesi

Ordinarily we'd be loathe to describe as pasta anything that didn't actually have, well, pasta in it. But given Giancarlo and Katie Caldesi are some of the best in the business—and have made it their mission to find gluten-free alternatives after Giancarlo was diagnosed with coeliac disease—we're trusting them. Besides, buttered savoy cabbage ribbons topped with Tuscan beef and pork ragu is bound to be delicious.

3. Fucina

Homemade calamari (thick tubes of calamari-like pasta, hailing from Naples) with a seabed's worth of yellowtail, clams and mussels. Dotted with Italian tomatoes and small, Liguarian taggiasche olives and sprinkled with basil, while perhaps not traditional, it's a dish that'll brighten grey days.

4. The Cavendish

Having first made waves at acclaimed New York restaurant Del Posto in 2010, we've been hoping the monster dish that is 100-layers lasagne would turn up on this side of the pond. Enter The Cavendish, and endless layers of silken sheets of pasta, interspersed with meat, parmesan and bechamel. Because more is always more, when it comes to pasta.

5. Opso

Most of us don't associate Greece with pasta (save, perhaps, orzo), but they do it very well. We're not entirely sure what 'village pasta' is, but it looks a bit like chips and, topped with fried duck egg, brown butter and smoked metsovone—a semi-hard, aged cow's milk cheese from northern Greece—that only makes us want to eat it more. A bit like a deconstructed, Greek carbonara, sans pancetta.

QA:

MAN OF THE WORLD

Carlo Scotto, chef-patron of Xier and XR, on global influences, the importance of experimentation, and why he might be a bad Italian

Interview: Viel Richardson



"I DON'T DO ITALIAN FOOD, I DON'T EAT PASTA, AND I DON'T LIKE FOOTBALL. MAYBE I'M A BAD ITALIAN"

Your restaurant is split into two—Xier and XR. What's the thinking?

My vision with Xier and XR is to tell the complete story of the food we serve to the customers. The dishes should represent the suppliers, farmers, artisanal producers as well as me as a chef. Each one of us has been involved in every plate of food, and their hard work and skill needs to be represented on each plate. If a customer understands this story, then we have done our job.

The two floors have the same concept, which is modern European with global influences, but with different presentations. Xier only serves a tasting menu, designed to be

a culinary experience. Downstairs at XR, things are more informal, with an a la carte offering. The atmosphere will be casual, the food will have a more familiar feel, and you can combine the food as you wish.

You have mentioned the global influence in your cooking. Where does that come from?

Travels through Asia, Japan and the US have been a big part of my culinary journey. Working in a high-quality restaurant kitchen gives you technique, but creativity comes from within and you find the place where that comes from. For me that means travelling. You need to see what the world has to offer.

Is travel about discovering new ingredients?

Actually, for me it isn't the ingredients that make the cuisine, but the culture in which those ingredients are found. Once you begin to learn about a culture then you begin to understand how people cook, which determines how their dishes have evolved and how they approach their ingredient choices. I try to bring that knowledge back to my kitchen. I always say

that the cultures of the world are the ingredients and the world itself is the kitchen.

The more I know about different cultures and how they eat, the deeper my understanding of the ingredients and the more interesting the ways these influences appear on my menu.

Did you work in kitchens when you travelled?

I did some kitchen work, but mainly went as a traveller. Working in different kitchens is important for a chef, but so is expanding your horizons as a person. Talk to people, watch the sunsets, eat with new friends in their homes. These experiences stay with you for life, they allow you to grow as a person and a chef. Then they come out in your cooking.

So, are you still an 'Italian' chef?

Not at all. I think I am the only Italian

chef in London who does not do Italian food. I also don't eat pasta, though I love cooking it, and I don't like football. Maybe I'm a bad Italian.

What do your Italian friends say?

They tell me that I should stick with my roots and do Italian cuisine, but I don't agree. There is nothing wrong with Italian cuisine, it is one of the best in the world. But it is not who I am or what I want to represent. If you look around the world, you see so many spices, herbs, ingredients. Why define yourself by only one tradition? That is not for me. Cooking is also about pushing the boundaries.

"I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO ANGELA HARTNETT— WE CREATE OUR OWN LIMITATIONS, AND SHE SET ME FREE FROM MINE"

You come from Naples.

What was the food you grew up on?

Neapolitan food is not only pizza, even though Neapolitan pizza is the best in the world. I came from outside Naples, by the coast, so eating seafood was a daily thing. I grew up eating mussels, sea urchins, clams, fish, octopus. My dad used to take me with him to gather mussels and clams. So, you can say I was born in the sea.

You lived with your grandmother for a while. What do you remember about her cooking?

The dish that stands out most was her ragu with meat and tomato sauce. I used to wake up to the smell of coffee brewing and the ragu cooking. It was this very thick, bubbling tomato sauce. I remember sneaking into the kitchen and dipping bread in the sauce, which was lovely. But the real memories were not the food, but the company. One thing in Italian culture is that you never eat alone. Family and friends are always there. Our family dinners could turn into 20 people around the table. For me, that is the best thing about the Italian food tradition, the fact that the table is a very communal place.

You were washing up in a Michelin-starred kitchen aged 13. How did that happen?

The family suffered a tragic death when I was a child, which hit us all very hard. Home became a difficult



place and I became withdrawn and rebellious. I wanted some money and heard that a restaurant needed help in the kitchen, so asked for a job washing up. On my first day I saw people shouting, screaming, rushing around. There was this really intense energy as they tried to achieve something great. Other people can be intimidated by that intensity, but for some reason I wasn't. The first time I put on that chef's jacket, those monsters in my mind that were driving me to be rebellious seemed to melt away. The kitchen felt like a safe space from the beginning, and that has never changed. Apart from time with my family, the kitchen is the place in the world where I feel most at ease.

How do you approach creating a dish?

When I am in the kitchen, I will think about how I can combine something like an Asian citrus with European ingredients, because my instinct says that something is there to be discovered. Usually calamansi, a Filipino citrus, and stracciatella, a soft fresh cheese from the heart of a burrata, wouldn't go together, but often it is not the essence of the ingredients that is the problem, but the ratio. Combined in equal parts they do not work, but if you experiment with different ratios then things start to become interesting. New flavours and textures emerge. Use a small amount of calamansi to slightly raise the acidity in the creamy stracciatella and you taste something interesting. It is about understanding why ingredients are seen as not working together and using that knowledge to see if you can blend them in a harmonious way.

Angela Hartnett was a real mentor.

What did she see in you?

I have no idea what she saw in me. I simply asked if I could work in her kitchen and she said yes. After a few months she moved me to the meat and fish section, which is the hardest in the kitchen, it is incredibly demanding. I was the youngest and least experienced in the kitchen. I even asked if she was sure when she first told me. In the beginning it was a real struggle and I was not really coping. One day when I was very behind on my preparation for the shift, she came over to help. After a while she asked me what was wrong. I told her I was finding it hard and wasn't sure if I could do it. I will never forget her next words: "If I didn't think you were good enough, I would never have put you in this section." It was like something was set free inside me. That vote of confidence changed everything. From that shift onwards, the mistakes fell away. I will always be grateful to her—I really believe we create our own limitations, and chef Hartnett set me free from mine.

Xier / XR

13-14 Thayer Street,
W1U 3JR
xierlondon.com

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

TOP NOTES

Aaron Ashmore, head chef at Clarette, on why a pencil is as important to a chef as any kitchen implement

Interview: Viel Richardson

A pencil may not be the first thing people would think of as an essential chef's tool, but you will see one sitting behind my ear all the time and it comes in useful literally every hour of my working day.

Whether I'm ordering produce, drawing up recipes for the chefs, planning schedules or writing down the mise en place at the start of a shift, I am always using it. When I think of a new idea for a dish, I write it down straight away. If I don't, it disappears from my mind, which can be very frustrating. Recipe tweaks also get written down immediately. It just means those moments of inspiration that suddenly occur are retained rather than being lost.

It is all about staying organised, staying focused, knowing what needs to be done. Having things written down makes it easier to organise the staff, allocate the jobs, keep on top of stock. If you make a note when you see that something is running short, you are much more likely to top it up than if you just think, "I'll sort that later."

Some chefs can get through shifts while juggling all that information in their heads, but to me that feels too chaotic and is definitely more stressful. You also see timings go awry, things get done in the wrong order. I've been there myself and I hate it. If you are a disorganised chef, you simply won't be making the best of your talent. Also, a badly organised kitchen can be incredibly wasteful, which is bad both financially and environmentally.

There are always a few pencils floating around the kitchen, a couple on the order sheet for everyone to use, one on the pass to take notes about dietary requirements, allergies, special requests, that kind of thing. Whenever a new chef starts, I generally give them a pencil. It is amazing how many chefs don't carry one and ask to borrow yours.

Of course, you need talent and passion to do well, but most great chefs have a bit of the control freak about them. My pencil doesn't make me a better chef, but it is a vital part to me being the best chef I can be.

Clarette

44 Blandford Street,
W1U 7HS
clarettelondon.com

THE PROMISED LAND

Limor and Amir Chen, the husband and wife team behind Marylebone's vibrant new Delamina restaurant, on Tel Aviv, Ottolenghi and the search for the perfect olive oil

Words: Clare Finney

"This is how I cook at home: healthily, but without compromising on taste and texture," says Limor Chen, one half of the wife and husband team behind Marylebone's Delamina. Hers is an approach to food that draws upon the wild diversity of culinary influences she shares with her other half, Amir—Israeli, Iranian, eastern European, South American—and the sights, smells and savour of the Levant. The result is as close as you can get to the sun-drenched shores of the eastern Mediterranean without leaving W1.

Limor and Amir are Israeli but, first and foremost, they are people of Tel Aviv. The distinction matters, says Limor: "Tel Aviv is different to Israel in the same way New York is different to the US, and Cape Town to South Africa. It has a magnetic energy. It has its own vibe." Though Amir's family left when he was small, Limor spent her childhood and early adulthood in this liberal university town, where "there is no sense of tomorrow, and life is one long party. It's not a pretty city," she continues—unless you're a fan of Bauhaus architecture that is, of which there is plenty—"but it is creative and incredibly open-minded."

Theirs is a cuisine bursting with fresh, punchy herbs, tingling spices and the sweet and sour tang of dried fruits, and freed from some of the heavier weapons employed in northern European kitchens. "Traditionally trained chefs have a tendency to use as much butter as possible," explains Amir. "We have worked hard to get away from that mentality. We don't fry unless we have to, and we use good olive oil in place of butter." Delamina's head chef, Cristiano, is Italian, so using olive oil is second nature to him. But to forswear frying? "It's been an interesting journey," Amir grins.

"We have taught each other," says Limor. "Cristiano respected my passion and philosophy, I respected his knowledge. He knew which of my dishes could work and which we couldn't do justice to," says Limor. Did it matter that Cristiano isn't

"THIS IS HOW I COOK AT HOME: HEALTHILY, BUT WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON TASTE AND TEXTURE"



Israeli? “Not in the slightest. I knew what I wanted. I just needed an experienced chef who was open-minded enough to work with me!”

The Chens took Cristiano to Israel, where they initiated him into a very different approach to cooking from that of Italy. “Ours is a country of immigrants,” says Amir, and each immigrant “brought with them the dishes of their country. In Italy, if you don’t cook a recipe the right way, it is not because you’re creative, it’s because you don’t know how to do it. In Israel, there is no right way of doing anything.” The country’s chefs are joyously creative; their dishes were liberated from the shackles of tradition the moment they left their original countries.

There’s no strict regionality in Israel. In Italy, a Neapolitan could be shot at dawn for cooking a Roman pizza. In Israel, they’ve bigger fish to fry—and, as Amir points out, they’ve all intermarried. “My mum is Bulgarian, my dad is South American, of Lithuanian extraction. Limor has Russian, Iranian and Ukrainian roots. Things have been mish-mashed.” The only common denominator, says Limor, is the use of citrus, olive oil, and local herbs and spices—which she took painstaking care over when it came to sourcing. The olive oil took the longest. “Good olive oil is the backbone of Israeli cuisine,” explains Amir.

“And we needed one to go with a range of dishes.” Limor tried endless suppliers, from countries across the Fertile Crescent, until she found The One, from Lebanon. Fortunately, when it came to sourcing the herbs and spices, her path to punchy cooking had been cleared in recent years, thanks in no small part to another of London’s ex-pat Israelis.

“Yotam Ottolenghi’s role is not to be underestimated,” she says. “Prior to him, many of the spices we use every day had never even been heard of before in the UK.” Za’atar, sumac, tahini, tamarind: not only did Ottolenghi bring these into our consciousness, he physically imported

them, and his restaurants, writing and TV appearances have made us familiar with their charms. His proteges have spread the word still further: “With the exception of The Palomar guys, all the great Israeli chefs—Honey and Co, Berber and Q, Bala Baya—hail from Ottolenghi’s kitchen. He really has been at the forefront,” explains Limor. She herself never worked with him; in fact, as she consistently reminds us, she has no formal training and no prior restaurant experience. All she can offer, she insists, is a taste of home. But what a home.

Delamina

56-58 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2NX

delaminamarylebone.co.uk



“OURS IS A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRANTS, SAYS EACH IMMIGRANT BROUGHT WITH THEM THE DISHES OF THEIR COUNTRY”



WASTE DISPERSAL

24 April, day one of the Food Festival, is Stop Food Waste Day, an international day of action in the fight against food waste. Around 10 million tonnes of food are wasted in the UK every year, which is both disastrous for the planet—estimated to produce more than 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions—and, at a time when the use of food banks is at an all-time high, deeply unfair. So, what are the people and businesses of Marylebone doing to help limit waste and, where it’s unavoidable, ensure it goes to a worthy home?

Romy Miller, GAIL’s

Food waste is entirely contrary to our way of thinking about the world. At GAIL’s, everything is handmade: if we are wasting something, not only is it a shame because nobody’s eaten and enjoyed something delicious, it’s a waste of the bakers’ time and skills. But like any shop, some days we sell out completely, and other days we don’t.

When there is surplus bread, we give it all away. We have partnerships with more than 40 charities, which collect our food at the end of every day. Those people have the biggest hearts: it’s initiatives like those that really bring a community together. But there are a number of things we do in-house to reduce waste, too. Today’s croissants are tomorrow’s filled croissants—we double bake them. We have great relationships with our suppliers: we work closely with Quicke’s dairy, for example, to make sure we use everything that they’re making. We get whole wheels of their clothbound cheddar and use slices of it in our sandwiches, then any offcuts go in our thyme and sea salt sourdough stick. We also use their butter, which is made from whey, a bi-product of cheesemaking—and absolutely beautiful.

At GAIL’s, nothing goes in the bin. My team do this because we really believe it’s the right thing to do. Nobody wants food to go to waste. It’s the number one thing people in our bakeries are proud of: that the business really cares and makes a point of having relationships with charities. I think that’s awesome.

Gail’s Bakery

4-6 Seymour Place,
W1H 7NA

gailsbread.co.uk

Kobus Maree, The Langham, London

There are many challenges that come with providing the experience that our guests expect while doing what we can to reduce food waste. As a five-star operation, you can’t run out of food—if it’s on the menu it must be available, so inevitably there are products that don’t sell every day. But nothing ends up in landfill. In the kitchen we have a very good

system, the Orca. It works like your stomach, using microorganisms sprayed on little recycled plastic bio chips that mix with the food to digest it and turn it into water, which goes into the drains system. The things we can't put in there, like shells or big bones, are taken away and turned into fertiliser.

We also partner with the Plan Zheroes, which collects surplus food and distributes it to local charities. They take anything left over in the restaurant at the end of the day, such as our croissants and bread rolls. A lot of our conference guests pay for all the food, but they don't eat all of it, so with Plan Zheroes we can donate it on their behalf to charity.

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The Langham, London

1C Portland Place,
W1B 1JA

langhamhotels.com

Ali Mulroy, FoodCycle Marylebone

The volunteers who help us provide a weekly dinner for residents of Lisson Green Estate using surplus food are just incredible. We have a team who work nine-to-five jobs, then they come here at six o'clock and help set up for the meal, cooking and laying the tables.

During the day, our volunteers go out and collect surplus food from shops and cafes all over Marylebone: Tesco has been fantastic, as has Gail's (whose cakes are amazing!), Paul on Edgware Road, As Nature Intended and M&S. City Harvest also has a big warehouse of food we collect from, full of produce that would have just gone to waste. Our chefs then work out what to cook. There's so much ownership, everyone plays their part: the shops, who text me to say what's there, the volunteers, the people who cook the food. Everyone's looking out for the project and that's what I really like about it; it's not based on any one person.

We've also got people who come for a meal, but also insist on helping us to set up, which is amazing. Sometimes you have to

wrestle bowls off people because they want to help me clear the table, and I say, "You're our guests. We want you to have a restaurant experience!" And they just laugh and say, "Yeah, yeah, whatever love," and carry on regardless. I love that: that it's not a case of them and us.

This is about tackling food waste and poverty, but it's also about tackling social isolation. It's wonderful to be able to use food that would've gone to waste to be able to feed people, but also to be able to build relationships through regular, week by week contact. And it's not just the people who use the services that benefit. One of our volunteers told me they'd been going through a really hard time and being able to connect with people and do something worthwhile had saved them. It's not this cheesy charity feel-good thing—it's real.

FoodCycle Marylebone

5 Rossmore Road,
NW1 6NJ

foodcycle.org.uk



SYBIL KAPOOR, FOOD WRITER

Eating in

Because I am a food writer, I am often recipe testing, which requires going to certain specialist shops. At Green Valley, you can buy proper spices, mooli, quality daal—things that are quite hard to get elsewhere. I also love the farmers' market, where I find my wild herbs and seasonal greens, and La Fromagerie, where I get my cheese, eggs and cream. I buy my bread there, too, if I don't have time to bake my own.

Eating out

I love Locanda Locatelli. If it is a special occasion, I go there—and if I had a small request it would be that he re-did his pizza pop-up at Carousel, another favourite place of ours. For more casual meals with friends we tend to go to Fischer's. I always have the same thing: veal escalope, and the apple strudel for dessert.

DEEP PURPLE

Marylebone's dining scene is a pretty diverse place, as attested by this snapshot of how an aubergine might be put to use in a handful of its restaurants

1.

Levant

Moutabal: fried aubergine dip with tahina, strained yoghurt and garlic

2.

Blandford Comptoir

Aubergine and parmesan croquettes

3.

The Gate

Miso glazed aubergine: half aubergine roasted and glazed with miso sauce, topped with toasted cashew nuts, ponzu sauce, micro coriander, sesame seeds

4.

Delamina

Roasted mauve aubergine, raw tahini, black grape molasses

5.

Il Baretto

Melanzana alla parmigiana: baked aubergine with mozzarella, parmesan, tomato and basil

6.

Opso

Hunkiar begendi: melting beef cheeks, aubergine puree, cinnamon and cumin tomato

7.

The Pickled Hen

Halloumi moussaka

8.

Pachamama

Caramelised aubergine, peanuts, coriander oil

9.

Jikoni

Pressed shoulder of Cornish lamb, home ground ras al hanout, burnt aubergine, flatbread

10.

The Providores and Tapa Room

The Tapa Plate: grilled chorizo, marinated olives, grilled artichoke, aubergine sultana relish, Après-Soleil cheese, fig-orange preserve

11.

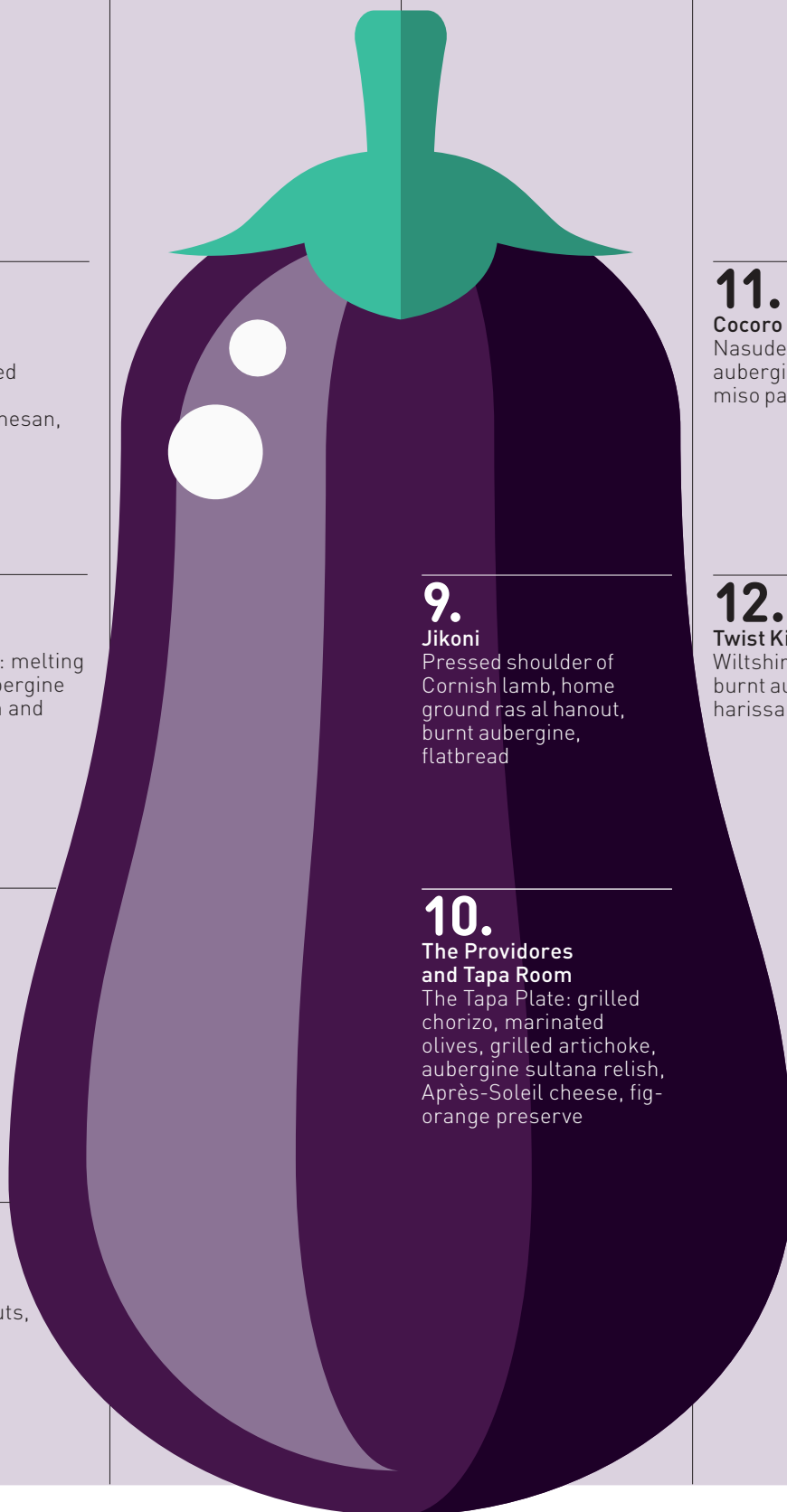
Cocoro

Nasudengaku: grilled aubergine with sweet miso paste

12.

Twist Kitchen

Wiltshire lamb chops, burnt aubergine, green harissa



DESSERT STORM

Four of our favourite Marylebone puddings

1. Bernardi's

It is a truth universally acknowledged that an Italian meal of any authenticity must end with a tiramisu. It is a truth locally acknowledged that Bernardi's serves one of the best: laced with Patron XO Cafe, sweetened with agave and fortified with 202 espresso—meaning espresso beans roasted at 202 Fahrenheit. If more coffee is what you need, we'd suggest having one of the restaurant's excellent espresso martinis alongside your tiramisu.

2. The Portman

Though a range of delectable-sounding desserts is on offer at The Portman pub, there is really only one sweet you need order: the sticky toffee pudding with toffee sauce and vanilla ice cream. It's the pudding by which all self-respecting gastropubs should be weighed and measured—and it's a rare thing to find one this sticky, and with such an extensive wine list to serve with it, too.

3. Twist Kitchen

While all of Twist's desserts sound intriguing to the point of madness—pineapple, creme patissiere and chocolate soil; cheesecake, mango and black olive caramel—the flan-creme-caramel with salted popcorn flakes and Amazonian cashew nut ice cream takes the biscuit. Or the flan, as it were. Twist is impeccable in its sourcing, so you can rest assured no Amazonian was harmed in the harvesting of those cashew nuts. This dessert is simply a flan-tastic realisation of the world's finest natural resources, and a chef's wild imagination.

4. Il Barreto

'Allow 12 minutes' instructs the menu of Il Barreto next to its tantalising translation of 'fondente al cioccolato'—hot chocolate fondant with vanilla ice cream—and, while it will force your fellow diners to wait desperately, spoons poised, for whatever quicker dessert they ordered, it's worth their irritation. It arrives, trembling, the smart boule of gelato on the cusp of melting. One sharp spoonful, and the fondant splits and oozes darkly into the cool pools of vanilla. If you're careful you'll make it last five spoonfuls, but quite frankly, we could finish it off in sub-three.

BOARD REPORT

Patricia Michelson of La Fromagerie tells the story behind the English goat's cheese on her Marylebone Menu cheese board

"HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM RACHEL AND FRASER ARE PART OF THE NEW WAVE OF YOUNG BRITISH CHEESE MAKERS"



I am in the business of celebrating cheese from all countries. When I was asked to provide a cheese plate for The Marylebone Menu, the opening event of the Marylebone Food Festival, I decided that rather than limit ourselves to one region we should showcase cheese from all over Europe and Britain—proving that the true British spirit is one of adventure, not division. Given everything that's going on at the moment, it seemed the right thing to do.

Alongside port from the Duoro region of Portugal, we will be serving a Beaufort from France, a cheese that we are well known for; a lovely washed rind taleggio from Italy; Colston Basset stilton; and Brightwell Ash, a goat's cheese from Norton and Yarrow in South Oxfordshire. This particular goat's cheese is new. The producers, Fraser Norton and Rachel Yarrow, are best known for Sinodun Hill—a goat's cheese in a truncated pyramid shape, for which they've won national and international awards—but this latest cheese is ash coated and round in shape, much like selles-sur-cher.

Husband and wife team Rachel and Fraser are part of the new wave of young British cheesemakers. They came in to the industry through the back door really, giving up their jobs in the City to go the School of Artisan Food in Nottinghamshire. There, they did an intensive course in cheesemaking and then worked at Neal's Yard Dairy before starting their own cheesemaking facility alongside Nettlebed Creamery, using the local goat's milk.

Now they finally have their own small farm, with a herd of Anglo Nubian goats, known as 'the Jersey cows of the goat world' due to the high fat content of their milk, and British Toggenburg. It's a beautiful area of the world, South Oxfordshire, just at the foothills of the North Wessex Downs—and the land and climate are very similar to that of France's Loire region. There are no extreme temperatures and the grass is abundant, so it's easier to kid all year round, unlike in the south of France where no goat's cheese is produced between December and spring.

The ash is a very fine charcoal powder, which serves to draw out some of the acidity from the cheese, tempering it. It helps with the rind, too: cheese ripens from the outside to the centre, so the edge of the cheese can become quite dry and tough, but this rind remains soft and creamy. The mixture of the white rind and the ash are very pretty together, and the ash doesn't give too much away in flavour beyond mellowing the strong acidity that goat's cheeses can sometimes have. At most, it adds a bit of interesting texture.

The port we're serving at the dinner—Quinta De La Rosa Finest Reserve—is relatively light and not too sweet, so it should go well with it. If you prefer wine however, I'd recommend a white—contrary to popular belief.

La Fromagerie
2-6 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EW
lafromagerie.co.uk

QA:

THE CHOCOLATIER'S ART

Chantal Coady, founder of Rococo Chocolates, on rococo art, packaging design and the pushing of boundaries

Interview: Clare Finney

Rococo is the name of an art style. What inspired you to use it?

The name came to me when I was doing a three-week business studies course. I was being pressed to give a name to my business, and I couldn't think of one. They said, "Just make something up then," and Rococo just tripped off my tongue. It was only later that I looked it up, and discovered it was a French word meaning shell work or scroll work, florid ornamentation. I thought, this is perfect; I can run with this. Art and design is my background—I studied art at Camberwell College—so I was always going to bring it to anything I did. A lot of my inspiration for Rococo came from trips to Paris and Belgium: seeing the beautiful chocolate shops, and feeling there was nothing in this country that had that kind of excitement or magic.

Why do you think other European countries developed such different chocolate cultures to ours?

The difference between England and the rest of the continent is the industrial revolution, and its effect on our methods of food production—for a long time we were more concerned with feeding our population than with producing fine food, and the continent, particularly the French, had the monopoly on gastronomy. Now of course we have come full circle and we have the most amazing cheesemakers, bakers, chocolate makers and so on.

FOOD PHILOSOPHY YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Mercedes Sieff, co-owner of Yeotown Kitchen, on the close connection between food and wellbeing

Interview: Ellie Costigan



"THE BIGGEST INSULT WOULD BE IF SOMEBODY SAID, 'IT TASTES HEALTHY.' WE ALL KNOW WHAT THAT REALLY MEANS"

1— I was born in Canada, but my mother's from Spain and my dad's from west Africa. They were both good cooks: I grew up with paellas, African stews, okra and plantain, dry cod and tomato bread. They taught me the value of cooking for yourself, and the importance of food in terms of community, connectivity and family.

2— The biggest insult to our food would be if somebody said, "It tastes healthy." We all know what that really means. What we want you to say is: "It tastes good." If we didn't tell you anything was eliminated, you shouldn't notice.



How far have we come as a nation in our appreciation of chocolate?

I think we are pretty much leading the chocolate world to be honest. There are so many great chocolate makers in this country. I don't know how sustainable it is—a lot of them are very tiny businesses—but we have always been a bit out there when it comes to challenging tastebuds and pushing boundaries. It's something of a national sport, in a way.

What was the source of Rococo's iconic blue and white pattern?

It was inspired by a 19th century French catalogue of chocolate figures, brought to me by an antiquarian bookseller. "You have to buy this," he told me. "I know you'll do something good with it." It cost about a month's salary, but I bought it. I had the idea of photocopying the images, cutting them out and laying them out as a random repeating design. If you look closely at a Rococo wrapper you can see the illustration of beautiful, intricate chocolate fish or shells, next to their price in French cents, and

their catalogue number. Even today I'll take elements from this—a dog or a cat, say—and use them to create a special chocolate figure or bar. The handwriting you see on the bars and boxes is mine.

Does the same artistry go into creating new tastes and flavours?

I think so. Just as there is a palette of colours, so there is a palette of flavours in my head. There's something visual about it for me. It's hard to describe, but I can almost see if a particular combination is going to work or not.

You were born in Iran. Have your Persian roots influenced you?

A lot. Even though I have not been back since I was a small child and have no conscious memory of Iran, I feel it in my bones. The blue skies, the smells, the colours, the sounds—you can be very tiny and still absorb those sorts of things.

How significant has investing in your own plantation in Granada been in

3— If you remember to have your fresh-pressed green juice or your salad for lunch, why would you forget to look after your mind? Mindfulness is important; wellbeing goes beyond the physical.

4— We all have character strengths—they're not talents, they're virtues: courage, humour, zest, the ability to love and be loved, resilience, perspective. Rather than calling a dish a 'lean green kale machine', we've called them things like 'gratitude bowl'. I wanted to inspire people. The happiest people are those who use their strengths on a regular basis. The menu is a reminder of that.

5— There's more and more research into the link between the gut and mind. I absolutely believe that the two are completely connected. When you eat something that you know is not great, how do you feel? Or when you're in a bad mood, what do you go for, the kale or the ice cream? What you're putting in your body is absolutely going to affect your overall wellbeing.

6— We don't use refined sugars, we don't use dairy or meat. The point is to take a break: we're not

saying never eat those foods, never have a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, but we encourage people to make a few small changes that are sustainable. Maybe they will feel better for it, maybe they won't; everybody is different.

7— Eating well is so much about habit—is one slice of pizza bad for you? No. A whole pizza every day? That's a problem. There's no such thing as 'good' food or 'bad' food or 'clean' food—it's the quantity that's consumed and the attachment you have to it that matters.

8— I have two young kids, so I try to balance out my busy working life—if we're in Devon we go to the beach, we go swimming, we get out and about. When I'm here, I go to my own yoga classes, I do muay thai boxing, I love to walk, meet my friends and make sure I stay social. We travel a lot—we go to Bali every summer. It's very easy to get buried in work and caught up in your own thoughts. It's important to have fun.

Yeotown Kitchen
42 Chiltern Street,
W1U 7QT
yeotownkitchen.com



ensuring the ethical and qualitative value of your chocolate?

It's very important. It's complicated and quite political, but I do think the big producers could do more in terms of fair trade. It is all about adding as much value as you can to where the cocoa is being grown. If you think about a high street bar of chocolate, the amount of cocoa in it is less than 10 per cent. There's VAT, the retailer's margin, and everyone else along the way, so the amount that gets to the cocoa farmer is very, very little. We try to ensure that more of the value of the bar stays within the local economy. Watching that happen in our estate in Granada has been fantastic: they are poor, but they have all the basic medical stuff, schools, infrastructure, and the chance for bright people to go to university. To understand more about this side of chocolate is really important for me.

"LIKE A PALETTE OF COLOURS, THERE IS A PALETTE OF FLAVOURS IN MY HEAD. THERE'S SOMETHING VISUAL ABOUT IT"

Rococo Chocolates
3 Moxon Street,
W1U 4EW
rococochocolates.com



"KITCHENS WERE
RUN LIKE ARMIES:
HUGE LINES OF CHEFS
SAYING, 'YES SIR, NO
SIR.' PETER NEVER
OPERATED LIKE THAT"
MICHAEL MCGRATH

The Peter principle

Over the years, chefs who learnt their craft alongside Peter Gordon have had a major impact on London's dining scene. So, what is it that makes The Providores and Tapa Room's kitchen such a popular staging post on the way to success?

Words: Clare Finney

“They call him The Godfather... of Fusion,” says Anna Hansen. But while she does so with a smile and a comic pause, her acknowledgement of Peter Gordon’s influence could not be more genuine. As the executive chef of Clerkenwell’s acclaimed fusion restaurant The Modern Pantry and a woman who, alongside Peter, was one of the founding partners of The Providores and Tapa Room, she knows better than most the role her friend and former colleague played in making their shared style of food—a considered cacophony of techniques and ingredients from across the globe—popular. “Peter reinvented the wheel with his food,” she continues, “and he believed in me. That is everything. Peter by nature wanted the people he worked with to thrive and to succeed.”

And succeed they have. Look around London’s food scene and it’s impossible not to see, taste and smell the impact of Peter Gordon. There’s the rising popularity of fusion generally (“though rarely in the way Peter does it,” says Anna, loyally)—but perhaps most importantly, there’s the staggering list of alumni who have passed through his kitchen: Hamish Brown of Roka, Miles Kirby of Caravan, Moondog (yes, really) of Spiritland, Selin Kiazim of modern Turkish-Cypriot joints Kyseri and Oklava—not to mention Brad Farmerie of Public across the pond in New York.

“We’ve had some extraordinary people,” says Peter, failing, with characteristic modesty, to acknowledge either his own role in contributing towards this ‘extraordinariness’, or his knack for attracting it. Fortunately, Michael McGrath, another of the restaurant’s co-founders and its long-standing manager, is there to compensate both for Peter’s lack of vanity, and the jet lag a recent trip to New Zealand has landed him with. “We have been a magnet for great people,” he says, “and a lot of that is to do with Peter.”

When The Providores and Tapa Room first opened in 2001, Gordon Ramsay’s Boiling Point miniseries was still a talking point, exposing as it did the extraordinary pressure and macho culture of high-end restaurant kitchens. “Hotel kitchens were such a strong force in the 20th century, and they were run like armies: huge lines of chefs saying, ‘Yes sir, no sir.’ I think a lot of chefs came from that environment,” muses Michael. “Peter never operated like that. Anna never operated like that.”

“I’ve always viewed us as egalitarian—more of a family restaurant, really,” says Peter. “You have to do the job—you can’t be a slack-arse—but we’re a family here. We all muck in together.” In 2016, Peter and Michael celebrated 15 years of The Providores with a dinner cooked

by a team of alumni. “We cooked dinner with Selin, Miles, Brad, Peter—it was a huge reunion,” Anna remembers. Again, it felt like family.

One of the most powerful testaments to the strength and inclusivity of Peter’s kitchen is his friendships: pretty much everyone who has worked at The Providores remains in touch. “I remember in the early days of Caravan, Miles, who was head chef here for eight years, ringing me up and saying, ‘I just want to thank you for the way you led your kitchen and taught your staff. I understand now,’” Peter remembers. “We treat people well, whether they are the head chef or the dishwasher. I’ll help wash the floors if everyone else is busy. We work as a team.”

In an industry known for its churn, The Providores’ staff retention is unusual: Miles, for example, worked there for eight years; their bookkeeper, JJ, has been there for 16. “We don’t see it as a constant stream of cheap staff. It’s beneficial for businesses to keep people,” says Michael. JJ joined as a dishwasher back in 2003. When asked what he wanted to do with his life, he said accountancy, “so we helped him get training, and now he’s our bookkeeper.” They aren’t the only restauranteurs to invest in their staff—indeed, conditions have improved considerably across the industry in the past few years—but their sense of fairness and equality of opportunity was certainly ahead of the game.

In part, it’s probably a New Zealand thing—a thought I dismiss at first, wary as I am of subscribing to ideas around ‘national character’. Yet when Miles, Hamish and Anna all ascribe The Providores’ collaborative, can-do spirit to Kiwiness, I can’t help but ask Peter and Michael how their native country has influenced their philosophy. “It’s that



Michael McGrath (left) and Peter Gordon



"FUSION IS A DISCIPLINE. YOU CAN'T JUST SHOVE RANDOM THINGS TOGETHER ON A PLATE"

PETER GORDON

"THE FIRST THING I PUT IN MY MOUTH AT THE PROVIDORES WAS A DAMASCENE CONVERSION"

SELIN KIAZIM

slightly more relaxed approach, combined with the confidence of thinking, I can do that!" says Michael. "Entrepreneurial, but easy-going—with talent," adds Peter. It's not about where you're from—after all, Selin is second generation Turkish-Cypriot, yet she's one of Peter Gordon's proudest graduates—but there's a common consensus that New Zealand's food scene is sociable, centred on quality and inclusive. Their food is by geographical and historical necessity a combination of Asian and western flavours. Famously, they were brunching on avocados before either

brunching or avos were even a thing.

The Providores has acted as what Peter calls "a staging post" for aspiring chefs from New Zealand looking to cook in London. "A lot of these young Kiwis coming to the UK wouldn't have had the confidence to go into Michelin-starred kitchens." Now, they're going off into the world armed with a solid understanding of Peter's pioneering approach to cooking. "I have given them freedom of expression—but I think what people learned when it came to our kitchen was that fusion is a discipline. You can't just shove random things together on a plate."

"Your combinations are instinctive," says

Michael loyally. “Ultimately, when a chef puts different flavours together, they have to know if it is good or dreadful; when it works and when it doesn’t.” Peter Gordon’s proteges owe a great deal to Peter, but their styles and sensibilities are unique to them—as is their food, be it sushi, fusion or modern Turkish. “I think, when you started, people were determined to put a name to what you did—to put it into a box,” Michael says, turning to Peter. “But people care less about labels now. You can call it Pacific rim. You can call it fusion. But it is your food.”

SELIN KIAZIM Oklava and Kyseri

I remember the first thing I put in my mouth at The Providores: a betel leaf with tender pork trim, shrimp paste, tamarillo, crispy shallots and garlic. I thought, I want to work here immediately. It was a damascene conversion. This was the food I loved to eat.

At the time, I’d just finished catering college. Peter asked me to come in for a trial and when I arrived, they sang out to me from downstairs in the kitchen. Peter and Michael are living proof that you don’t have to be nasty to be successful in this industry. The fact that they created a restaurant that was a wonderful place to work as well as eat still does not get the credit that it should. I wanted to work with Peter not just for his creativity, but for the support and advice he gives. He’s so nice, you want to please him, and that filters down through the whole kitchen.

Cooking with Peter taught me to be completely fearless. Nothing sounds odd to me as a flavour combination—at The Providores I saw the impossible come to life. That makes your mind work in different ways, and even though I draw upon a lot of traditional dishes and methods in my restaurants, I think, what is the thing that will make it different, that no one else has thought of before?

The other thing I learnt was how to balance a dish: to create levels and textures. There is a dish that comes on and off the menu at Oklava that demonstrates this. The Turkish element is the monkfish chargrilled over coals, with Turkish urfa chilli. I add bitter orange caramel, honey, soy, olive oil and a hint of fish sauce. I serve it with a blood orange and coriander salad. That is probably the epitome of the food I cooked at The Providores meeting the food I cook today.

The Providores has been an incubator for good chefs because they created a good place to work—and they have never been afraid to do their own thing.



“I LOVED THE UNAPOLOGETIC, UNRELENTING PURSUIT OF FLAVOUR—HEAT, SALT, ACIDITY”

MILES KIRBY



MOONDOG Spiritland

When I was at The Providores it was the dream team: Hamish, Anna, Miles, Selin. I think that’s why I stayed so long—I was there for nine years, eventually becoming head chef. It was a really beautiful, encouraging place. You’d make something and Peter would taste it and say, “Add this”—and he’d be right. You’d make something like smoked strawberries and it would go terribly wrong, and he’d say, “Well, you tried. That’s how we learn things.” He was an amazing mentor: you could always catch a word with him and ask some advice. Peter is the person who discovered fusion food, basically, and he is the single biggest influence on me.

At The Providores I learnt that while a kitchen can be stressful, it can also be fun. Running a restaurant is about being firm but fair. You could have a laugh, but at the end of the day Peter was the boss. Today, at Spiritland, that’s how I run things: no one calls each other chef—we have names—and I encourage my staff to be creative. There’s no divide between front

“NO ONE CALLS EACH OTHER CHEF—WE HAVE NAMES—AND I ENCOURAGE MY STAFF TO BE CREATIVE”

MOONDOG

and back of house, no yelling or screaming. The Providores instilled that in me.

When I came to create the menu for Spiritland, I sat down with Peter. I wanted to chat about the fact that there would be some crossover, because I learned so much from him. He said, “That’s wonderful. Just as long as you don’t put Turkish eggs or scallops with crème fraiche and sweet chilli on the menu.”

At the end of the day, Miles, Selin, Hamish and I went to the same school. I helped Miles at Caravan. I helped Selin in her first pop-ups. We laugh and talk and make food and bounce off each other. I know it’s hippy-ish—especially coming from someone called Moondog who walks around barefoot—but I believe this sort of unity comes through in the food.

MILES KIRBY

Caravan

The moment I arrived at The Providores I knew it was the perfect fit for my personality. I’ve never tolerated people who are unreasonable, shouty, mean or bullying. That behaviour happens in certain kitchens, and I’ve done my darndest to avoid them. What I didn’t know was how much fun it would be. There was an expectation

that you would always do nothing but your best, but there was also support to make sure you did. The whole team was built around camaraderie and I thrived in that environment. It was a step up from anywhere I’d worked before in terms of professionalism, and I loved it.

I joined The Providores at the end of 2001 as chef de partie, just after it opened. In my first week in Peter’s kitchen everything I tasted—absolutely everything—blew me away. Being from New Zealand there were a lot of ingredients I was familiar with, but I was still mesmerised. I loved the unapologetic, unrelenting pursuit of flavour—heat, salt, acidity. Though there’s a balance that needs to be mastered, of course—there’s nothing worse than someone saying, “Can you tone it down a bit?”

I do think the culture of New Zealand is reflected in The Providores—multiculturalism, humility, communication—and I’ve strived to create that at Caravan. We have an open forum in which everyone can have their say on how we can improve. That’s very New Zealand. A sense of collective responsibility is what makes kitchens great.

Setting up Caravan was never about leaving The Providores. It was about going back to my friends, Laura and Chris, who I’d met in Wellington 25 years ago. In 2009 we felt like we’d all earned our stripes and could pursue our dream of having our own restaurant.

In Caravan I wanted some of the vibe of the Tapa Room. I loved the sharing small plates. We call ours ‘well-travelled cuisine’: anything goes, as long as it is a true representation of something I’ve tried elsewhere in the world. I wouldn’t say it’s fusion. I think Peter really owns that space and I don’t want to copy him. But in the pursuit of flavour, of excellent relationships with suppliers and in terms of vibe inside and outside the kitchen, we definitely have similarities.

ANNA HANSEN

The Modern Pantry

People think that fusion is having a restaurant where you cook both Italian and Indian food, or where you do a classic French dish using lemongrass. That’s not what it is for Peter. He doesn’t set out to cook an Indian dish ‘with a twist’—he reinvents the wheel. What I love, and what I think Peter loves, about fusion is that it is individual and creative. What he cooks and what I cook will be completely different, even if we have the same ingredients. We have our own styles.

Our way of being in The Providores kitchen was pioneering—but I don’t think I knew that at the time. Peter was only the second chef I’d ever worked with in Britain and before that I was with Margot and Fergus Henderson who were equally cool, relaxed and friendly. They were part of a small group of chefs heralding a new era of running kitchens. For them, it wasn’t about killing yourself over Michelin stars. It was about working together to make food that was good and interesting. We did work ridiculous hours, often—but we did so by choice, because we all wanted to thrive and succeed.

We had so much fun doing The Providores. When it was time to work, it was time to work, but we had a joke, listened to music, and we worked together, although it wasn’t always easy. It was the first time any of us had opened a restaurant before and it was a massive undertaking. It was a good experience to have had when it came to opening The Modern Pantry—though that was a different challenge. This time I was doing everything on my own.

The time I spent with Peter was invaluable. He believes in people, and I think the effect you can see around London is because of that. He’s a unique human being who has touched the lives of thousands of people, inside and outside the world of food. He is also a very clever man. The only chef who can touch him for creativity and kindness is Yotam Ottolenghi—and he is good friends with Peter, so he must be okay.

The Providores and Tapa Room

109 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 4RX

theprovidores.co.uk

“IT WASN’T ABOUT
KILLING YOURSELF
OVER MICHELIN
STARS. IT WAS ABOUT
MAKING GOOD,
INTERESTING FOOD”

ANNA HANSEN

LOCAL HERO

Trishna co-founder Karam Sethi on how his desire to recreate the energy and vibrancy of Indian food culture shaped one of Marylebone's favourite restaurants and led to his family-run business becoming a major force on the London restaurant scene

Words: Viel Richardson



"WITH TRISHNA,
WE OPENED THE
RESTAURANT THAT
WE WANTED TO EAT
IN OURSELVES.
NO PRETENSIONS,
NO STIFFNESS AND
GOOD FOOD"

KARAM SETHI



The world was a very different place in 2008. A little-known senator from Chicago named Barack Obama was named as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency of the United States, the collapse of the Lehman Brothers bank led to the financial world almost literally running out of money, and just as importantly (for us, at least) a new Indian restaurant called Trishna opened its doors for the first time on Blandford Street.

"You could say that it was a challenging time to open a restaurant," says Karam Sethi, smiling, as he casts his mind back over a decade. He had taken this bold decision along with his sister Sunaina and brother Jyotin.

"It was tough, but also a time of great opportunity. Back then, the big hotel and expensive fine-dining restaurants were dominating the scene. There seemed no space for people to open on a smaller scale or try something new. The credit crunch changed everything, as people were suddenly looking for new types of investments. Then Russell Norman opened Polpo, which was a new style of restaurant, and his success showed what was possible. He was a real inspiration to a lot of people, including us."

What Polpo demonstrated was that restaurants serving well-designed, beautifully cooked but keenly priced small plates was not only viable but potentially profitable. It was a style of dining that spoke to Karam and his siblings. The Indian tradition of dining, the tradition with which he had been raised, is based upon an informal family-centred experience, with everyone sharing communal dishes of excellent food. Karam had always believed that informality and unimpeachable quality did not have to be mutually exclusive and thought that the approach to dining espoused by Russell Norman could be a perfect fit for the Indian food he loved.

However, the British Indian dining scene was not a promising landscape for such an idea. On the one hand you had the local restaurants where people went for a limited selection of cheap Anglicised dishes, washed down by pints of lager. On the other were some expensive, starchy, overly-formal high-end restaurants reserved for special occasions. Neither of these appealed to our budding restaurateurs.

"The vibe in high-end restaurants didn't appeal to us. It was really stiff, there was no character and the interior design felt sterile. There was none of the energy, vibrancy and life that I have always associated with India and its food," Karam explains. "The food we wanted to serve was food inspired by home cooking, the



food we have grown up eating both in London and on our visits to our grandparents in India. There, we would dine in clubs such as the gymkhanas and golf clubs, where the food was great and the atmosphere more relaxed. Those dining experiences as children still very much inform the type of food and style of restaurants we like. With Trishna, we opened the type of restaurant that we wanted to eat in ourselves. No pretensions, no stiffness and good food. For me, Indian food should be served in the middle of the table and shared."

That consuming food should be a sociable and enjoyable experience is deeply important to Karam. For him, the excitement and pleasure that you revelled in when being taken out for a meal as a child should not disappear just because you are old enough to have children yourself. However, everything had to start with the food. And that, he thought, had to be tasty, consistent and authentic.

Quite how important authenticity would be was something that Karam and his siblings perhaps underestimated at first. "From the start, we were serving dishes based on the cuisine from the south-west coast of India. We were confident that it was something that would be new to many diners and that they would enjoy it as much as we did," Karam explains. "But while things were going alright, the restaurant hadn't really sparked into life. Something was missing." After two years, the Sethis decided that a change needed to be made, and Karam himself went into the kitchen. "I decided to make just one major adjustment, but to apply it to everything," he says. "From the start, we had adapted the spicing to what we thought the British palate preferred, and in hindsight this had been a mistake. I made the spicing bolder, punchier and more complex, much more reminiscent of how these dishes would be served in their native regions. It was not a case of making things hotter—too

much chilli heat overwhelms the flavours, and the main ingredient still has to sing on the plate. You just need to use the spices with confidence. The dishes retained a modern twist, but at their core was the idea of honouring the skills of those who had created this cuisine, and trusting that our diners would appreciate the dishes they had created.”

That faith paid off—the following year Trishna was awarded Michelin’s Bib Gourmand, which recognises restaurants that serve outstanding food at affordable prices. But there was more to come. In 2012 Trishna became one of the few Indian restaurants in the country to gain a coveted Michelin star. “I thought that it was a wind-up,” says Karam. “I first heard on the morning of my 28th birthday, due to the list being leaked early. When we realised it was true, there was a real sense of pride as well as surprise. It was also a bit daunting, as with that star comes pressure. You are now in the spotlight, especially as an Indian restaurant. Suddenly, there was a curiosity among the public to see what a Michelin-starred Indian restaurant has to offer. We started pushing ourselves even harder to make sure we didn’t only keep it for a year. Everyone’s hard work means it is still on the door today.”

That was seven years ago and much has changed. Trishna has now grown into JKS Restaurants, the group taking its name from the first initial of each of the three siblings. What began as a risky punt at the start of a recession has led to the Sethis being some of the most influential figures on the London dining scene. The group is involved with 17 restaurants across London, split into two distinct areas. One is based around the cuisine of the Indian subcontinent and is made up of Trishna, Gymkhana, Hoppers, a delivery service called Motu, which focuses on Indian street food, and Brigadier. Then there are the ‘partner’ restaurants including places such as Lyle’s, Bubbledogs and Bao.

“Jyotin, Sunaina and I actively run the Indian restaurants, whereas we are investors in the partner restaurants,” says Karam. “Throughout our expansion of the Indian cuisine offerings, the ethos has remained the same: punchy, bold flavours inspired by authentic regional cooking. Along the way we have expanded the variety of regions we cover. In Gymkhana, the food has a wider range but is more from the north of the country; in Hoppers, dishes are inspired by the food of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu; and Brigadier is probably the most pan-Indian.” Karam explains.

That early lesson in authenticity has not been forgotten, and nor has a commitment to using the best produce available. “We import a lot of the spices and the chillies we use from India—Kashmiri chillies being a big one. We also import some other things like alphonso and Pakistani mangoes, and other produce we just cannot source outside India. However, we buy in as much as we can from British producers,” Karam explains.

Things are going well, but there is no resting on laurels being planned any time soon. The differences in regional Indian cuisine can be huge, and this is an area

that Karam, Sunaina and Jyotin are keen to continue exploring. “The cuisines in Goa and Delhi are as different as those in England and Portugal. There’s a huge amount to discover. It is very much at the forefront of our minds to continue to create a wide variety of authentic, complex and flavourful dishes.”

One sign of the change that Trishna’s success has helped inspire is the diminishing of the ‘curry and a pint’ culture that had become the dominant form of Indian food. Now, the suggestion that Indian food and good wine might be paired together is no longer met with the scepticism of old. “They were definitely not seen as a things that belonged together. We were working against a culture that said Indian food was not fine enough to warrant good wine, but we knew from our own experience that this was not true,” Karam recalls. “This was a perception we really wanted to change and we put a lot of hard work into this from the beginning. We were sending out a message about the sophistication of good Indian cuisine. I believe Trishna was the first Indian restaurant to have every dish on the menu paired with a carefully chosen wine. We also had a wine flight option for our tasting menu. Sunaina has to take a huge amount of credit for this. She took on the job of building the wine list and worked incredibly hard at finding the right wines and working on the pairings—she was a real pioneer in this area. Funnily enough, we have now come full circle. At Brigadiers, the food is being matched with carefully chosen and interesting beers that we are brewing ourselves. Matching carefully great drinks with Indian food no longer raises eyebrows.”

Karam is still very much involved with the food side of the business, though he has stepped back from the daily grind of the restaurant kitchen. His time behind the stove is now spent alongside the group’s other chefs as they develop menus for new restaurants or work on new recipes for the existing ones. “We will hire a chef three to six months before the project opens and I am in the kitchen pretty much every day with them. During that time, we will be testing dishes, testing ingredients, creating the menu. We will very much go through the whole process together. The great thing is that we can create much more creative and adventurous menus than you once would,” Karam reveals. “I wouldn’t call myself a chef anymore. While I still go into the kitchen during the set-up phase, I have to take a holistic view of the whole restaurant concept. I look at layout, decoration, menu, staff, uniforms. But my thinking on food is still very much the same. I’m inspired by old, rare and classic recipes and creating our takes on those recipes. We never ‘fancy them up’, but stay close to the roots of where the food originates. Bold, indulgent spicing with a sense of fun and a sense of occasion defines our food. It has to create conversation, be convivial. That is what I think our food is and should always be.”

Trishna
15-17 Blandford Street,
W1U 3DG
trishnalondon.com



SOURCE MATERIALS

Even the most skilled of cooks are only as good as the produce at their disposal. Eight of Marylebone's chefs tell the stories of the ingredients that inspire their best work

Interviews: Ellie Costigan, Clare Finney, Viel Richardson

OLIVE OIL

EDUARDO TUCCILLO
TWIST KITCHEN

In Italy, olive oil is like gold. It is very important to me. It represents my childhood: my grandfather used to have a few olive trees on his little piece of land and in September or October, we would go and pick the olives from the tree and make olive oil. It felt like a festival.

For my olive oil, I use a small farm in Calabria called Frantoio Baroni de Rosis Rossano, which is owned by a family friend and is one of the oldest producers in Italy. They're still using the old methods of picking and cold-pressing the olives, which is done at 27C. Once the olives are picked, they are pressed and bottled within 12 hours—it's really fresh. They don't produce much, only for a few restaurants in the area and for us.

It's very, very good oil. The owner, Roberto, is an expert on olive oil. He has different kinds of olives on his frantoio: dulce de rossano, leccino, coratina, nocellara, pendolino and moraiolo. He makes me a few different blends. There's one that is really top, which we use for finishing—not aggressive, very low in acidity, fruity, very Mediterranean. If we are making a simple fillet of fish, we will use just a little bit of this olive oil. Then we have one for salads, which is a little bit more acidic, but refreshing so that the salad still feels crisp when you eat it. It's very well balanced. Then we use one for cooking, which is still very delicate and mild, with just the right amount of fat. In my kitchen, olive oil is one of the main ingredients that I use, so I had to choose one of the best. I am very lucky to have Roberto.

Twist Kitchen
42 Crawford Street,
W1H 1JW
twistkitchen.co.uk



CEPS

COLIN KELLY
PICTURE

My favourite ingredient is the mushroom. When I'm at home, it goes into almost everything and if I could, I would put it in everything here at the restaurant as well. I love the umami taste of mushrooms cooked in some butter and salt. In the restaurant, we make it a little more fancy. At the moment, we have a mushroom tart with slow cooked duck egg, and it has five or six different types of mushrooms: roasted mushrooms, sliced raw mushrooms, mushroom powder, mushroom sauce, mushroom ketchup, and onion and mushroom marmalade—just because I love it. I don't think that's ever going to come off the menu.

We always have a wild mushroom on the menu somewhere—we use different mushrooms depending on the time of year—but my favourite is the cep. It's always a little celebration when they come in. The thing about the cep is that it's quite meaty, so if you're a vegetarian it's a good substitute. Also, the flavour is fantastic—even just from the trimmings. We pare it down to make it beautiful, but we don't really waste any of the mushroom; we use the trimmings in sauces and stocks. If you make a meat-based stock, you have to cook it for hours and hours, whereas I cook my mushroom stock for 10 minutes—no more, otherwise you cook off that freshness and flavour.

Picture Marylebone
19 New Cavendish Street,
W1G 9TZ
picturerestaurant.co.uk

COPPA

DALMAINE BLIGNAUT
BOXCAR BAKER & DELI

We use a company called Cobble Lane Cured for all our charcuterie. They're an amazing little producer: everything is made in Islington, and all of the produce they use is British. Here at the restaurant

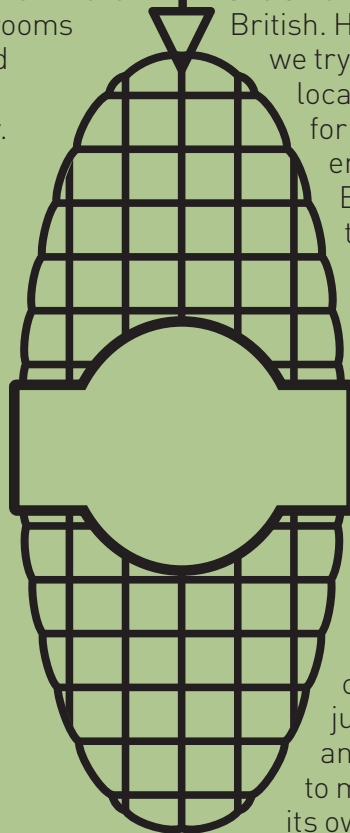
we try to get everything as locally as possible, as much for the quality as for the environmental factors.

Britain produces some of the best livestock in the world.

The coppa is probably the one we use most and will come back to time and again, because it's so versatile. It's made with free-range pork shoulder, specifically a cut called the pork collar. It's rubbed with simple spices and aromatics—black pepper, cloves, nutmeg, ground juniper, mace, garlic, salt—and hung for three months to mature. It's great just on its own, letting the delicious

meat speak for itself, or on our charcuterie board we serve it with a lovely homemade olive and caper tapenade, freshly baked sourdough, a few gherkins and some pickle. We also make our own flatbreads: one of them is plain rosemary and salt, then as it comes out of the oven we put the sliced coppa over the top so that the residual heat from the flatbread softens up the marbled fat and really brings out all that flavour.

Boxcar Baker & Deli
7A Wyndham Place,
W1H 1PN
boxcar.co.uk



BEEF

NEMANJA BORJANOVIC

LURRA

The ingredient Lurra is best known for is our beef, seared over the grill. In the past we've used Galician blond beef, but in recent months we've been working with a farm to raise our own retired dairy cows, here in the UK.

We take cows that have been through a four-year dairy cycle, after which they don't produce enough milk to be economical. Normally at this point they would go to the abattoir to be turned into cheap mince for dog or cat food. Instead, we buy them for comparatively little, and for a year to 18 months these retired cows live out their days on a lovely farm in Thirsk, Yorkshire. It's the best time of their life: just grazing and wandering.

During this time, all milk production stops. The fat transfers from the udders, where their energy has gone into producing milk, to the rump and back. Fat is flavour—as is age, which is why old dairy cows are such a delicacy.

Our cows are reared on grass—it is unnatural for cows to eat grain, and not great for the environment. In terms of sustainability, cows produce a lot of methane. The traditional model is to have dairy cows and beef cows, but this is dual purpose. One cow in its lifespan can produce both dairy and meat. Methane production is reduced by default—and the dairy farmers get better value from their livestock. It's a win-win situation, not least for the customer, who gets this nutty, winey, intensely beefy steak.

Lurra

9 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BA
lurra.co.uk



WILD GARLIC

LAUREN KERR

FISCHER'S

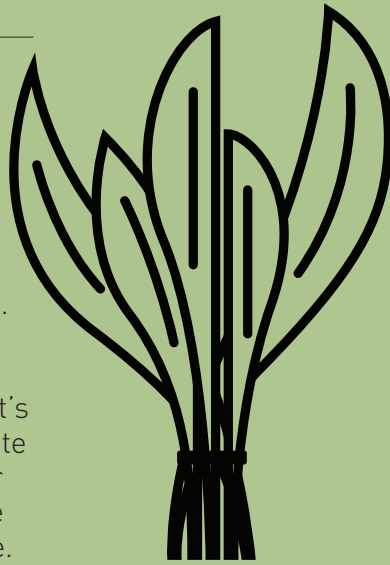
The first time I came across wild garlic wasn't at work but when I was wandering around Borough Market in my own time, looking for new and exciting ingredients. I'd never seen it before, so I bought some and started experimenting with it in the kitchen. Wild garlic is a leaf that smells exactly like regular garlic and has pretty much the same flavour, but it's not as punchy—it's quite subtle, quite delicate. It can be used as a herb or a vegetable—I think that's why I like it so much, because it's so versatile. It's also native to this country and has a short season, so in the spring, when it does come in, I like to use it a lot at the restaurant.

One of the dishes we've had on the menu recently is a wild garlic and asparagus soup. It has a similar base to leek and potato soup, then you throw in the asparagus at the last minute, so it doesn't overcook. The wild garlic is blanched, then refreshed in ice so it stays a really bright, vibrant green, which bursts through when you blend it into the soup. You can also use wild garlic to make dressings, or my favourite thing to do with it is make a pesto. This is also white asparagus season, so I'm planning to put that on the specials along with wild garlic and a fried duck egg. Wild garlic is only here until June, so I plan to do at least a couple more dishes with it before it's gone.

Fischer's

50 Marylebone High Street,
W1U 5HN

fischers.co.uk



CHICKEN

ANTONY ELY
DAYLESFORD

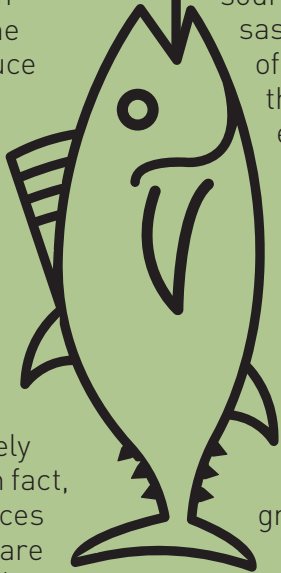
The chickens I get to cook with are, I believe, the very best you can get. Their meat has a wonderful flavour, a beautiful texture and is exceptionally juicy. I am in control of five Daylesford kitchens and the popularity of the chicken dishes on all of those menus is down to a combination of two things: the skills of the great group of chefs we employ, and the quality of the animals raised on the Daylesford family farm in Gloucestershire.

The breed doesn't have a fancy 'heritage' name—our farm managers just selected the breed best suited to produce outstanding poultry in the conditions on our farm. From the beginning our owner refused to compromise on standards of animal welfare, sustainability or husbandry, and that has never changed. We want chickens to lead healthy, happy lives under extremely high welfare standards. In fact, we are one of only two places in the UK where chickens are certified organic from birth. We use natural remedies if they are ill, which keeps drugs out of our food chain. They are free to roam in a paddock the size of half a football pitch, and they have a shelter that can be moved around that field if it's needed. I am in no doubt that you can taste the result of all this effort on the plate. While I could find cheaper chickens elsewhere, in my opinion I could not find better ones. That is down to the owner's commitment and vision and the people who have been hired to bring that vision to life.

Daylesford

6-8 Blandford Street,
W1U 4AU

daylesford.com



YELLOWFIN TUNA

ROBERT CARMO
BERNARDI'S

One of the most popular items we have at Bernardi's is our tuna, which we cook on the grill and serve rare with olives, Sicilian datterini tomatoes and Sardinian asparagus. Salmon and sea bass dishes are always popular, especially as we get into the warmer months, but tuna is the star of the show. We use yellowfin tuna: pole caught, so it's the most sustainable source of tuna, and sashimi-grade—that is, of the highest quality

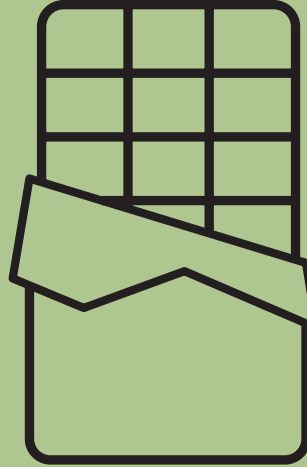
there is, which means you can eat it raw as well as cooked. As we get into summer, we'll be serving tuna crudo, with just some lemon and good olive oil.

One of the reasons we love working with yellowfin tuna is that it's such a versatile fish, as good grilled as it is raw or in pasta. In fact, any tuna trimmings left over from the grilled dish or the crudo we use in our pasta alla puttanesca at lunch. Our puttanesca is made with fresh chilli oil, lemon, rosemary and capers—it's delicious, and it is brilliant to be able to create it using fresh tuna rather than tuna from a jar, which is how it is usually made. It also means we minimise the waste from this beautiful fish. Our desire to avoid waste extends to all dishes on the menu: it is right and respectful to use the whole animal.

Bernardi's

62 Seymour Street,
W1H 5BN

bernardis.co.uk



CHOCOLATE

ANDREW GRAVETT
ROUX AT THE LANDAU

'Posh Dairy Milk' probably isn't quite the right way to describe Valrhona's Caramélia chocolate, but the flavour is definitely one you will associate with childhood. As pastry chefs, we know that if you make a dessert that reminds people of when they were kids, you are onto a winner. The Caramélia chocolate is infused with real, dairy-based caramel, which is added to the cocoa beans at the time of conching. It's a milk chocolate, so it's 36 per cent cocoa—but the

quality is second to none. London's chocolate mafia will have you believe the only good chocolate is dark chocolate, but that is far from true—there are really good milk and white chocolates out there. It is all about the beans, but also the roasting process, the grinding time and the conching time.

All Valrhona, chocolate is ground to be below 17 microns, so you simply don't detect any texture. It's just pure smoothness. The conch is a huge cement-mixer like machine, which heats and mixes the ground cocoa nibs so the bitter compounds evaporate off. The longer the conching time, the more the real cocoa flavours develop. Valrhona conches for 72 hours, while most producers only conch for 24 hours. The flavour lasts long after you've swallowed it. It really coats your mouth. It's as good for eating as it is for cooking with.

The chocolate is sourced direct from plantations, so the owners get a fixed salary regardless of whether they have had a bad yield. The price doesn't fluctuate. The new wave of bean-to-bar companies suggest responsible sourcing is a new thing, but Valrhona has lived these principles for almost 100 years.

Roux at the Landau

1C Portland Place,
W1B 1JA

rouxatthelandau.com



"DON'T GET ME
WRONG: I LIKE
MICHELIN-STARRED
RESTAURANTS. BUT
LIFE IS HECTIC AND
BUSY, SO WHEN YOU
GET TIME OFF, YOU
WANT TO HAVE FUN"
NUNO MENDES

Fire in the belly

As soon as it opened, the Chiltern Firehouse restaurant became a magnet for the rich and famous, but the glamour of some of its diners is possibly the least interesting thing about it. Executive chef Nuno Mendes and head chef Richard Foster talk about the subjects that really matter: the food and the philosophy that underpins it

Words: Clare Finney

Images: Emma Lee, Orlando Smith, Tim Clinch, Peden And Munk

Forty-seven thousand. That's how many portions of crab doughnuts the Chiltern Firehouse has sold since it opened its gates to international acclaim bordering on hysteria. Its refusal to court publicity had, as someone in owner André Balazs's marketing department must have predicted, somehow courted more publicity than any hotel restaurant opening London had ever seen. The story was that getting a table had become instantly impossible. You had to be somebody, or know somebody, simply to get standing room in the bar area. Yet while the media gorged themselves on snaps of celebrities approaching, entering, or—best of all—stumbling out of the iconic black gates, within the Firehouse walls a smart, understated and altogether more sophisticated crowd of regulars were quietly gathering.

They were the locals: Marylebone residents and workers who, unphased by the famous faces, knew a good thing when they saw one. Yes, you were as likely to bump into Kate Moss in there as your neighbour, but the dining room was chic, the bar beautiful, the staff warm and inviting, and the kitchen—a gleaming, buzzing open plan affair with dining seats at the counter for front row action—overseen by none other than Michelin-starred chef Nuno Mendes. They loved his food—a bold and enticing blend of cuisines and flavours with a North American thread running throughout—and they loved the drinks list, which had been created with just as much searing attention to detail.

"We are a destination restaurant, but from the start our offer has been geared toward local people—to

the neighbourhood. We're a neighbourhood restaurant that has become destination." I'm having a flat white with Nuno and his right-hand man, head chef Richard Foster, in one of the plush private dining rooms tucked away next to the restaurant. The pair shrug when I mention celebrities. "The clientele is the clientele. Our team is passionate about hospitality, and we pride ourselves on looking after the guests and giving them all a good time," says Nuno. To be dining or drinking here is to feel like the most important person in the room, regardless of whether you actually are. The service, the environment, the menu—all are geared toward your entertainment: and while a plate of the famous crab doughnuts would work beautifully in isolation, it's this holy trinity that sets the Firehouse ablaze.

The secret, it seems, is North America. Loathe though we often are to acknowledge it, there are areas in which the States' huge bearing on our culture and food has proved positive. The Firehouse is one of them: a living, fire-breathing testimony to the merits of a restaurant in which hospitality, taste and above all enjoyment are the primary concerns. Nuno is Portuguese by birth, but he cut his teeth in the Big Apple: home of quality brasseries and busy, beautiful hotel restaurants. "I spent 15 years in North America, and most of my experience was in those kinds of places: amazing for a good night out, loud and social—but with a cool and interesting menu.

I never found that in London." Times have changed now, but if you think about it, not so long ago the choice over here was really between a formal, fine-dining experience or TGI Friday's.

"Don't get me wrong: I like Michelin-starred restaurants. There's definitely a place for them," says Nuno. "But life is hectic, we are busy, and when you get time off, you want a place to have fun in."

"I went for lunch at a reputed fine-dining restaurant a few months ago," Richard interjects. "We were there for four hours, emptied our pockets—and had no fun at all. We couldn't really chat because waiters were constantly interrupting us with more and more courses—and I'm just bored of that," he exclaims. Richard has worked at some of the capital's most acclaimed restaurants, but he's found his home at the Firehouse. "There were 200 people in the restaurant last night. Two hundred. On a Wednesday in Marylebone. And the buzz, the noise, made your hair stand on end."

"It was the sound of happiness!" Nuno chips in proudly, unable to disguise his joy.

The Chiltern Firehouse pulls tourists, like anywhere associated with fame and celebrity—which makes its popularity with locals all the more remarkable. Almost everyone I've spoken to for this magazine over the last four years has mentioned the Firehouse as a haunt. Some people go daily. "We have many guests to whom we can just say, the usual? And I love that. It's something we've been working toward since we opened," says Nuno. "I also think people come back because they can have a

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RICHARD FOSTER





different experience every time. They can have a quick lunch in 20 minutes. They can relax in the afternoon in the courtyard with some oysters. They can rent the bar at night for a party or hire a private dining room for a big dinner," adds Richard. "They can have a luxurious or a fairly economical experience."

Sun sweet melon comes with kelp and Piouet olive oil. Smoked eel comes with potato purée, yuzu and torched onion. The obligatory burrata is there of course—but instead of importing from Italy, the chefs source the cheese from the La Latteria dairy, here in London. "They make our burrata and stracciatella fresh every day in Acton. We love to work with producers like that," says Nuno, who dresses the Firehouse burrata in chilli jam and heritage tomatoes. Local produce, Japanese sauces, Indian spices, southern US ingredients and European techniques are scattered throughout the menu, and there is certainly more than a hint of fusion flying around here—although Nuno is wary of what he calls "fusion confusion". His approach, and Richard's too, is very much that of a well-travelled, Michelin-starred Portuguese chef who has worked in the global cities of North America and the UK.

Nuno calls it "the New York pantry": "In a kitchen in New York or San Francisco, the product is the driver, but the way you dress it can be from all four corners. Somewhere like Gramercy Tavern will have French technique, Mexican ingredients, Japanese ingredients—and I like that. It's a fun way to eat." The produce is British ("at least 90 per cent"), but the pantry is cosmopolitan. It is here, Richard points out,



that you can see Nuno's Portuguese heritage. "What struck me, when I was travelling, was how easily the Portuguese cuisine fits in with others. Malaysia, Macau in China, the Philippines, Africa, South America, parts of India—all were at some point a part of the Portuguese empire, and you'll find that in the food."

Richard, who took six months out from working at the Firehouse to travel around Asia and Africa, was struck by the extent of Portugal's culinary influence. "I was in Goa in India, and they have this pork sausage made with loads of spices, which they serve in a curry. Pork isn't usually big in India, but where the Portuguese travelled they used local ingredients to recreate their dishes. Seeing that gets your brain thinking about how you can fuse different cuisines." For Nuno, a culinary nod to Portugal is a point of pride as well as palate. "I'm not nationalistic, but I am very proud of what has happened in my country. I think for a long time we hid our cuisine and served what we thought tourists were looking for. Now we have started taking more pride in our produce and dishes, and there's been a revolution in rural areas in Portugal, with young people rejuvenating old traditions in making wine and cheese."

In Lisbon and Porto, restaurants serving spag bol and pizza have been replaced with tascas and petisqueiras serving up traditional (and, increasingly, highly modern) Portuguese dishes. It's come over to London too: Nuno himself opened Taberna de Mercado in Spitalfields, and you'll find petiscos—the Portuguese answer to tapas—all across London. "Spain, France and Italy have done a very good job at marketing their cuisine. It is recognisable. When you travel to those countries you want to try it. And I think we have made the step of coming out and saying, this is Portuguese."

Though he had "no idea they would be such a hit; I just thought they'd be tasty", Nuno's crab doughnuts are a prime example of his innovative approach. "There is American, there's Portuguese—there are references to all sorts of things in there," he enthuses. Served with egg and wasabi, there is also a touch of another of Nuno's favourite countries, one whose food also blends remarkably well with that of Portugal: "I have a passion for Japanese cuisine. It marries really well with Portuguese, so there is Japanese technique as well as ingredients throughout the menu." For Richard it is India—"the smells, the spices, the colours, the street food"—that gets his juices going. "I love to try to match those to European techniques and ingredients." As indeed he has achieved in the Firehouse's tandoori salmon and lamb massaman curry.

Everyone in the kitchen gets involved in creating new dishes. "Though we're a big restaurant, I like to keep that small restaurant feel, where the team feels like a family. There's interaction with the menu and interaction with the suppliers. We have suppliers visit every single day here, and if they turn up with something really cool, it's nice to say we can work with it," says Nuno. The chefs remain motivated ("If someone is working a 55-hour week in a demanding environment it's really important they feel nurtured and engaged in the creative process," observes Richard) and the diners can enjoy venison, new-season plums and rich roasted partridge.

Last year, the Firehouse's famous oyster cart was joined by two more stands: one of cheese and the other of charcuterie. "It's such visceral produce. You want them on display, not hidden somewhere in a fridge," says Nuno. Having toyed with the idea of having an all-British selection, he decided there were plenty of places doing that already in London, and that they should also showcase other countries: after all, you don't spend 20-odd years travelling the world working in food without befriending a few artisans. "We have some amazing friends doing amazing projects," he enthuses. "I want to have some British cheese, of course, but we aren't a British restaurant. Italy, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Germany—they're all doing interesting stuff, and we want to share their story."

'Make it new' was the maxim of 20th century writer Ezra Pound—but it could equally be said of Nuno Mendes and his approach to restaurants. Soon after coming to London in 2007, he founded the Loft Project, the cult pop-up for which the chef cooked at their own home and guests dined communally around their kitchen table, because nothing like it existed. He opened Viajante, his first Michelin-starred restaurant, and Taberna do Mercado, for the same reason. "I enjoy doing projects that are new to London—not for the sake of it, but because they add another layer to the food scene. I keep lots of notes of ideas I want to develop—in fact, I actually wrote that I wanted to do a North American-style project years before André asked me about this place..." He smiles knowingly.

I'm prepared to accept this prophetic chef's foretelling of the Firehouse. But even he cannot have predicted the popularity of crab doughnuts with the denizens of Marylebone.

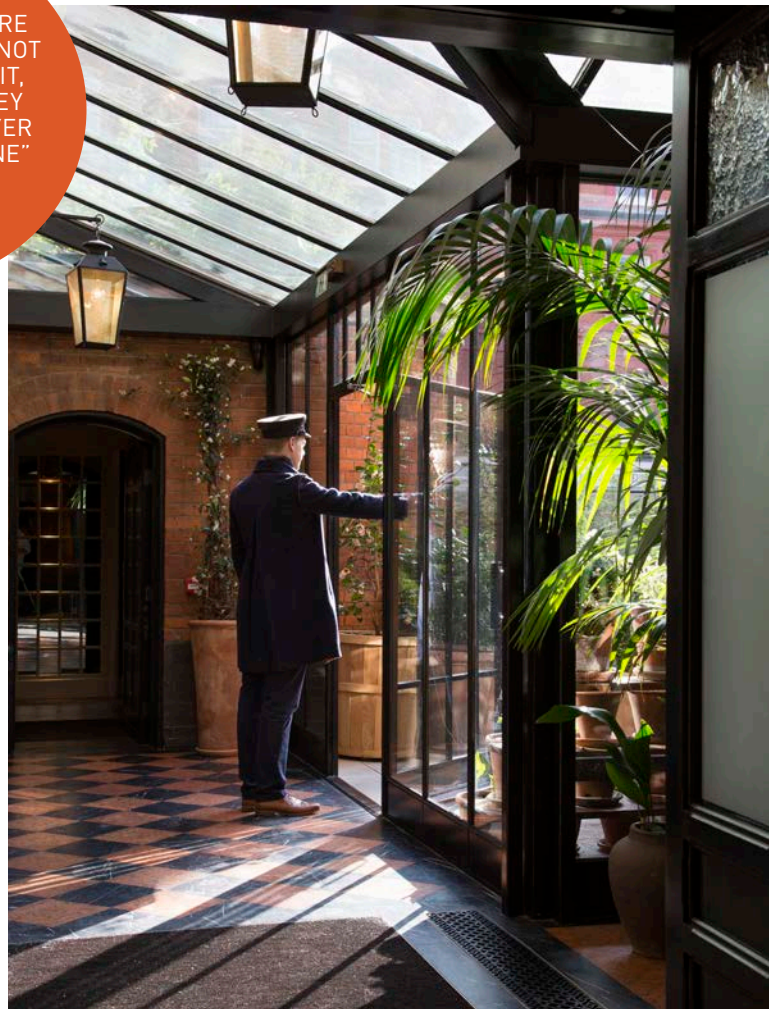
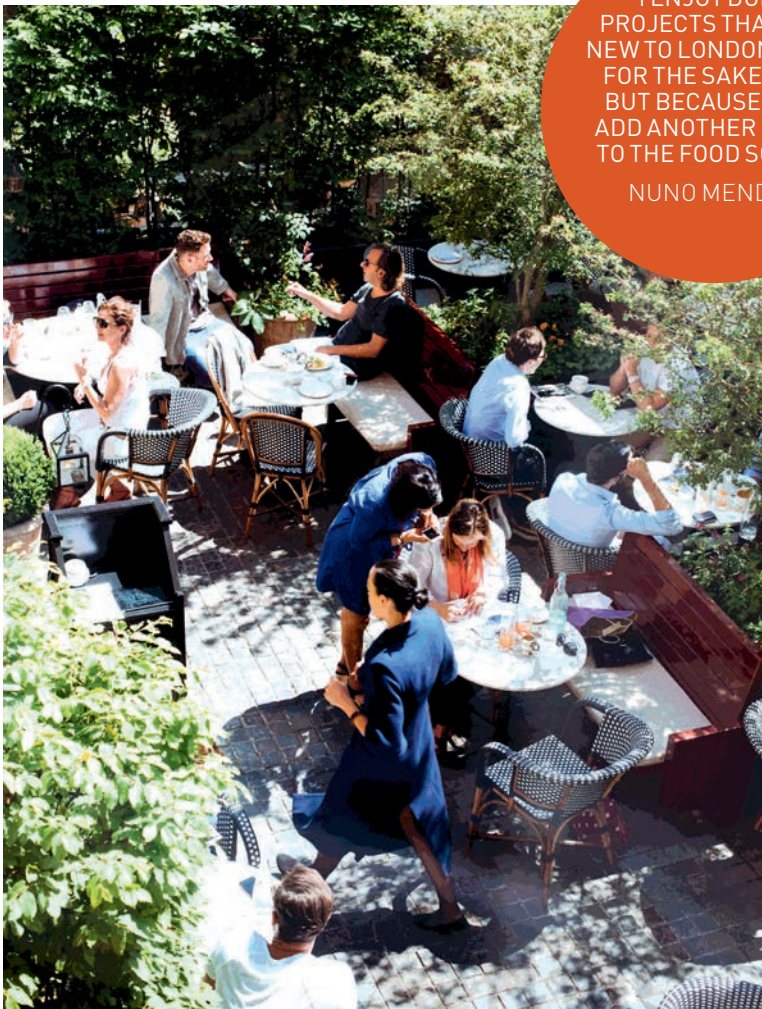
CHILTERN FIREHOUSE

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chilternfirehouse.com



"I ENJOY DOING PROJECTS THAT ARE NEW TO LONDON—NOT FOR THE SAKE OF IT, BUT BECAUSE THEY ADD ANOTHER LAYER TO THE FOOD SCENE"
NUNO MENDES



NORTH STAR

Texture's chef-patron **Aggi Sverrisson** on his memories of Icelandic food, his spurning of the limelight and the importance of his Michelin star

Words: Clare Finney





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“Now that isn’t very Icelandic, is it?” Aggi Sverrisson grins triumphantly, as the tart crunch of a radish brings a look of surprise to my unsuspecting face. What I’d assumed was potato is in fact cubed mooki—a radish more associated with China than it is that icy, volcanic island near the North Pole—served with avocado, a smoky sliver of chorizo and a hunk of milky-white cod. Its punch is one of several reminders, dished out over four resplendent courses, that Texture does not serve Icelandic food. It is a Michelin-starred restaurant serving “modern European food with Scandinavian influences, and it focuses on combining and emphasising different consistencies”. Beyond that, any assumptions you make are likely to be thoroughly shaken.

Aggi Sverrisson is Icelandic, though. That much is undeniable. Born and bred in Reykjavik, he came to cooking in spite of his heritage, not because of it: “Boiled cod and potatoes. Boiled haddock and potatoes. Pan fried cod and potatoes, if you were fancy,” is his salty synopsis of Icelandic cuisine when he was a kid. If you were lucky you’d get kaestur hákarl—that’s the famous buried, fermented and dried shark, which is considered a delicacy in Iceland and a buried, fermented and dried shark everywhere else. “My parents used to snack on it, in front

of the television. I did too,” he shrugs, casually. “It was a luxury then, though it’s less popular nowadays.” Iceland is changing—and, like everywhere else, one of the most significant areas of development has been its food.

It has gone gourmet. Once best known for its reindeer, Reykjavik is the latest city to join the culinary bandwagon, calling its fare ‘new Nordic’, and rolling out across Europe. First pioneered in 2004 by a group of Scandinavian chefs returning home from restaurant kitchens in France and Italy, this is an approach characterised by sustainability, seasonal cooking, vegetables and indigenous local ingredients. Texture opened in 2007. By this time Aggi had worked under Tom Aikens, Marcus Wareing, and most significantly Raymond Blanc at Le Manoir aux Quat’Saisons, where he spent three of his five years as the prestigious restaurant’s head chef. When Aggi arrived in Marylebone with his Norwegian king crab, Icelandic cod, and then-unknown cultured dairy product skyr and opened his first restaurant, it was many Londoners’ first experience of Scandinavian produce treated with the respect and delicacy you’d expect of haute cuisine.

Aggi is not of the ‘new Nordic’ school, though. Not that he disagrees with its principles—on the contrary, his menu changes seasonally and his ingredients are impeccably sourced—but “they take it too far sometimes,” he explains, citing the current foraging trend as an example. “That ‘pick some grass, cook it, put it on a plate’ thing. It needs to taste good as well, you know?” He takes a dim view, too, of tasting menus comprising 30-plus courses, each one needing to be ‘introduced’. “It’s too much!” he exclaims passionately. “The chef coming to the table each time, telling you how bloody good he is. You want to be left alone when you’re eating.” At which point a smart, broadly smiling waiter unwittingly approaches our table. Fortunately, the dish—Norwegian king crab bathed in coconut milk, lemongrass and lime leaves—needs little introduction. The hot, succulent pink frills in a luminous pool of fragrant herbs and creaminess speak for themselves about the quality and provenance of Texture’s food.

“I wouldn’t say it is strictly Scandinavian, let alone Icelandic,” Aggi says of his restaurant, “but it is perhaps my take on Scandinavian.” His Norwegian king crab dish is a case in point. Caught in limited numbers, they are delivered to the kitchen more or less as the fishermen find them: eight pounds of gnarly shell, spidery arms and sweet meat apiece. The kitchen is well versed in handling them—Aggi doesn’t



look like a man who'd shrink at the sight of a crab shell—and they are the perfect vehicle to showcase his affinity with Asian cuisine. "It works so well with fish and other seafood, especially if you want something clean and light," he enthuses, citing the food of Thailand, Japan and Vietnam as key influences. "I eat a lot at restaurants like Hakkasan and The Araki and so on." Indeed, it's this confidence with Asian flavours that drove Aggi's decision to eschew cream and butter when he opened Texture: a bold move for any chef, let alone one of Nordic heritage and French training.

At first, I think this a 'clean eating' decision: a sop to those poor souls shunning dairy, gluten and other deliciousness in their quest for Instagrammable 'perfection'. Yet a man who starts a meal with a pile of warm, crusty sourdough complete with three types of olive oil is not a man concerned with assigning moral values to food groups. Far from being trend-led, the reason Aggi decided to cut the cream and butter was entertainingly simple—almost selfish. "I was always going out in fine dining restaurants, and feeling too full after the tasting menus to go out and party," he grins. "I had to go home and lie on the sofa. So, I decided to create a tasting menu which would leave you feeling full, but good."

With constraint comes creativity. "You have a smaller frame than someone using cream and butter, but I think it's better," Aggi says. Certainly, dishes like his signature anjou pigeon with chargrilled sweetcorn, bacon popcorn and red wine essence would suggest a mind that looks beyond the obvious. Now in its tenth year on the menu, the pigeon dish is just one of many examples of how pioneering Texture was when it first opened its doors in 2007. In fact, some critics took exception. "We didn't have any tablecloths and people said that's crazy, in a fine dining restaurant! Now lots of places don't have tablecloths in London." Likewise, Michelin-starred chefs cooking sans cream and butter, once unheard of, are increasingly commonplace as Japanese, Korean, Indian and other Asian-inspired restaurants attract the praise of the illustrious awards scheme.

It's been an interesting decade—for all of us, but particularly for Texture, which opened on the eve of the 2008 financial crisis and got its Michelin star just over a year later. Since then Scandimania, health-conscious eating and the impact of social media on all things 'foodie' have seen the restaurant's defining features propelled to the status of major trends: relaxed fine dining, pickled vegetables, Scandinavian produce, Asian cuisine. "All the things we



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were doing 10 years ago are now popular,” Aggi laughs. “We were a bit ahead of our time, I have to say.” Yet while some restaurants can live on ‘likes’ alone, for Aggi—who wilfully possesses neither an Instagram nor Twitter account—the most reliable signs of success are those that have always mattered: that Michelin star, and whether or not his customers continue to return to his food.

“Some restaurants don’t need a star to be successful, but places like this, trying to do Michelin star food and charging Michelin star prices—it matters.” Winning one in 2010 prompted “a massive turnaround” in Texture’s fortunes, he says, and they’ve been working hard to retain it since. “People have become more and more conscious about where they eat, so that is very satisfying.” More satisfying still, though, has been loyalty shown by both local customers, and those coming from further afield. “I have customers who come here for the first time and book to come again before leaving. We have people who have been here over 100 times; one gentleman, from Bray, has been over 200,” he smiles. Not unsurprisingly, many of these religiously regular customers have in time become Aggi’s firm friends.

One customer in particular stands out: a pilot from Newcastle, who saw Aggi on Saturday Kitchen and decided to “prove him wrong” about cream and butter. “He came here to prove my food was no good without cream and butter—and he was blown away, he said. Now we visit each other regularly. I’ve even flown in his plane!” In fact, to see Aggi on Saturday Kitchen is a rarity in itself: in the age of the celebrity chef, this taciturn Icelander is the exception, preferring the heat of the hob to the spotlight of publicity. “I have better things to do with my time,” he says disparagingly of cookery programmes, social media, and other

mines for the vainglorious foodie.

“I do it because it’s good PR, when I have to.” Even the prospect of opening a second restaurant seems “attention-seeking.

This is my first baby and I just want to be here. I don’t want to be opening places all the time, being in the news.”

He knows what he likes, and what he likes is his restaurant: its food, and its design, in which he takes a strong interest. It’s amazing, really, that Aggi is so disdainful of Instagram: his cooling tomato gazpacho, served in a gleaming, green marbled seashell on a bed of wild moss, is one of the most photogenic meals I’ve seen. He designed his crockery himself, with a French ceramicist he’s known for decades, and it is beautiful: elegant, but with a rusticity perfectly befitting of the wild fish and seasonal vegetables he uses. “If you are a chef, I think you have this artist’s blood in you one way or another, and you know what will suit your restaurant. Rustic and elegant,” he smiles at my observation. “That is exactly how I would describe our food.”

Does it feel like he’s been here for over a decade, I ask? “Yes and no. We’ve had a love-hate relationship during that time.” The financial crisis and the impacts of Brexit, both current and impending, have made life hard for everyone in the restaurant industry, and the future is hazy in terms of labour and the cost of food. Yet for all the downs, “there have been lots of ups,” he smiles. His customers, his star, the “amazing” rise in the quality of British ingredients—and that sweet, sweet satisfaction we all get when something we’ve always done becomes, in the eyes of the world, ‘cool’.

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QA:

RAISING SPIRITS

Johnny Neill, founder of Marylebone Gin, on pleasure gardens, botanicals and the perfect martini

Interview: Viel Richardson



We understand your family has a bit of a gin history.

My father was a director of the distillers G&J Greenall as well as Greenall Whitley, a brewery based in Warrington. His uncle, John D Whitley, was chairman and my great-grandfather, JJ Whitley, was managing director. I am also descended from the Thomas Greenall who founded Greenall's back in 1762. My father left the company while I was quite young, so I had no involvement with the distillery at all. My initial jobs were in accountancy, going blind staring at spreadsheets. But I have always been fascinated by gin, and somewhere in the back of my mind I always wanted to try making my own.

What made you decide to go for it?
I sat in an office thinking I could either do something that I'm really passionate about, or I could continue staring at spreadsheets. So, I left the City and started to develop a gin brand called Whitley Neill. My wife is South African, so that first gin was based around South African fruit flavours. We then launched Marylebone Gin in 2017.

What kind of drink did you want your gins to be?

I wanted gins you could drink neat and not have to hide in a cocktail. A good gin should have all the characteristics you want from a drink; it should be flavourful, have depth and be well balanced. One of the most exciting things is that you can use many different kinds of botanical—berries, fruits seeds, roots, herbs—to flavour your gin.

So, is making gin a more personal process than distilling other drinks?
I would say so. You see more of the personality of the distiller in the gin because they can choose whatever botanicals they like. The stories behind each gin—how the distiller developed their recipe and why they chose certain botanicals—are something I love. For me, creating these gins has been an adventure. With Marylebone Gin, I based the approach on the famous 18th century

pleasure gardens. We looked at using floral botanicals that may have been planted in pleasure gardens at the time, like lemon balm and lime flower.

What is the spirit you are trying to invoke with Marylebone Gin?
I lived in Marylebone for about 15 years and loved the local area. I knew about the Georgian pleasure gardens and that there was a big gin craze when the pleasure gardens were at their height. I was trying to develop a drink based around that Georgian period, but bring it up to date—definitely not the rough, raw spirit that Hogarth knew.

So what was the recipe you came up with?
The base is a triple-distilled wheat grain spirit, which gives the drink a crisp, clean, pure feel. We then started with the traditional London dry gin botanicals—juniper, coriander, angelica—so in those terms it is quite traditional. We then played around in the floral areas, using the botanical flavours I mentioned. I also love citrus, so we added grapefruit peel, sweet orange peel and lemon peel, too.

Is the fact that it's a London dry gin significant?
It is a mark of quality—there are regulations controlling how you make it. To produce a London dry gin, juniper has to be the predominant flavour. You also have to start with a basic spirit of agricultural origin, so no synthetic spirits. You have to distil it in what we call a pot still, it has to come out at over 70 per cent ABV and there are a few other restrictions. You can make a London dry gin anywhere in the world, as long as it meets these stipulations.

How do you add the botanicals?
All our botanicals physically sit in the base spirit in the still, which is how the fragrance and flavours are infused. Some makers sit their botanicals in a basket above the spirit, and the vapours pick up

"I WANTED GINS YOU COULD DRINK NEAT AND NOT HAVE TO HIDE IN A COCKTAIL. A GOOD GIN SHOULD HAVE EVERYTHING YOU WANT FROM A DRINK"

the flavours from the botanicals as they pass through the basket. With our method, the flavours are a bit more intense because of the contact.

What do you think has helped kick off the recent renaissance in gin-making?

All drinks go through phases, it's just that gin had been forgotten for quite a long time. I actually think one of the things that helped the gin resurgence was the craft brewing renaissance. Suddenly people were much more interested in the provenance of what they were drinking. They wanted to know the stories behind what they were drinking and were also more into trying drinks connected to the local area. I think gin was particularly well suited to this new attitude. Gin makers can use different base spirits, different botanicals and different distilling methods. It's interesting for the distillers as well as the customers. You can have three or four different gins and go on three or four very different journeys.

What cocktails would you say that Marylebone Gin is good for?

I'd say a nice dry martini. Pour your gin in a classic martini glass, add some dry vermouth—as little as you can get away with—then add a little bit of grapefruit zest just to lift the coriander and the citrus notes in the gin.

As well as the original Marylebone Gin, you seem to have recently expanded the range.
We have another gin that we wanted to really focus on the pleasure garden, so the main botanicals in that are sweet orange and geranium. This a much simpler recipe, with only eight botanicals as opposed to 13 in the original. It is a lot more floral and citrusy. The third one in the range is a cask-aged gin. Gin historically would have been held in casks, which of course would have imparted some flavour. Once this gin is distilled, we are storing it in West Indian rum

barrels for exactly six weeks. This extracts some of the rum flavours such as cinnamon spice, vanilla and oak from the cask. It is very round and smooth with hints of spice.

You have a small still sitting by the bar in the 108 Brasserie at the Marylebone Hotel. What are you making in there?

As well as making Marylebone Gin, we've been using that beautiful copper distilling pot, which we call Isabella, to make small batches of 108 Gin, which we developed in a partnership with the Marylebone Hotel. I worked closely with the team there to develop the final recipe. It is a proper London dry gin, but alongside the usual botanicals we are using cardamom, basil and prune.

Are you working on any other recipes?

The nature of gin means the basic recipe is very versatile. Recently we did a small batch of January seasonal gin for the hotel. Moving ahead, we will continue to develop and experiment, especially with botanicals. It is going to be an exciting process.

How do you drink it?

Neat. I keep it in the fridge and sip it as it is—it's a delightful spirit.

Marylebone Gin
marylebonegin.com



"ALL DRINKS GO THROUGH PHASES. SUDDENLY PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN THE PROVENANCE OF WHAT THEY ARE DRINKING"

MIX MASTERS

Four of our favourite Marylebone cocktails

1. Grind espresso martini

This energising cocktail from 31 Below is made with a simple, effective and very London-centric triumvirate of ingredients: the creamy mouthfeel and faint anise aftertaste of East London Liquor Company vodka—made in Bow with 100 per cent British wheat—brought to life with a shot of Grind espresso, which is roasted and ground in Shoreditch, with a splash of gomme (sugar syrup) added to sweeten it up a touch.

2. Gimlet

Possibly named after Sir Thomas Gimlette, a naval medical officer credited with adding scurvy-preventing lime juice to his sailors' gin rations, but possibly not (cocktail name derivations are often fiercely contested), the gimlet is among the simplest of the bartender's repertoire, meaning that quality ingredients are key. At The Coach Makers Arms, the drink is a 50:50 mix of Duck & Crutch gin, a small batch spirit made in a shed in Kensington, and the bar's own homemade lime cordial—a perfect blend of spicy, aromatic, sharp and sweet.

3. 5 Senses

The Churchill Bar's 5 Senses is not so much a single cocktail as a series of events. Comprising of five different drinks, all of which must be sampled in order to appreciate the whole, it celebrates Scotland's national drink by linking a different malt whisky to each of the five senses, while taking you on a journey through five different Scottish landscapes.

4. RAKE'S PROGRESS

There is a series of William Hogarth paintings called The Rake's Progress, in which Tom Rakewell descends into licentiousness, frame by frame. At Seymour's Parlour, the cocktail of the same name alludes to Rakewell lavishly kissing the cheeks of scarlet ladies—the combination of white colourant and the black dot created by juniper oil looks like their painted faces adorned with beauty spots. A spritz of perfumed oil, reminiscent of heavily perfumed brothels, finishes this gin cocktail off: short but punchy, and far more delicious than its spurious associations suggest.

THE WINE LIST

Marylebone's wine experts pick out their favourite wines

Interviews: Viel Richardson

LAURENT FAURE, Le Vieux Comptoir

CUVÉE LA MARQUISE BLANC DE BLANCS, PAUL BERTHELOT, DIZY, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE

This is a beautiful, top quality premier cru champagne, made by Paul Berthelot, a winery founded in the late 19th century in Dizy, a village near Epernay in the Champagne region. It is what we call a blanc de blancs champagne, meaning that it is made using 100 per cent chardonnay grapes. It is also a 'brut zéro' which means there is zero sugar in it. Traditionally, sugar has been added to champagne to cover excess levels of acidity. The fact that this wine requires no sugar to be added indicates a very high quality of grapes. Another thing that sets this particular wine apart is that all the grapes for a particular vintage are picked in a single parcel within the vineyard, giving a real purity of flavours. This champagne has then been aged for four years, as opposed to the usual 18 to 24 months. Ageing develops the layers of complexity and has given this a very mineral profile, with delicate flavours of almonds and pear and a beautiful long finish.

Le Vieux Comptoir
Moxon Street,
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levieuxcomptoir.co.uk



ANNE MCHALE,
108 Brasserie

'NOBODY'S PERFECT' SÉMILLON/
MUSCADELLE, CHÂTEAU DE
MONFAUCON, BORDEAUX,
FRANCE, 2017

I love the story behind this wine. The vineyard is owned by an English lady called Dawn Jones-Cooper. She had worked as a hairdresser in London for many years when she and her husband bought a farm in Bordeaux with a vineyard attached. After falling in love with the place, she started a degree in viticulture; fast-forward seven years and she is the maker of this delicious white. Her vineyard is fully organic, which is quite hard to achieve in Bordeaux, where the humid conditions mean that most growers use fungicides to combat mildew—it takes hard work and constant vigilance. Nobody's Perfect is a sémillon / muscadelle blend. The sémillon adds a lovely mouthfeel and texture, while the muscadelle is delicate and aromatic. The wine has those familiar apple and grapefruit notes, but also a zingy, lip-smacking, 'have another' quality. Normally as a professional you spit out wines during tastings to keep your head clear, but at a recent tasting I drank the whole glass!

108 Brasserie
108 Marylebone Lane,
W1U 2QE
108brasserie.com

ANGELIQUE VAN BOMMEL

Philglas & Swiggot
RECANTINA, SERANI & VIDOTTO,
VENETO, ITALY, 2017

Recantina is a grape variety that has been grown in the Veneto region of Italy for thousands of years but it had fallen out of favour and was in danger of being lost altogether, so when I first read about this wine, it really intrigued me. The moment I poured some into the glass, I knew I was going to like it. It had this deep, rich, ruby red colour, but also a transparency when you held it up to the light. It had a lovely flowery, spicy aroma, with cherries and old berries, which promised a good wine. And when I drank it, I wasn't disappointed. It is fruity but well-balanced, with tons of personality. Treviso, where it is made, is known for its powerful, complex wines, like amarone and merlot. The recantina grape, while having the recognisable terroir of the region, has very different, very distinctive properties—it is a bit like if a syrah and a malbec had a baby. It shows there are still some treasures waiting to be discovered if you take the time to look.

Philglas & Swiggot
22 New Quebec Street,
W1H 7SB
philglas-swiggot.com

NICOLE TRYTELL

Vinoteca
PINOT NOIR RESERVE, OLIVER
ZETER, PFALZ, GERMANY, 2016

Oliver Zeter is a bit of a maverick in his approach to winemaking.

He does his own thing and is totally dedicated to making absolutely the best wine he can. His pinot noir is much more full-bodied than you would expect from this variety. It is really vibrant with red berry and floral notes that combine with really smooth, almost silky tannins to make a wonderfully elegant wine. After I first tasted it at the vineyard, I told the guys here at Vinoteca as soon as I got back that they had to get a sample to try. I loved it from that first taste and still do.

This is definitely a wine that is great to drink on its own—I certainly do—but it also pairs nicely with meat dishes. This again is a bit unusual for a pinot noir, which would usually be paired with lighter dishes like pasta, but the tannins here mean it works. Oliver wants to show that great red wines can come from Germany—and this beauty is definitely proof of that.

Vinoteca
15 Seymour Place,
W1H 5BE
vinoteca.co.uk

"AFTER FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE PLACE, SHE STARTED A DEGREE IN VITICULTURE; SEVEN YEARS LATER, SHE IS THE MAKER OF THIS DELICIOUS WHITE."

QA:

METAL GURU

Corin Mellor, creative director of the David Mellor cutlery brand and son of its eponymous founder, on his design process, his love of materials, and the surge in demand for cake forks

Interview: Ellie Costigan
Portrait: Joseph Fox

Have you always been a designer?

I studied a mix of furniture and product design at Kingston University, which I really enjoyed. After that I was lucky enough to go and work for a London architects' firm—it was the nineties, everybody got a job back then—but I found it a bit frustrating, because I couldn't actually make anything. I retreated back to the Peak District and got involved in the family business. I worked alongside my father for many years, then took over about 10, 15 years ago.

It would seem design is in the blood...

I suppose it is really. My grandfather used to work for something called

the Sheffield Twist Drill Company and he was a toolmaker—a craftsmen, really. I love materials, I love finding out about processes and how things are made. I love going round workshops and big factories. I think to be a good designer, you really need to know how things are made. That's why my dad set up his own cutlery manufacturer, so he could have that total control: start off with the design and oversee its development and manufacture.

Have you carried on that approach?

I'm involved in everything, yes. I have an amazing factory manager who's been with us for 40 years, so I liaise with him on production and help him with any issues—and I am totally involved in the design side. The design department is me and my assistant. It's tiny. I like that: if I had 20 designers, I wouldn't be able to keep tabs on what's coming out. I also oversee the direction of the company, manage all our staff, and do all of the display work in the shops. I'm in London a couple of times a week.

David Mellor is known for its timelessness. Is it challenging to maintain that while bringing in new products?

I think it's quite simple—you just have to not over-design things and really understand materials. I'm not anti-

fashion, but I think you do have to take it with a pinch of salt. I'm not unaware of what is happening, but it's important not to get caught up in it—if you do, ultimately, you're going to end up creating a product that will date quite quickly. We've always focused on purity of form; making beautiful simple shapes that are not flashy, that's our trademark. Hopefully you end up with something that still looks good in 10 years' time.

Is there a point at which striving for a certain aesthetic can impinge on practicality?

It's inevitable. I wouldn't criticise anyone for it, we've all fallen for it at different times in our lives—and I think there's a valid place for it. Without fashion, the economy would stop—but I also think there's a really good argument for buying something that's beautifully designed, beautifully made, high quality, and will last a long time. It can work out more economical—you're not buying rubbish that only lasts a year. It depends on your mindset—some people quite like to change things. On the other hand, if you've got something you have an affection for and you've bonded with, you want to keep it. And you can only do that if it's well-made.

You mentioned the importance of knowing how things are made. What did you mean by that?

We were known for making knives and forks, that got our reputation going, but since I took over, I've become involved in designing other things, but finding someone else to make them: fine bone china, glassware, woodware, cast iron. If you're designing an object to be made with hand-blown glass, you need to understand how hand-blown glass is made to be able to design it. I normally do it that way round; make sure I understand the process—if it's cast iron, how iron is cast—and then design something. Otherwise you might have designed something

"I THINK IT'S QUITE SIMPLE—YOU JUST HAVE TO NOT OVER-DESIGN THINGS AND REALLY UNDERSTAND MATERIALS."





the makers are not very comfortable with, so won't do a very good job. You end up not achieving what you want.

What is your design process?

It might sound mad, but I design things in my head first. Then I'll go to the sketch pad—I'm really old fashioned, I do it by hand. It helps me think, and I can adjust as I go. The next step changes depending on what it is I'm designing. If it's a knife, normally I would go into the workshop and make a very rough prototype—'knock it up', as I call it, with bits of stainless steel: weld them together, file them and shape them and polish them to get what I've sketched in rough 3D. Then

my design assistant James will transfer what I've mocked up into the computer. From that we'll do a 3D printed prototype, then move on to tooling. It's a similar process with the hand-blown glass, but we'll go straight to the workshop and they'll do the mould and prototype.

David Mellor has been around 60 years. How much has changed?

The way we manufacture hasn't changed at all. Bar the odd machine, it's pretty much the same as it would've been 100 years ago. You could mechanise it more, but because we do such small volumes of so many different designs, it's not feasible. We're absolutely people-

led, which has its advantages: if a customer comes in and says, “I’d like that range of cutlery but shinier,” we can do that. If they want a certain knife but they want different serration, we can do that. It gives us that flexibility.

How much have changes in lifestyle affected what you do?

If you went back 150, 200 years, the place set was enormous: now some people really only need a spoon and a fork. Other people love the showiness of the dinner party, where they’ll likely be doing quite a few courses and therefore need quite a few different tools. Our oldest range is Pride from 1953, and we’ve realised it’s not big enough. There are, more recently, customers who want a cake fork—that’s been a bit of a ‘thing’—and a butter knife. We’ve never sold one in that range. I think part of that’s because people are taking food more seriously. If you’d asked me the same question five years ago, I’d say people are paring back, but now there are people who like to have these special tools. To accommodate that, we’ve always sold our cutlery in individual pieces. You can, in effect, buy the tools to do the job you need—if you only eat cereal all day, you can just buy a spoon.

What with the shops, your workshop and factory, it’d seem you live and breathe David Mellor...

My work and home life have always overlapped, which has advantages and disadvantages. I live on site, which is great, because at night when everyone’s gone I can go into the factory and make something—fiddle on the lathe, play with the wheels. The disadvantage is when something goes wrong, there’s someone knocking at my door at six o’clock. My father started that, on a much smaller scale, so I just took it for granted. I’ve been making things since I was a little boy and I love doing it. My life and my work merge into one, really.

David Mellor
14 New Cavendish Street,
W1G 8UW
davidmellordesign.com



PAUL COSTELLOE, DESIGNER

Eating in

The things I love most are good olive oil and salad. I really enjoy making a homemade salad with an oil, mustard and vinegar dressing. Our friends the Bamfords have a cafe and shop called Daylesford, and they do a good job. It feels authentic. We go in sometimes and buy nice tomatoes, new potatoes or fresh cream.

Eating out

Il Blandford’s serves the best Italian food in the whole of London—and I have lived in Italy. The second best is around the corner from there: Anacapri. Fucina on Paddington Street.

JO GOOD, TV AND RADIO PRESENTER

Eating in

I have to say, I have never turned my oven on: I am single, I live in a tiny studio flat and I simply love living in Marylebone. I’ll eat out, or I’ll get something from the salad bar at the Natural Kitchen.

Eating out

Fischer’s. I think Corbin & King have done something remarkable with that. It looks like it has been there for years!

HEAVEN’S KITCHEN

Kitchenware from around
Marylebone



1.

2.



3.



4.



1. Marbled stone dust bottle opener
Oliver Bonas, £14
2. Linear face patterned side plate
The Conran Shop, £12
3. Oiva Sääpäiväkirja plate by Marimekko
Skandium, £26

5.



6.



- 4. Zalto universal glass Philglas and Swiggot, £34.95
- 5. Another Country pottery series pitcher Another Country, £58
- 6. Zalto No 75 carafe Philglas and Swiggot, £43.95
- 7. Copper pineapple ice bucket Oliver Bonas, £40
- 8. Siirtolapuutarha teapot by Marimekko Skandium, £75
- 9. Alfredo carafe by Georg Jensen Skandium, £45



- 10. Crane cookware C3 frying pan Another Country, £125
- 11. Chopping board, round Skandium, £78
- 12. Kobenstyle 2-Quart casserole dish The Conran Shop, £99
- 13. Age de Fer serving set Caravane, £41.86
- 14. Ecume glazed earthenware serving dish Caravane, £24.42
- 15. Arran St East large pitcher Toast, £75



A CUT ABOVE

Jay Patel of the Japanese Knife Company on buying and caring for knives

A good knife will do most of the work for you—and one knife will do most of the work in the kitchen. If I had a budget of £100 for all my knives, I would certainly look to be spending £70-80 pounds on the one knife I use all the time.

The most common cause of damage to a knife is using force to try to cut something very hard. The mistake people often make is using a knife like a cleaver.

If you take a newspaper or a piece of leather and put it flat on a surface, stroke the blade over it backwards and forwards—a process called ‘stropping’—it will realign the edge and bring it back to full sharpness. It takes 15 to 20 seconds and should be done as often as every three to four days, depending on the

quality of the knife and amount it’s used. If you do this, you will only need to use a sharpener to re-establish the edge every now and then.

The best kind of chopping board is made with wood from the handkerchief tree. It’s very light—if you pick it up and blow it hard it’ll blow away from you—and very enduring. The best synthetic boards are Asahi rubber. The material is almost like a feather. They are amazing to use. You want to avoid very hard things like oak—and do not ever use glass or marble. It’s insane.

Whatever a cutter can do to a knife, we can undo it. There’s very little we can’t repair.

If I cut an onion with a very sharp knife, it won’t tear the cells, it

will slice them. If you bring that onion up to your eye, you won’t feel a thing—there will be no tears. There will be more acid in the onion, more sugar, it’ll caramelize at a lower temperature and it’ll taste a lot sweeter.

Knives should always be cold when you sharpen them. There are three basic ways of doing it: a water sharpener, a steel rod, or a water stone.

‘Stainless’ means just that—it stains less. It isn’t stain-proof. Even stainless steel will rust if left in water. It’s better to wash and wipe the blade dry straight away.

Tagadashi sharpening, which is the ultimate sharpening,

“TAGADASHI SHARPENING IS THE ULTIMATE. IF I WERE TO USE THAT AND YOU WERE TO THEN CUT YOURSELF, YOU WOULDN’T KNOW IT UNTIL YOU SAW THE BLOOD”

requires that you use eight stones on a blade. If I were to use that and you were to then cut yourself, you would not know it until you saw the blood. It’s used for cutting things like live eels so they don’t feel anything.

Avoid any kind of storage that requires you to pull the knife in and out of a block at an angle. The blade is cutting the wood each time. If you’re going to use a knife block like that, turn your blades upside down. The ideal way to store it is to have a block or a strip on the wall that is magnetic. The other way is to buy some kind of pouch or sleeve you can put your knife into, then you can put it into a drawer.

A knife is the only tool that most people use every single day of their lives. It’s also the last thing that people think about. I always equate it with an iron: if you have one that doesn’t work very well, you keep rubbing it across your fabric and it creases, it’s frustrating. A knife’s exactly the same—if you can remove that frustration, your life will be so much more pleasant.

When buying a knife, insist that you hold it in your hand. It’s like buying a pair of shoes: unless you know the make, model, and size exactly, you’ve got to try the shoes on! Otherwise how are you going to know whether they fit you or not? It’s the same with a knife.

I would never recommend putting your knife in the dishwasher. If you’ve ever seen knives that have splits or bits broken off around the rivets of the handle, 99 times out of 100, that’s the result of putting it in the dishwasher.

Always buy a knife that’s easy to sharpen, rather than one that stays sharp for longer. It’s better to have a knife you can bring back to sharpness yourself.

Japanese Knife Company
36 Baker Street,
W1U 3EU
japaneseknifecompany.com



THE MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL 24-28 APRIL

The Marylebone Food Festival is brought to you by The Howard de Walden Estate and The Portman Estate, supported by Baker Street Quarter Partnership, Marble Arch London and Marylebone Journal. Its charity partner is The Springboard Charity

The Howard de Walden Estate

hdwe.co.uk

The Howard de Walden Estate is the freehold owner of most of the buildings in 92 acres of Marylebone, central London. The Estate is owned by the Howard de Walden family, whose deep historic connections to Marylebone date back to around 1710. With its entire operation based on Queen Anne Street, the business is firmly rooted in the local community and is fully committed to a long-term investment strategy, with an equal focus on each of its main sectors: residential, office, medical and retail.

The Portman Estate

portmanestate.co.uk

The heart of The Portman Estate is 110 acres of prime property in the vibrant and cosmopolitan area of Marylebone, central London—a mix of residential, retail and office space that delivers a sense of community. As a family business, it is able to strike a pragmatic balance between short and long-term investments across the area. Over recent years, the Estate has worked especially hard to restore many Georgian buildings to today's high standards and create contemporary homes and offices that reflect their historical context.

Baker Street Quarter Partnership

bakerstreetq.co.uk

Baker Street Quarter Partnership (BakerStreetQ) is a Business Improvement District (BID) covering a geographical area which is roughly a quarter of Marylebone, in which the larger business occupiers and property owners invest collectively to improve their environment. The Partnership came into existence in April 2013 and represents circa 175 businesses and seven property owners. The Partnership's vision is to ensure the Quarter is the West End's commercial district choice by fostering a 'Place For People' and a 'Place for Business'

Marble Arch London

marble-arch.london

Marble Arch London BID was established in April 2016 following a successful ballot of local businesses. The BID delivers services to improve the operating environment for approximately 200 businesses and organisations from a range of sectors, including offices, hotels, shops, restaurants, cafes, venues, schools and community organisations. Together they provide a strong, collective voice for the Edgware Road and Marble Arch district—the world's threshold to London. The area's celebrated dining, leisure and cultural district is a premier destination for socialising, relaxing and eating out..

Marylebone Journal

marylebonejournal.com

The Marylebone Journal magazine offers a window onto life in one of central London's most attractive, vibrant and culturally rich neighbourhoods. Since 2005, it has sought to capture Marylebone's unique character through intelligent writing and stunning photography. The Journal is jointly supported by The Howard de Walden Estate and The Portman Estate, Marylebone's two historic estates. Published every two months by LSC Publishing, its 30,000 copies are delivered free to residents and businesses around the area.

The Springboard Charity

charity.springboard.uk.net

The Springboard Charity helps young people achieve their potential and nurtures unemployed people of any age into work. It helps alleviate poverty by supporting disadvantaged and underprivileged people into sustainable employment within hospitality, leisure and tourism. Its work encourages and motivates its beneficiaries, builds their confidence, develops the skills they require and mentors them to succeed.



**MARYLEBONE
FOOD FESTIVAL**
24-28 APRIL 2019

marylebonefoodfestival.com

 [marylebonefoodfestival](https://www.instagram.com/marylebonefoodfestival)

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