

MARYLEBONE JOURNAL

MARYLEBONE JOURNAL

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MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL SPECIAL

FEATURING MICHEL ROUX JNR, PETER GORDON,
KARAM SETHI, RAVINDER BHOGAL, TONY CONIGLIARO,
LA FROMAGERIE, ROCOCO CHOCOLATES,
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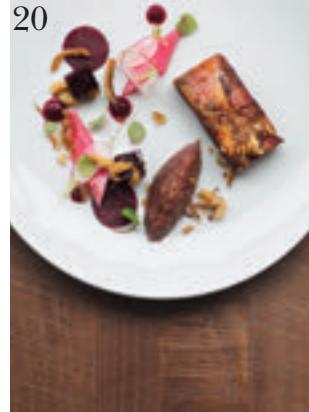
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CUPBOARD LOVE

MARK RIDDAWAY

George Bernard Shaw summed it up perfectly. “There is,” he wrote, “no love sincerer than the love of food.” One of the best things about Marylebone (the setting, incidentally, for Shaw’s Pygmalion) is that this is a neighbourhood in which such fervent devotion can be expressed with promiscuous abandon. The range and quality of the area’s restaurants, bars and shops is remarkable. But more importantly, most of them are owned and staffed by people whose considerable expertise is matched in scale by their own sincere love of what they do. And that’s what makes their food so easy to fall for: ingredients matter, of course, as do skill and creativity—but what matters most is the fact that they genuinely care.

All that ardour will come spilling out in March, with the launch of the inaugural Marylebone Food Festival. Jointly organised by The Howard de Walden Estate and The Portman Estate and supported by the Marylebone Journal, the festival will see vast numbers of local restaurants and retailers joining together for a 10-day celebration of food and drink. In preparation, virtually the entirety of this edition of the Journal has been turned into a heartfelt paean to the subject, taking in everything from Michelin-starred chefs to the man who makes the best full English in NW1. If good food and drink is what gets your pulse racing, this is a magazine to fall in love with, sincerely.

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Around the Estates.

MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL

8th-18th MARCH 2018

marylebonefoodfestival.com

Food, glorious food. That, in a nutshell, is the theme of an exciting new event that will be sating appetites and igniting tastebuds across Marylebone for 10 days in March.

Organised and funded by Marylebone's two historic estates, The Howard de Walden Estate and The Portman Estate, and supported by the Marylebone Journal, the inaugural Marylebone Food Festival will celebrate the extraordinary food and drink on offer in a neighbourhood famed for the quality and diversity of its restaurants, bars and food retailers. Over the course of 10 days, dozens of these

establishments—ranging from Michelin-starred restaurants to neighbourhood cafes—will be participating in two major events (see right), offering special menus and dishes, and lending their expertise to masterclasses, one-off collaborations, food tours and talks.

Throughout the event, Marylebone Food Festival will be raising money for its charity partner, FoodCycle Marylebone.



THE WORLD ON A PLATE THURSDAY 8TH MARCH

The Church of the Annunciation, Bryanston Street, Marylebone, W1H 7AH

The Marylebone Food Festival opens with an unmissable dining experience: in a dramatic medieval church, over a dozen of Marylebone's very best restaurants and wine specialists will collaborate on an exceptional eight-course tasting menu, paired with a perfectly-matched wine flight, while the Hampstead Ensemble string duo (the members of which are Royal Academy of Music alumni) provides a suitably atmospheric soundtrack. The event costs £150 per person, including all food and drink—visit the website to book your tickets: marylebonefoodfestival.com

The list of participants is a stellar one: Roux at The Landau, Trishna, The Providores and Tapa Room, Picture, Bernardi's, Lurra, La Fromagerie, Rococo Chocolates, Le Vieux Comptoir, Blandford Comptoir, Clarette, Sourced Market, and Seymour's Parlour in partnership with Marylebone Gin.

MARYLEBONE STREET KITCHEN SATURDAY 17TH MARCH

Moxon Street Car Park Cramer Street, Marylebone, W1U 4EW

Offering the perfect way to spend an early-spring Saturday afternoon in central London, Marylebone Street Kitchen will transform Moxon Street Car Park (home to the Sunday farmers' market) into a haven of food, drink and expertise. The event will provide a fascinating programme of culinary experiences, including tastings, masterclasses, workshops and interviews, while stalls hosted by a wide range of local food and drink establishments will keep visitors fed and watered. Marylebone Street Kitchen is an all-day event that's completely free to attend.

Those taking part will include (but not be limited to): 108 Brasserie, Amanzi Tea, Boxcar, Clarette, Coco Momo, Fishworks, Hoppers, La Fromagerie, The Coach Makers Arms, The Grazing Goat, The Providores and Tapa Room, Trishna, Yeotown Kitchen and Zoilo.

Peter Gordon of
The Providores and Tapa Room



Clarette



Daisy Green



Picture



Sabrina Gidda of Bernardi's



Trishna



OTHER EVENTS

Marylebone's two Business Improvement Districts will also be organising events, highlights of which include:

Baker Street Quarter Partnership

bakerstreetq.co.uk

- A street food market at 55 Baker Street (14th March)
- A lunchtime tasting tour (15th March)

Marble Arch London

marble-arch.london

- A 'spring clean' vegan or vegetarian lunch tour (12th March)
- A wine-tasting tour (13th March)
- Curry-making masterclasses at Hankies (14th March)
- A mixology masterclass at The Pickled Hen (15th March)

Throughout the festival, many of the area's restaurants, retailers, pubs and bars will be creating special menus and dishes or running their own events. As well as those already mentioned, these will include: Carousel, Coco Momo, Daisy Green, Fishworks, Galleria, Jikoni, Roti Chai, The Montagu, The Real Greek, Twist Kitchen, Yeotown Kitchen and Zoilo.

Around the Estates.

NEWS AND ARRIVALS

Roganic



Two of Marylebone's most highly acclaimed restaurants, **Orrery** and **Roux at the Landau**, will reopen in February, having been closed since the start of the year. Both have been substantially refurbished, and their menus refreshed. Roux at the Landau is changing quite significantly, moving to a more informal approach to dining.

**8th-18th
MARCH
2018**

Marylebone
Food
Festival

Roganic, run by Cumbrian culinary legend Simon Rogan, has returned to Marylebone as a permanent fixture, having popped-up here in 2011-12. Located at 5-7 Blandford Street, the restaurant offers highly imaginative, technically refined dishes created from carefully-sourced ingredients, including produce from the group's own Lake District farm.

Simon Rogan



On 19th May, Hyatt Regency London—The Churchill hosts the **2018 Annual Kids for Kids Ambassadors' Ball**, where guests will enjoy a three course dinner, an auction and raffle, and dancing into the early hours. All proceeds go to Kids for Kids, a charity devoted to transforming the lives of children in Darfur, Sudan. Tickets cost £105 from kidsforkids.org.uk.

Hippy Fish



The inspiration is poké, the traditional raw fish salad that has come to define Hawaiian cuisine, but the take on it is very London: a melding of flavours and ingredients that take these healthy bowls of protein, grains, vegetables and dressings far beyond their Pacific roots. The restaurant is **Hippy Fish**, open now at 5 Thayer Street.

Delamina Marylebone is set to open in February at 56-58 Marylebone. Run by Lane Amir and Limor Chen, the couple behind the highly successful Shoreditch venture Strut & Cluck, Delamina will offer a menu of seasonal dishes inspired by eastern Mediterranean home cooking, using local ingredients and ethically sourced produce.



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Up front.



RESTAURANT STORIES

ORRERY

Flicking through the Journal, it's hard to imagine that Marylebone was once something of a culinary hinterland. Back in the mid-1990s, there were a few cosy neighbourhood establishments (a few of which—Hardy's, Paul Rothe & Son, Woodlands, The Golden Hind—continue to prosper), with a touch of fading glamour provided by Odin's, owned by the colourful, carousing Peter Langan. Jean-Charles and Rose Carrarini's influential Villandry had made a splash in the late

eighties and early nineties, with its deli and restaurant, before moving to Great Portland Street. But on the whole, Marylebone was not a place that drew crowds from far and wide to eat, drink and be merry.

That all began to change in the mid-1990s, when The Howard de Walden Estate kicked off what was then a ground-breaking new strategy. Rather than just passively collecting rents, it would give the slightly moribund high street—and by extension, the entire area—a lift by actively

pursuing retailers whose quality and profile could help shift perceptions of Marylebone. A major part of the plan was to anchor the top of the street with a carefully-chosen business that would do much to set the tone for the rest: The Conran Shop.

Terence Conran was persuaded to take over a large 19th century building that had been built as stables for a horse dealer, then later used as a car hire centre and a tyre-fitting workshop. Taking its lead from The Conran Shop's Chelsea flagship, the top floor of the building would house a high-class restaurant, named Orrery after the intricate cosmological instrument. Chris Galvin, who had earned his spurs in various high-end kitchens in London and New York, was brought in by Conran as head chef.

Opening in October 1997, Orrery was an instant success. Bright and elegant, with big windows and attractive views of the parish church, its setting was matched by the sophistication of the food: classically French in influence, but light and imaginative. In 2000, it was awarded a Michelin star—the first restaurant in the Conran group to achieve that accolade. Three years later Chris Galvin moved on. André Garrett, who had joined Chris as sous chef, took over from his mentor, running Orrery to considerable acclaim before leaving in 2006.

That same year, two Conran Restaurants executives, Des Gunewardena and David Loewi, led a buyout of the group, which was renamed D&D London.

In April 2008, after a couple of head chefs had left in quick succession, the group appointed Igor Tymchyshyn, a bright new talent brought in from Mirabelle. The Ukrainian-born chef, who learned his craft under two giants of London fine dining, Jean-Christophe Novelli and Marco Pierre White, has been there ever since, lending consistency and maturity to the Orrery menu, which has remained thoroughly ingredient-led, seasonal and quietly luxurious.

In 2016, Igor was appointed chef-patron and the restaurant's quality and longevity were recognised at the Tatler Restaurant Awards, winning the Test of Time category. Last year, Orrery's 20th anniversary was marked with a special menu featuring some of its greatest hits from across the years: confit potato, fromage blanc and Oscietra caviar; roast quail, figs and champagne velouté; lobster and mango salad; tournedos rossini with sauce Périgourdine; lime panna cotta with blackberry sorbet. To mark the start of 2018, it has undergone a major refurbishment, thoroughly refreshing that lovely interior.

Over the two decades since Orrery arrived, Marylebone's dining scene has been utterly transformed, as the upcoming Marylebone Food Festival will attest. All the while, Orrery has been looking down from on high, watching it all unfold, quietly going about its business.

ORRERY
55 Marylebone High Street,
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orrery-restaurant.co.uk



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Up front.



LOCAL LIVES

MARIO BARONE

Mario Barone is the co-owner of Gino's Coffee Bar, located on the corner of Great Central Street, just across the road from Marylebone Station. His busy cafe is known for its traditional fry-ups and freshly cooked lunches

INTERVIEW: JEAN-PAULAUBIN-PARVU
PORTRAITS: ORLANDOGILI

My name is actually Franco, but everybody knows me by my middle name, Mario. I was born in Puglia, south Italy, but grew up in Turin. I came to London on holiday in 1976, aged 20, found a girlfriend, found a job and I'm still here. This is my real home.

Back in Italy I'd been a welder, but after arriving in London I got a job at a sandwich bar in Old Street and I have been in the food business ever since. I spoke no English, so for the first couple of months I did the washing up, before progressing to making teas and coffees. By the time I'd learnt to make the sandwiches I'd been offered another job in Bank that paid more money.

After that, I spent six months managing a cafe in Moorgate, then worked at Bar Reno on Dover Street. After grafting there all day, I would go on to my second job at a club on Greek Street from 10pm until 3am. I worked day and night until I'd saved enough to buy my first flat.

I then rented a sandwich bar on Dover Street and ran it for 12 years, and it

became a very busy place. But the landlord started to ask for more and more money. Eventually I decided to pack my bags and make a business somewhere else—I wanted my own shop. In Fulham, I found the perfect place to open an Italian delicatessen, which became very successful. I sold it in 1997, began investing in property and was eventually making enough money to live without working.

But I only retired for a few years. My business partner here at Gino's had three different shops and would always find himself short of a manager—maybe one of them would be sick or away on holiday. He would call me up and I'd work one week here, one week there. I ended up working more than I had before I retired!

We bought Gino's Coffee Bar 10 years ago. It has been here since 1932. We planned to change the name, but as soon as we took it over, the cafe got busier and busier. Gino's was a landmark, a meeting point, so we decided to stick with the name because everybody knew

it. As the English say: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

We are open six days a week, Monday to Saturday. I arrive at 4am. Though we don't officially open until six, sometimes the cafe is full by five. Our fry-ups are the best in the area. Honestly, once people try our breakfasts they won't go anywhere else. A good breakfast in the morning will keep you going all day: bacon, sausage, egg, beans, chips, toast, tea, coffee. Our prices are very reasonable. We are not interested in being millionaires—we are happy to just make a living. Our food is good and everything is made fresh. And we always try to make our customers happy.

People often ask if Gino's is a family business. It isn't, but we are definitely like a family. I'll give you an example: I have a lady washing up in the kitchen who was with the previous owner for 34 years and has now been with me for 10 years. So, she must like it here! Gino's definitely has a family atmosphere. Obviously we have to hurry when the cafe is busy, and customers who have trains to catch need to be served quickly, so we have to be fast as well as good. It's no use being just one or the other.

“

I have a lady washing up in the kitchen who was with the previous owner for 34 years and has now been with me for 10 years. She must really like it here!

I would say roughly 90 per cent of our customers are regulars, some of whom are famous, including Raymond Blanc. One time, he brought along a jar of jam made by his mother. He asked to keep it here so he could have jam on his toast. I kept the jar in the fridge for him.

We do get the occasional strange customer, especially early in the morning—people who've missed their last train home. They drink all night, then see me put the light on and try to come in. But this is part of the game. If they are very drunk or seem a bit dodgy I will tell them that although the light is on we are still closed.

I enjoy my job and don't actually see it as work. I enjoy socialising with my customers and staff. I love talking to people. And we are constantly giving people directions, telling them how to get to Madame Tussaud's or Regent's Park, for example. If I could charge 50 pence for every person who came asking for directions, I'd be a millionaire.

I work six days a week and then on Sunday when I don't work, I still work. I live on my own and every Sunday morning I go for



Up front.

a run, a swim or a cycle. I then clean my flat, go shopping and catch up on my paperwork, plus everything else I didn't have time to do during the week. I also spend time with my two young children, who are 15 and 12.

Two years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer of the throat and needed chemotherapy and radiotherapy. I didn't take any time off work. I'd go for radiotherapy in the morning and would then come straight here. I lost four stone in two months. People would come into the cafe and ask: "Where is Mario?" And I'd reply: "You're talking to him." They didn't recognise me because of all the weight I'd lost. But slowly, slowly, I'm recovering. Fingers crossed.

Even though I have a strong Italian accent, I consider myself British. And I'm proud to be. I came to London when I was 20 years old and am now 62, so I grew up here; this city is my home. When we're driving through central London, my son will often tell me that I should be a taxi driver, because I know all the one-way systems and the backstreets. And I say to him: "Well I grew up in London. That's why I know everything."

QUOTE

RAYMOND BLANC
Chef and
Marylebone resident

“

If anyone does not have three minutes in his life to make an omelette, then life is not worth living

PAST PRESENCE ISABELLA BEETON (1836-1865)



Forget everything you think you know about Mrs Beeton, writer of the famous Book of Household Management—a collection of recipes and practical guidance, published in 1861, which taught generations of British women how to boil calf's feet, curry mutton, treat servants and dress appropriately. In your mind's eye, she's probably the archetype of the Victorian woman of breeding, a conservative and somewhat severe character, highly experienced, probably middle aged, and a cook of some sophistication.

In truth, she was none of the above. Isabella Mary Beeton never made it to middle age—her epochal book was first published when she was 25, and she died just three years later. She came from a lower middle-class background and, while writing her instructions for the affluent housewife, was neither affluent nor a housewife. Instead, she was an ambitious, energetic young journalist.

Isabella had Marylebone in her blood. Her maternal grandparents lived and worked in the area—both had been domestic servants in Marylebone mansions, before Isabella's grandfather opened a livery stable on Wyndham Mews and became a relatively successful small businessman—and her mother, Elizabeth Jerrom, was raised here. Her father, Benjamin Mayson, a linen merchant, lived in Marylebone and had a warehouse in the City. The

couple were living at 40 Upper Baker Street when Isabella, their first child, was born, and she was baptised on 20th April 1836 in St Mary's, Bryanston Square. Not long afterwards, though, the family left the area, moving to Cheapside to be closer to Benjamin's business.

At the age of 19, Isabella married Samuel Orchart Beeton, a dashing publisher, who had astutely bought up the British rights to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852, before launching Boy's Own Magazine in 1855. The new Mrs Beeton, while heavily pregnant, took up writing for another of her husband's publications, The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, covering both cookery and home management. After the tragic death of their young son she threw herself into her work, commuting to her husband's London offices every day from their home in Pinner. The most popular recipes and columns from the magazine were collected in a book, which was published in October 1861.

Mrs Beeton wasn't, though, much of a cook. With one exception (Useful Soup for Benevolent Purposes), every recipe had been shamelessly robbed from other writers, notably Eliza Acton and Hannah Glasse, or sent in by her magazine's readers. Isabella's genius was in setting these recipes out with clarity, consistency and useful notes relating to pricing, seasonality and social mores.

Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management sold millions of copies, and had perhaps as great an influence on Britain as any cookbook ever has or will. She didn't live to see that influence unfold: in February 1865, aged just 28, she contracted puerperal fever from the unwashed hands of the doctor who had delivered her fourth baby hours earlier, and died within days.



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Up front.

MY PERFECT DAY

SYBIL KAPOOR

The food writer and long-time Marylebone resident describes her perfect day

Breakfast

For me, breakfast starts at home. I make my own muesli, using a mix of ingredients from Waitrose, and my favourite coffee: a Brazilian blend from La Fromagerie, which I grind myself. I like to take my time over breakfast and catch up with my husband before the day begins.

A spot of fresh air

Part of the rhythm of writing, especially when I am working on a book, is my daily walk. It allows me to think. One of the benefits of living in Marylebone is that the streets have retained their 18th century layout: the small streets are perfect for pedestrians who like to stop and talk. I've lived here for 20 years, and it's almost impossible for me to wander around without bumping into someone I know.



Comptoir, our whisky from the brilliant Cadenhead's Whisky Shop on Chiltern Street, and everything else from Waitrose. I do fancy Blandford Comptoir for a drink, though, sometimes. They've a lovely wine list.

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 we tend to go to Fischer's with friends. I always have the same thing, because I know it's going to be good: veal escalope, and the apple strudel for dessert.

Eating in

Because I am a food writer I am often recipe testing, which requires going to certain specialist shops. One of them is Green Valley on Upper Berkeley Street: 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.

Anything else?

One of the things I love about Marylebone is wandering about. I'll have a destination in mind, and then choose the route that goes past the shops I like gazing into. One of my favourites is Bulthaup on Wigmore Street—they always have the dreamiest kitchens in the window, so I love going past there and imagining what they would be like to cook in.

A new outfit

It would have to be Bella Freud. I love her jumpers, they've got real personality. You have to be prepared for people to comment on what you're wearing, but they're also both flattering and comfortable. Luckily (from a financial perspective), I'm not a regular shopper: I tend to fall in love with what I've bought and then wear it until it falls apart.

Mid-morning break

If I'm peckish I will head to Pierre Marcolini. I just love the eclairs there: I always buy them for birthdays and dinner parties. I can't decide which is my favourite, I usually have to buy a selection—for myself and for my mother, who loves them as much as I do.

Culture

I love RIBA. Whatever is

available there, I do—the permanent collections, the bookshops, the cafe—and I also love Asia House. We don't go often enough, but I enjoy it when we do.

Shopping

Every aspect of cooking should be a pleasure, and David Mellor makes it that. His things are so beautiful, and yet so simple. I love my Pride range of cutlery: I am trying to get better at posting photos of my food on social media, and I'll be using their cooking equipment and cutlery when I do.

Pre-dinner drinks

We actually make cocktails at home. My husband has The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks by David A Embury, an excellent cocktail book. We buy our calvados and brandy from Le Vieux



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Features.



A RECIPE ALONE IS NOT DELICIOUS. IT'S THE CHEF WHO BRINGS IT ALIVE

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Michel Roux Jnr talks to the Journal about the joys of simplicity, the decline of the rock and roll chef, and the rebirth of Roux at The Landau

WORDS: CLARE FINNEY
PORTRAIT: PAUL JUDD

Saturday Kitchen. Masterchef. Hell's Kitchen. Add in two Michelin stars, six books and the genetic blueprint of Albert Roux, and you have the definitive celebrity chef. Walking through the murmuring, tinkling Palm Court at The Langham, London, Michel Roux Jnr stops to wish a guest happy birthday, and she turns pink with delight, his well wishes clearly the cherry on top of the candlelit birthday financier. I am nervous about interviewing him, despite having met him briefly before, despite the smiling, generous manner of the hotel's staff when I whisper, "Um, I'm here to see, um, Mr Roux? Junior?" on arrival. Yet at the risk of flogging to death the journalist-finds-famous-person-normal trope, the Michel Roux Jnr who greets me is a chef—catching his breath after checking out the redesign taking place at Roux at The Landau—not a TV star. If he had any airs about him when he arrived, they've been left with his coat by the door.

The Roux restaurants represent the ne plus ultra of classical French cuisine—yet Michel himself is really

quite British. Born in Kent, he grew up on trifle, Victoria sponge and meat puddings, made by the housekeeper at the Cazalet family's country manor, where his father was a cook. At The Langham's tavern, The Wigmore, Michel pays homage to these dishes: "The Wigmore takes us back to childhood, and Mrs Badbrook making her great British desserts and pies. She used to look after me when mum and dad were working," he continues. "It was proper food: nothing fancy, but done fantastically well. My dad prepared classic French food—not foie gras or caviar or anything like that, but French technique applied to good, local ingredients." Growing up at the Cazalets', Michel didn't really distinguish between French cuisine and British, or feel one was superior to the other. "I just had good food, cooked well."

But when it came to his chef's training, there was no doubt in which school he'd be versed. In 1970s Britain, it was French or nothing—and besides he was a Roux, son of Albert, nephew of Michel Senior. With the opening of

Le Gavroche in 1967, his father and uncle changed the face of London fine dining. The chefs that came under their tutelage would become the lodestars of our food landscape: Marcus Wareing, Marco Pierre White, Gordon Ramsay, Pierre Koffmann, Rowley Leigh, and many more. No sooner was Michel Jnr out of primary school, he was in their kitchen, peeling potatoes and washing plates in return for pocket money. When I ask what he learnt from his parents, he replies: "Respect: for ingredients, but also for my peers and my elders." He may have been born to a culinary genius, but that genius took great care not to bequeath Michel any silver spoons.

"Work ethic was instilled in me by my parents from a very young age," he continues. At 16, he left for Paris, to serve as an apprentice to a master pâtissier, Henri Hellebouarch. After that, he trained under Alain Chapel, then served his French military service at the Élysée Palace. On returning to London, he joined Pierre Koffmann at La Tante Claire, then set off to Hong Kong for the Mandarin Oriental hotel. Here, he was out of his culinary comfort zone. "The different produce and ways of cooking—it was a real eye opener: steaming and frying in a high heat, for example, and flavours like ginger and coriander that were not really that readily available here, as they are these days." It had, he says, "some influence", small traces of which can be seen scattered lightly on various menus he's worked on, "but I am a trained French chef, at the end of the day. I am not trained in Chinese or Japanese cuisine."

He is still a pretty spring-like chicken—he is 57; his father, still working, is 82—but Michel Jnr has seen it all. Le Gavroche turned 50 last year, and he's worked there since the 1980s. In that time, plenty of culinary fashions have come and go. Fusion food, for example. "A bit of fusion is great," he says, pointing to the Norfolk black chicken gyoza on the old menu at Roux at The Landau, served with broad beans and lightly flavoured with lemongrass, "but you have to be careful not to create confusion. I think it is dangerous to

Features.

Michel Roux Jnr

dabble in different cuisines when you don't have the skill or knowledge."

Likewise foraging, a word that's now de rigueur on London menus, but which is something Michel "just grew up doing. We'd find snails, pick mushrooms or racine de pissenlit [dandelion root]. We still do," he says. When you see it on a menu, "whether it's true or not is, in some cases, debatable. Whether it's good or not is even more debatable—there are some things out there you can forage and they are bloody horrible," he laughs. "But it has its positives. It has opened chefs' eyes up a bit more to natural produce and seasonality", two principles which, throughout his life, he's considered the foundation of good food.

They're at the heart of Michel's latest venture with The Langham, London: the transformation of Roux at The Landau into a more ingredient-led restaurant. "We wanted to make it more convivial, more accessible, and making our produce a centrepiece of the restaurant was one of the ways we thought we could do that," he says excitedly. "We are converting one of our wine cellars into a mini cheese cave, which guests can go into, and we're creating a display of our prosciutto di San Daniele and our fresh seafood."

The chefs will work at a central island, at which couples or single diners can sit and watch their meal unfolding. "The new restaurant is

about paring back, returning to the true essence of French cuisine, without unnecessary garnishes." But I thought extravagant garnishing was the *raison d'être* of French cuisine? Such simple focus on a single ingredient is an approach I'd associate more with Italy, I venture nervously. "Actually, if you look at the recipes in my books, none of them have loads of garnishes. It is just the prime ingredient, and the sauce," Michel corrects me kindly. "French food has had a bit of bad rap for being rich and overcomplicated, which it absolutely can be—but it's technique and bringing panache to the table that make the difference between French and Italian food."

Restaurant H, a restaurant Michel ate in recently in Paris, is a case in point. "No more than three or four ingredients on a plate, and great sauces. The red wine sauce with the beef—it was stick-your-bread-in-it stuff. I could have had a bowlful." His face lights up at the memory. Roux at The Landau, Roux at Parliament Square and the family's Scottish outposts cook along similar lines: "French food, but more contemporary—less formal in style," he says. Think celeriac, goat's cheese and dank quince with pungent black truffle; wild seabass with bright, vivid sorrel velouté; heritage carrots and the hot jelly of bone marrow jus served with the short ribs and pink roast fillet of beef. These aren't the new Landau's dishes—those will remain under wraps until the big reveal this month—but they are the sorts of meals you'll find on Michel's menus. In their composition and produce-led pursuit of perfection, they are typical 'Roux'.

And then there's Le Gavroche: the two Michelin-starred beacon of excellence tucked discreetly within a townhouse in Mayfair. The name alone conjures images of silver cutlery, stiff napkins and the barely perceptible hiss of cold, effervescent champagne. It can't ever really change—the secret to its continued success is its constancy. But to remain relevant in this century, even the most ancient and prestigious of institutions must evolve.

"I think the fact it hasn't followed contemporary trends is one of the reasons Le Gavroche is still around,

Q&A

CHRIS KING

EXECUTIVE CHEF
OF THE LANGHAM,
LONDON TALKS
US THROUGH THE
REOPENING OF
ROUX AT THE LANDAU

How much scope do you have with Roux at The Landau when you have to cater for such a variety of different guests?

We are so lucky here: we have The Wigmore, Artesian and Palm Court, each of which has a totally different offering, so we don't need to cater for all our guests in the Landau. The Wigmore has pub food—very good pub food!—while Artesian is our cocktail bar and Palm Court is there for afternoon tea and lunches. That gives us and the head chef of Roux at The Landau, Nicolas Pasquier, the chance to do something a bit different with our menu.

What prompted the decision to revamp Roux at The Landau?

One of the things we've been trying to do

but it has evolved over the years. If you don't you just stagnate." It's not been quick, nor radical—"revolution for its own sake would alienate our regular customers"—but Le Gavroche has succeeded in modernising without compromising its values or traditional roots. "Le Gavroche is still a stalwart. It is still very much a classic in its approach to food and service, but I think it's in a league of its own," Michel muses. "There's a limit to how many Gavroches there can be in the world. The food is fairly, well, calorie-laden. You don't want to eat it every day."

The next time I speak to Michel he is calling from Le Gavroche, in a snatched few minutes before the evening service kicks off. "Bear

for some time is remove what I call the ‘frou-frou’ of the experience of French cuisine. We are changing the uniforms to something a little less formal, and aiming for a more convivial dining space where our guests can connect with the ingredients—hence the cheese fridge, the wine cupboard, the central island where you can see chefs working and the ham and seafood on display.

Wait...cheese fridge?!

Yes! We’re converting one of our old wine cellars into a mini cheese cave. We were partly inspired by Neal’s Yard Dairy—and they’ve been really helpful, actually. The same people who make their conditioning caves have made ours. The older, larger cheeses will condition there, and the little, younger ones will be on display at the front. When you come on to your cheese course you’ll be able to just wander up and choose which cheeses you want.

How has stripping back the frou-frou impacted on the menu?

We want to really push the flavour and the produce that we have, and remove the excess garnishing. The backbone of French cooking, at least as far as savoury goes, is sauce work. We want to spend more time on making sure our sauces are outstanding and our ingredients really shine. So less frou-frou, more deliciousness.

Who takes responsibility for writing it?

I am just the executive chef. There are

with me,” he says above the rattling crescendo of the busy kitchen, “I just need to find my keys.” He’s hands-on as a chef: more comfortable in whites than in the natty suit he wore at The Langham—but as an employer and teacher, he also knows how to keep his distance. Each of his restaurants has a head chef of great talent managing the day to day running of the kitchen, and Michel takes pride in giving them their freedom. “It is very important the head chefs of each outlet have an input and take ownership of their particular restaurant—that it feels theirs.”

“It is the Roux style, and the Roux name above the door, but our head chefs don’t do it by rote. They have to bring their own soul to it,” he

a wealth of talented people who work for me at the hotel. Nicolas is brilliant as head chef, and we have a team of talented pastry chefs too. Nicolas and I will work on the menu, then Mr Roux will give us a pointer, and we will go back to it, working in our repertoire with the Roux style.

What are your stand-out restaurants in Marylebone?

The Picture restaurants are fantastic, as is Trishna, then of course you have La Fromagerie, The Ginger Pig, there is so much food in Marylebone. You used to think of Soho as the place for restaurants, but they are really popping up here now. It just goes from strength to strength.



continues, “A recipe alone is not delicious. It’s the chef who brings it alive.”

The Roux family are strongly committed to investing in the next generation of chefs. Through their restaurants, an aspiring talent like Chris King can progress from trainee to executive chef of The Langham, London. Then there’s the prestigious Roux Scholarship scheme, now in its 35th year. “The scholarship’s first winner was Andrew Fairlie, who now has two Michelin stars at Gleneagles in Scotland. He has since trained loads of chefs, so it’s become self-perpetuating. Great chefs are training great chefs, who are training great chefs, and

the knowledge filters down,” enthuses Michel. “I find the young chefs of today are more knowledgeable than they have ever been before.”

Michel is excited about the future. Looking at our flourishing food scene, who wouldn’t be? He jokes about smuggling French cheeses and wines post-Brexit, like his parents did for Le Gavroche pre-EU, but is confident our culinary reputation will continue to rise. “In 25 years, I have found the changes amazing; ask my father, and he’ll say he never dreamt that London could offer the standard of food it does now. It is so vibrant.” Slowly but surely, the cult of the Michelin star is waning in favour of “extremely good cooking at extremely good value”.

“We went through a stage of chefs having ‘attitude’, but I think the younger generation realise it’s not just about being the next Gordon or Marco.” We diners don’t want what Michel calls “rock and roll” chefs: increasingly we want talented cooks who care about their producers, their impact on the environment and the work-life balance of their staff. At their restaurants, the Roux family have heeded these concerns as much as possible, forging long-term relationships with trusted suppliers and adjusting contracts so staff have longer weekends. “I think generally in the hospitality industry we have to look after our staff, and that means looking at the hours we ask them to work as well as looking at pay.”

The reopening of Roux at The Landau, with its slightly informal tone and unabashed celebration of beautiful, ethically-sourced produce, is in a way a culmination of this. “It says, these guys are serious about their food and they know what they are doing.” A man with countless openings and refurbs under his belt could be forgiven for feeling just a wee bit blasé about this one. Nevertheless, as we leave, I hear him and Chris discussing its progress. “I’m excited, chef,” says Michel. “Walking though earlier, I looked at the hole in the floor where they have started work, and I thought to myself, it’s a new beginning.”

ROUX AT THE LANDAU
1c Portland Place, W1B 1JA
rouxatthelandau.com

Features.



From Peter Gordon's Turkish eggs to Karam Sethi's lamb chops, Marylebone's finest chefs illuminate the creative processes behind their restaurants' most famous dishes

INTERVIEWS: CLARE FINNEY

Signature moves

Turkish eggs

Features.

Signature moves

Peter Gordon

The Providores and Tapa Room

Turkish eggs

Thirteen years ago, Turkish eggs didn't exist in London. Now, if you search #turkisheggs, you'll find they are the new eggs benedict. Nigella even has them in her new recipe book, and kindly credits us as being the first place she tried them—because although they have become a regular brunch item, they started here, in Providores. We put them on the menu after coming across them in Istanbul. In Turkey, they're known as menemen, or prostitutes' eggs, and they are nothing fancy: thick whipped-up yoghurt, poached eggs and aromatic Aleppo chilli butter, served with sourdough. We make them more or less as a Turkish grandmother would do, so they don't really reflect the fusion food Providores is known for. That is much more evident in, for example, our grilled scallops with sweet chilli sauce: a paste of lime leaves, chillies and ginger, blended and added to a sugar caramel. The scallops are hand-dived, and boast this beautiful, sweet flesh. The fusion comes about when we serve it with crème fraîche because the ingredients in sweet chilli sauce are very much from south-east Asia, yet this European addition just melds the flavours together. It's a perfect example of how flavours of different countries can go together very happily—like migrants. That's why we should open our doors.

THE PROVIDORES AND TAPA ROOM

109 Marylebone High Street, W1U 4RX
theprovidores.co.uk

Ravinder Bhogal

Jikoni

Prawn toast scotch eggs

The prawn toast scotch egg is like the bonny love child between two perennial favourites: a Chinese prawn toast and a classic scotch egg. It really represents what we do here—we're all about mixed heritage, and I really like presenting familiar things in unfamiliar ways. We serve the prawn toast scotch egg with banana ketchup: it may sound disgusting, but they go together very well! It came about when I had too many ripe bananas one day, and I was going to make a banana cake—but I really love the savoury approach to fruit adopted by many Asian cuisines, so I decided to try making a sauce. I'd been experimenting with different meats and different coatings for scotch eggs for a while when I had this idea. I love—really love—prawn toasts: I always get them when we have a Chinese, and my husband doesn't like them so I usually get a whole bag to myself. To make these we buy really spicy Thai pawn crackers, which we blitz into a crumb and mix with panko breadcrumbs. We use quail's eggs and prawn meat, rolled in the crumb mix. When you deep-fry them, they really crisp up because of the rice content in the pawn crackers: it's like a Richter scale crunch. People love the texture of this, combined with the soft, almost gelatinous prawn meat and the rich, just runny quail's egg inside.

JIKONI

19-21 Blandford Street, W1U 3DG
jikoni.london.com

Nemanja Borjanovic

Donostia

Succulent Ibérico de Bellota pork shoulder with romesco sauce

You have to tell the story behind this dish for someone to appreciate what it is that makes it so special. On the face of it, it's just a pork chop. You can pick one up in the supermarket. Yet the Iberico de Bellota has nothing to do with your standard joint. For one thing, it is one of the few pork dishes in the world that can be served medium rare, like you would a steak, because the meat is so tender. Pigs here in the UK are usually given a diet of cereal and so on, to fatten up, but this breed, the black Iberian pig, only eats the chestnut and acorns which they forage in the woods in which they roam freely. The nuts contain a high proportion of nutritious oils, and the pigs grow enormous: twice the size of your normal pig. Some of it goes to making the iconic aged jamón, but the rest is sold as fresh meat, like that we serve here, with a rich roasted red pepper and almond sauce.

DONOSTIA

10 Seymour Place, W1H 7ND
donostia.co.uk

Scotch eggs



Features.

Signature moves

Pressed ham hock and pork cheek



66

When you receive the liver, you have to clean it, take the arteries out and cut it properly, so that by the time you eat it, it is smooth, clean and delicious. It takes years to learn—it is like surgery!

Giancarlo Caldesi, Caffe Caldesi

Giancarlo Caldesi

Caffe Caldesi

Pan-fried calf's liver with butter, sage and creamy mash

Calf's liver is a classic Italian dish, but no one in London does calf's liver the way we do it. I mean that—we've been making this dish since the very first restaurant we opened on Marylebone Lane, and I had people coming all the way from Greece, just to eat it here. Of course, things have changed in that time: the veal is rose veal these days, because it is no longer kept in crates, so it's pink, not white in colour. It's a big thing when you first receive it, and you have to clean it, take the arteries out and cut it properly, so that by the time you eat it, it is smooth, clean and delicious. It takes two or three years to learn how to do this—it is like surgery—but we know how to master it. We've been here making it for 23 years.

CAFFE CALDESI
118 Marylebone Lane, W1U 2QF
caldesi.com

Colin Kelly

Picture

Pressed ham hock and pork cheek

When I first moved to London, I worked at Orrery, just up the road, and we did this pig's head terrine: fromage de tête, it's called in France. We didn't sell much of it, to be honest, but when I went to work with Anthony Demetre, he served it slightly differently: warm, with a sausage alongside. Back then, it was still a bit spooky for people to eat pig's head, but when they tried it they found it was amazing: so full of flavour. At Arbutus, where I went next, the pork's head terrine became a signature dish—but when we brought the idea here, we decided to reduce the fat content slightly, which is where the smoked ham hock came in. The ham hock is pretty much all meat, while the pig's head is intramuscular fat, so combining the two increases the meat content and introduces a smoky flavour. It's been on the menu ever since we launched, though it changes its clothes seasonally. In January and February, it is garnished with beetroot, rhubarb and red onion; I always like to have fruit with pork, it just makes sense to me, and then I like pickled vegetables for crunch. In early summer it will be apricots, in late summer ripe peaches, autumn pear, and late autumn maybe quince puree. When you come across a technique that works perfectly, you don't really want to change it—especially something as economical and tasty as this cut of meat. I am not sure it will ever come off the menu, unless we can't get a pig's head: they used to just be chucked away, but they are becoming much cooler as chefs discover the flavour, and now everyone wants them.

PICTURE

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

THE GATE

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

Features.

Signature moves

Nemanja Borjanovic

Lurra

Squid stuffed with chorizo prawns, squid ink sauce

A lot of restaurants claim to be source-led, but we really are. All that we serve we get in ourselves, not from a third-party supplier. Lurra was born out of our importing txuleton—steak from 14-year-old cows—into the UK, and of course, that dish continues to be the biggest draw; but both Lurra and Donostia are about showing a new side of the Basque Country, a side people might not otherwise see. Recently we've been looking at the French side of the region: Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and the villages there around the Bay of Biscay, which is where this squid comes from. Stuffed with prawns and chistorra (a Basque chorizo) and served on a sauce of black squid ink, it looks beautiful—and it's unusual, because it is meat and fish in a single dish. It's seasonal, as we can only get the squid when the size is right, but when we have it, it is very much a signature special. It's the sort of thing where a group will order one to share as a starter, then order another because it is so good.

LURRA

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

Sabrina Gidda

Bernardi's

Pappardelle with lamb ragu

It is just lovely to take two ingredients and then, throughout the entirety of the year, have such a rich variety of ways of presenting them. The two constants here are lamb and pasta: the lamb comes from our butchers Aubrey Allen, who source it from the west country, where the lamb is such quality it has PGI status. The pasta is always pappardelle, which we make ourselves here. They are just so perfect together: pappardelle is a large, flat pasta so it holds the sauce nicely. We braise a whole shoulder of lamb for 15 hours in a stock with carrot, onion, thyme and other beautiful aromatics, until you can just pull the whole thing off the shoulder blade. It's luscious. We lighten the ragu in spring and summer, and make it a whole lot richer in the colder months. Right now, as spring approaches, we're moving toward a lighter, fresher sauce, using leek instead of onion for something softer, sweeter and greener. It'll be less sticky than it is in winter, and without red wine. As the year goes by the sauce is punctuated by seasonal highlights: shelled broad beans, wild garlic. The lambs are older come autumn: not tough—they are still very tender—but there is a gamier flavour to the meat, which I think is representative of how we eat and drink with the seasons. You've the young, fresh grass flavour of spring lamb in the warmer months, perfect with lighter wines and vegetables, but when it's cold, you want to get inside and warm up with a stronger profile of red wine, and you need food that can sit alongside that. A slow-braised dish can be like a hug, and I simply love making pasta. For me, it is a sort of chef's therapy.

BERNARDI'S

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



When it's cold, you want to get inside and warm up with a strong red wine, and you need food that can sit alongside that. A slow-braised dish can be like a hug

Sabrina Gidda, Bernardi's

Karam Sethi

Trishna

Tandoori lamb chops with Kashmiri chilli, ginger, crushed onion and kasundi mooli

Tandoori lamb chops is probably one of the most ordered dishes by Brits when they go to an Indian restaurant, but we have taken it to the next level. We use organic, free-range lamb from north Wales—Daphne is the farmer who supplies us—and we marinade it in a mix of Kashmiri chilli, garlic, smashed onions and ginger, garam masala, dried fenugreek, yoghurt and mustard oil. We leave it for 24 hours: marinating tenderises the meat as well as flavouring it before it is roasted in the tandoori oven. Ravinder Bhogal's husband calls these the best lamb chops in London, and there are people who come to Trishna just for this dish. Though we like to think the spicing of it is as robust and bold as those you will find in any good high street Indian, or even in India, we try to elevate that by making our own garam masala, by the quality of lamb that we use, and by serving it with kasundi mooli—two types of mooli dressed in a mustard-style chutney. We grew up eating tandoori lamb chops, but this is our own recipe—one we created ourselves when we first opened the restaurant, and has been on the menu ever since.

TRISHNA

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

Squid stuffed with chorizo prawns,
squid ink sauce



Features.



SOUL FOOD

Every Wednesday, FoodCycle Marylebone collects surplus ingredients from local food businesses and uses them to lay on a big, boisterous feast for residents in need of sustenance and companionship. The Journal spends a day watching the charity at work

WORDS: JEAN-PAUL AUBIN-PARVU

IMAGES: ORLANDO GILI

Tonight you're hosting a dinner for upwards of 50 people. Your guests expect three courses and the food must be tasty, nutritious, vegetarian and suitable for those with specific dietary requirements. But the cupboard is completely bare, so you'll need to go shopping. Except you don't have any money. Not one penny. To be honest I don't fancy your chances.

Despite these odds, Caroline Cotton and Nathan Eddy are in good cheer when we meet at 9am sharp outside St Paul's Church Marylebone on Rossmore Road. Caroline and Nathan are volunteers for FoodCycle Marylebone, a project run jointly by the church and the West London Synagogue of British Jews.

Every Wednesday, FoodCycle volunteers collect surplus food donated by local businesses, which is then prepared and cooked in the synagogue's kitchens before being transported up to St Paul's where a three-course evening meal is served. Many of the guests are residents of Lisson Green Estate, one of the most deprived areas of Westminster. For some, this is the only chance they get all week to share a meal and a conversation with others.

Caroline and Nathan set off at a canter along Rossmore Road. Caroline is coordinating things; Nathan has the honour of pushing the FoodCycle bike, which sports a large, covered box. The bicycle is soon left to its own devices outside Tesco Metro on Church Street while the two volunteers head inside, navigate a chicane of shoppers, nip through a side door, run down a flight of stairs and enter the stockroom.

Minutes later they emerge into the morning drizzle clutching bags full of surplus vegetables, salads, fruit, pastries and boxes of cereal. As Nathan loads up the bike I try to imagine what sort of three-course dinner could possibly include breakfast cereal, forgetting that crushed up cornflakes make a fine crumble topping. Alternatively, the boxes of cereal will be handed out at the end of the meal, along with anything else left over.

Nathan points the bike in the direction of Edgware Road, where a branch of Paul has been donating bread since FoodCycle Marylebone was born some 18 months ago. Following behind, Caroline, a former buying director who retired from the fashion industry two years ago, explains that their main local donors are Tesco, Paul, As Nature Intended and Waitrose. She would love to hear from other food businesses wishing to donate, although the food can't be pre-cooked and must be vegetarian—FoodCycle can't serve meat or fish in case somebody gets ill.

Caroline heads across the road on the prowl for ad hoc donations from the market traders setting up along Church Street. "I'm cheeky enough to ask them to help me," she shouts over her shoulder, before returning with carrots, onions and a tray of avocados.

At Paul, assistant manager Baiba greets us warmly and presents Nathan with a large paper bag containing a variety of the bakery's different breads. That's us done for now. Nature Intended's donation is always collected in the afternoon and Waitrose has nothing to donate this week, so we head to the West London Synagogue to unload our haul.

It is raining hard now, so Nathan wheels the bike, taking care to avoid the pedestrians and their dangerous umbrellas. Originally from the US and a minister by vocation, Nathan believes that projects such

Features.

Soul food

as FoodCycle Marylebone are vital tools for building a stronger local community. “I think we’re all aware, particularly after Grenfell Tower, just how important and precious community is,” he says. “We need places where people from different backgrounds can come together and everyone is welcome. Isolation is a huge problem in the area, so this project is important just to help people get out and have a good meal, meet their neighbours and enjoy the great neighbourhood that we live in.”

Several hours later, I’m standing outside As Nature Intended with Alex Cameron, a volunteer who coordinates FoodCycle Marylebone. Having received the surplus organic veg from the shop, we wheel the precious cargo along Edgware Road while Alex, who works as food and wellbeing officer at St Paul’s and was previously a community worker for the West London Synagogue, describes the shared philosophy of these two institutions: “The synagogue and the church both fundamentally believe that our society needs people to work together to change and improve the communities that we live in.”

FoodCycle Marylebone, she says, illustrates this perfectly. “The atmosphere is just like a big family meal and the guests really love getting to know our volunteers, who are mainly young professionals. To be honest, the volunteers get just as

much from it, because loneliness is as prevalent among people in their twenties as it is for those over 60.”

The weekly meals usually attract around 50 guests, many of whom are older people who live on their own. “There used to be a local drop-in for senior citizens, but the council pulled the funding and it closed down, which is one of the reasons we started FoodCycle Marylebone when we did. And for most of the guests this is the social occasion of the week. We have loads of statistics on the number of people who feel it has improved their confidence and that kind of thing, but the one I like is that we’ve been the place of choice for six birthdays.”

With the food donations collected, the hard work continues in the professional kitchens at the synagogue. Alex and her team of volunteer cooks have less than three hours to work their culinary magic. Imagine an episode of Ready Steady Cook, but instead of a carrier bag containing just a few ingredients, Alex has to make sense of a mountain of fruit and veg, ranging from peaches, papayas and pomegranates to potatoes, parsnips and pak choi. Throw in a rather random mix of Jaffa Cakes, bread, pastries, breakfast cereals and cartons of organic oat drink, plus the chocolate and orange cakes donated by the same local branch of BNP Paribas that gifted the large food trolley used to transport the meal up to the church, and you have what amounts to an intellectual challenge as well as a culinary one.

Alex grabs a few essentials from the store cupboard and a cauliflower from the freezer. She has made her decision. The starter will be an avocado and mixed leaf salad with pomegranate seeds. This will be followed by a main course of roasted root vegetables, pak choi and broccoli stir fry, baby potatoes in herb butter and cauliflower cheese. And for dessert there will be the cakes, plus a healthier fresh fruit salad alternative.

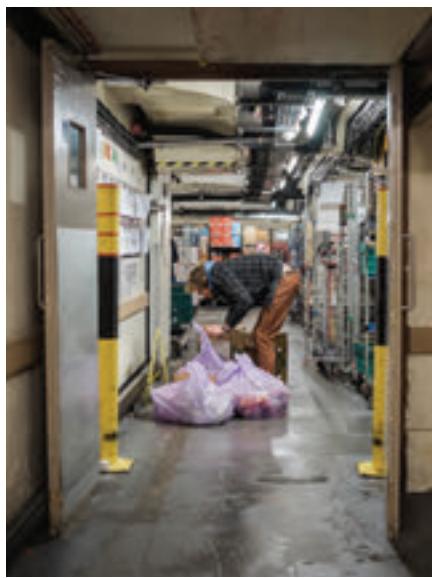
While Alex nips out to buy cheese, her fellow volunteers get on with the task in hand. Several are making their FoodCycle debuts, but they’re soon bantering away like old friends.

Chopping boards and sharp knives appear, vegetables are washed and prepared, fruit is peeled and a solid cooking crew is forged in the heat of the kitchen. Time for Ainsley Harriott to meet the contestants.

Patience Berry works for an American firm on Baker Street, is no stranger to volunteering for charities, loves cooking for friends and family, does an amazing roast chicken by all accounts and may have inadvertently invited me round for Sunday lunch. Salvatore Logalbo came to London eight years ago and is a professional chef keen to use his skills to help others. Currently between kitchens, he is looking for a job with more family-friendly hours—fatherhood can do that to a man. Valerie Volcina is a journalist and keen amateur cook who used to write a restaurant column. Living just a stone’s throw from St Paul’s, she discovered FoodCycle Marylebone quite by chance when she walked past one Wednesday evening and heard the happy commotion going on inside. Toby Graham took many cookery courses in his youth, but found his true calling to be front of house. Taking a career break from hospitality and restaurant management to look after two-month-old son Leo, he has still found time to volunteer for FoodCycle. Changing nappies is not something that Nate Stumpff needs to worry about anytime soon. This 17-year-old American is studying at the Halcyon London International School on Seymour Place. Despite his youth, Nate is a seasoned volunteer and used to make breakfast for the homeless back in the States.

During the next couple of hours, the team absolutely smashes it in the kitchen and a three-course meal takes shape. Just the cauliflower cheese to go as Alex stirs the simmering sauce. I notice that she has used the oat drink as a substitute for milk. “We try to cater to the dietary needs of the guests,” she says. “We need to know exactly what goes into our meals so we can advise them properly as to what they can and can’t eat.”

That’s if it makes it onto the plate. Alex winces as she recalls one





“

We need places where people can come together and everyone is welcome. Isolation is a huge problem in this area. FoodCycle helps people have a good meal, meet their neighbours, and enjoy the great neighbourhood we live in

Nathan Eddy (right)

Features.

Soul food

particular evening when the main course, a curry, ended up decorating the floor of the tiny kitchen at St Paul's. "That was probably our greatest disaster," she laughs. "But we've had other weeks where we've been given no food, so we fundraise to allow us to buy it, because it's more important that we feed people."

By the time I rock up to St Paul's the meal is in full swing. The guests are sitting around six large tables, swapping gossip and tucking into the starter. Though of various ages, the majority might be described as veterans of the London food scene. The avocado salad has gone down a bundle and nothing but empty plates are being ferried back to the kitchen. With some of the host volunteers up to their elbows in soap suds, others begin serving the main course.

Reverend Clare Dowding, the rector of St Paul's and wife of our food-collecting friend Nathan, is working the room, welcoming every guest into her church. "We want to bring people together—particularly those who live alone or sometimes struggle to get by," she says. "This is one of the most densely populated wards in the country, but because of the way the social housing is set up, people often end up living quite isolated lives. But what's been lovely about the growth of FoodCycle Marylebone over the last 18 months is that guests have invited neighbours along, realising

they live alone and may not have much of a social life."

Three of the regulars are clearly having a cracking night, judging from all the laughter. And though a complete stranger, I'm instantly made to feel welcome at their table. Maggie Carr introduces me to her friends, Sue Davis and Pina Tingdan. Maggie has lived on the Lisson Green Estate for over 40 years and looks forward to these meals all week.

"It's lovely not having to cook on a Wednesday night," she says. "And it does help a bit with my income. Being the middle of the week I haven't always got the shillings to spend on food. And everybody here is so lovely. We get really good service and great food. There was only one time when I couldn't eat something and that was only because I was allergic to it."

Sue is also a resident of 'the Green' and has lived alone since the death of her partner. "It's just nice to be with people and have a conversation. There's nothing worse than sitting on your own with your dinner on your lap," she says. "You meet some lovely characters here and the volunteers are wonderful. They can't do enough for us. I'd give them 10 out of 10."

Pina is the owner of both a fetching red hat and an exotic accent. "I'm originally from the Philippines," she explains. "I have lived here in the Green for 30 years and before retiring worked as an instrument technician in the operating theatres at the Princess Grace Hospital and the Harley Street Clinic." These days Pina keeps busy at her local community centre where she teaches fellow pensioners the joys of American line dancing. And like Sue, Pina has lived alone since her husband passed in October 2010. "I love coming to these meals because I love meeting people," she grins from beneath her hat.

"I have made new friends through coming here and often meet them outside for a coffee," adds Maggie. "This is a lovely local hub."

Walking away from the table I am struck by the warm, sociable din filling the church as the guests start tucking into the choice of desserts. And they aren't the only ones enjoying the evening.

"You go home with such a nice, happy buzz after the meal," says journalist Amy Lewin, who is in charge of hosting tonight's meal. Many of Amy's fellow hosting volunteers hail from far flung places. Kathy McKay moved to the UK from Brisbane seven months ago and works in mental health for the NHS. "So obviously I switched for the better weather," jokes Kathy. "Before I moved over here people kept saying: 'London is such a big city and the people are unfriendly.' But here it feels like such a beautiful community where everybody is made to feel welcome."

By the time the guests start drifting away, I am chatting with Fred Allen, who for the past year has been living just around the corner in sheltered accommodation. "I was homeless before," he tells me. "I was living on the streets for 15 years on and off." Fred is so grateful to have FoodCycle Marylebone on his doorstep. "This is brilliant," he says. "I can't fault it at all. And the volunteers are wonderful. They are always running around and the food is magnificent. And it gets you out of the house."

Maggie and Sue wander over to say goodnight. I ask for their verdict on tonight's meal. "Keep it clean," laughs Fred.

"The word is 'blinding,'" says Sue. "Absolutely blinding."

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The logo for vine times features the word "vine" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, where the "v" is stylized to look like a bunch of grapes with a leaf. To the right of "vine", the word "times" is written in a large, bold, lowercase sans-serif font.

vine times

In recent years, the world of wine has been growing and evolving, becoming ever more open, accessible and broad-ranging. Four of Marylebone's most prominent oenophiles explore how this most ancient of drinks is currently being produced, sold and consumed

WORDS: VIEL RICHARDSON

The Romans had Liber, the Chinese had Yi-Di and the Greeks prayed to Acratopotes, Silenus and Amphictyonis as well as Dionysus, who after a quick change of name re-emerged in Rome as Bacchus. Even Odin, chief among those ferocious beer drinking Norse gods, was said to love his wine. No-one really knows exactly where it was that someone realised that their abandoned jar of grape juice had transformed itself into something infinitely more appealing, or when that first cup of wine was sipped. But since its discovery, the delightful tastes and increased conviviality that wine bestows have been deemed so miraculous that wherever it is found, wine has been thought of as a gift from the gods.

As a result, it has tended to be taken very, very seriously—more so than just about any other form of food or drink. Those who knew their wine were inclined to cultivate its mystique, while exuding a rather po-faced sense of self-importance. Today, though, that won't wash. "The most important thing to remember is that drinking wine should be pleasurable," says Laurent Fauvre, the decidedly un-po-faced owner of Le Vieux Comptoir. "Wine is a wide and wonderful world and sometimes you can get a little lost. But never forget: it should always be fun."

Brett Woonton, one of the founders of Vinoteca, agrees.

66

Wine for so long has been shrouded in an almost masonic level of secrecy. But we have a new generation of sommeliers who want to open up this world they love to more people

Brett Woonton, Vinoteca

VINOTECA

15 Seymour Place, W1H 5BD

vinoteca.co.uk

"When people think about wine, fun is probably not the first word that comes to mind. Romance, sophistication, expense—but not fun, which is a shame," he says. "It should be. I remember the moment that turned me on to wine: it was a very good Bordeaux and it blew me away. I remember thinking, this liquid is incredible." Brett tasted that Bordeaux as part of a wine course, and it was not just the drink itself that inspired him. "The guy running the tutorial was incredibly passionate and his enthusiasm really brought the wine to life. His energy was integral to the experience and that has stayed with me to this day. We always try to create an environment that is fun as well as knowledgeable."

That sense of enjoyment is also uppermost in the mind of Xavier Rousset, owner and head sommelier at Blandford Comptoir. "Good food and good wine equals a good time," he says, with a beaming grin. "If you talk to any good sommelier, the first thing they should tell you is that they love their job."

One of the reasons behind Xavier's own love of wine is its almost endless scale. "When you open one door there are 10 more behind it and behind each of them 10 more," he says. "If you love wine, this is a wonderful situation. I have been doing this for over 20 years and I am still learning." Today, the number

of doors that Xavier and his peers can walk through is bigger than ever, with new wines emerging from vineyards all over the world. For Brett this is great news for wine lovers. "It really gets me fired up hearing about good wines from places like China and the Middle East," he says.

Other high-quality wines are emerging from places that, while unexpected, are far from new to the art. "I was in Morocco recently to discuss importing some Moroccan wine," says Laurent. "I am also looking at Algeria, and there are some good quality wines being produced in Lebanon. All of these regions have a long history of winemaking, so the skill is there." Brett agrees: "We sell a couple of wines from Georgia made using methods first used there 8,000 years ago, and they are just extraordinary."

According to Caroline Fridolfsson, head sommelier at Clarette, some of the most interesting winemakers in Europe are also looking to their history for inspiration: "I was in Tuscany a while ago and several winemakers were pulling up cabernet and merlot vines and replanting the sangiovese and canaiolo grapes that have traditionally grown in the area," she says. "It's brilliant to see them rediscovering lost flavours, textures and aromas. It is incredibly exciting."

Caroline explains that some producers are even storing their wines in amphora, the baked clay jars used to mature wine in the ancient Mediterranean. "This will create a different type of wine compared to the modern French oak wines, with their vanilla flavours."

Producing good tasting, well-balanced wine is an art—one that new or upcoming wine-producing regions are increasingly showing they possess. However, while creating fine wines takes talent, creating truly great ones does take time, as Xavier points out. "The step from good to great is a difficult one," he explains. "What makes a great wine is the depth of vintages of a consistently excellent quality. You need 30 to 40 years of great vintages to consider a wine to be great. Two or three great vintages do not make a great wine. So, there are wonderful wines from China and elsewhere that in 25 years we may say are established as great wines, but it takes time."

This is an exciting time for those involved in wine—professionals and customers alike—and the industry is booming. In 2016, vineyards covered 7.5 million hectares of land worldwide and produced €29 billion in sales. But any industry of this scale will create some collateral damage, and much though they love their vocation, our professionals know that not everything is perfect.

“

Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon: all of these regions have a long history of winemaking, so the skill is there

Laurent Fauvre, Le Vieux Comptoir

LE VIEUX COMPTOIR

Ashland House, 20 Moxon Street, W1U 4EU
levieuxcomptoir.co.uk

“

The biodynamic, organic, low-sulphite trend has been taken a bit too far by some people. I see people committing to the idea without really understanding the processes behind it

Caroline Fridolfsson, Clarette

CLARETTE

44 Blandford Street, W1U 7HS
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Brett points out one obvious problem: packaging. “Glass is not an ideal package for wine, as well as not being particularly environmentally friendly,” he explains. “One solution is wine in ‘kegs’; not a traditional wooden keg, but a box containing a high-tech bag that keeps the wine in excellent condition and is collapsible and recyclable after use.” The issue here is one of public perception—getting away from the 1980s idea of wines in a box being a cheap party drink. These boxes may reduce the romance, Brett says, but not the quality of the wine. “Some very good winemakers are now trusting excellent wines to boxes because they work so well.”

Laurent’s main bugbear is slightly more contentious. “For me, most of the ‘natural’, ‘low intervention’ and ‘biodynamic’ wine movement is simply a marketing strategy,” he explains. Laurent believes that some proponents of these wines are giving the impression not only that these methods are new, but that wine not made this way is somehow ‘unnatural’. “This is simply not true. All wine has naturally occurring sulphites, and traditionally some extra sulphites are added in making the classic wines. The practice was developed over generations and is there for a good reason: to help create wines of the highest possible quality,” he says with some feeling.

“Simply stripping things away is not always a step forward. If you go the Wine and Spirit Education Trust you can read lists of technical faults in wines produced through problems with the vines, winemaking process or storage. I have seen biodynamic or natural wines where these flaws are marketed as a ‘new taste’. This is not fair on the customer. There are some good wines from these producers, but far too many are not.”

Increased demand for these wines is something that Caroline is encountering on the restaurant floor, and she too is not convinced that it’s always entirely positive. “I think the whole biodynamic, organic, low-sulphite trends have been taken a bit too far by some people. I see people committing to the idea without really understanding the processes behind it,” she explains. “I have had people walk out of the restaurant because there is not a natural wine on the list. To me, if that is your only criterion for drinking wine then I think you have to consider how much of a wine lover you are.”

With choice getting ever wider, even the experienced drinker can need guidance, so the role of the sommelier and wine merchant remains key, especially in the area of matching wine with food. It is a role that’s evolving. “We are the bridge that helps the customer feel at home



Good food and good wine equals a good time. If you talk to any good sommelier, the first thing they should tell you is that they love their job

Xavier Rousset, Blandford Comptoir

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

with the wine list,” says Caroline. “We are not here to judge people’s taste, or to belittle them—we want to make sure they have the best experience. It is no longer about standing at the table dispensing inflexible rules that the customer must follow; it is about finding out about them as people and wine lovers. Our customers know more about wine than they used to, and our role has had to change to reflect this.”

“Wine for so long has been shrouded in an almost masonic level of secrecy; a world of secret knowledge only for the few,” confirms Brett. “But we have a new generation of sommeliers who want to open up this world they love to more people. Food and wine matching is a very personal thing, because we all have different tastes. There is some science to it that needs to be respected, but there is room for creativity and the tastes of the customer must play a central role.”

So, what about the most famous wine maxim of all: red wine with meat, white wine with fish. It’s a rule so engrained, you would think it was handed down by that long list of gods. It also turns out to be wrong. Xavier suggests a simple rule: “The lighter the dish, the lighter the wine. That’s it. Forget about the colour of the wine. If you combine light fish and a light red, it is fine. If you are eating a big, powerful fish, then

go for a bigger red, if that’s what you want. It is the same for pairing white wine with meat. It is all about enjoying yourself. If you are too tense or you feel intimidated, you will not enjoy either the wine or the food.”

Even as a self-confessed classicist, Laurent’s view is that wine should be selected through discussion rather than diktat. “My job is to be a guide. I may have more knowledge, but it is a two-way conversation with the customer. I will ignore the classic rules and enter with an open mind. For example, some white wine with cheese combinations are wonderful.”

This sense of a two-way conversation sums up the transformation of our relationship with wine professionals over the last quarter of a century. But by drinking greater quantities of it and being exposed to far more choice, this can increase our chances of going astray. So, what can we do to improve our overall wine experience?

Xavier’s suggestion is one shared by all the others: “Remember what you drink. There are so many apps that let you take a picture of the label and add a few notes. Eventually you get to know the type of wine you like, which will help you both at home and in a restaurant.”

For Brett it is also about reaching just a little deeper into your wallet. If you are spending £7, upscale to

£10. Remember, he says, that with an £8 bottle of wine, at least £6 is various taxes. That leaves £2 at most to cover all the production, transport and retail expenses. Once you hit the £10 mark, the jump in the quality you are getting far outweighs that small jump in price, because more of your money has been spent on making the wine.

Caroline suggests a small project: find a book about the region where a wine you like comes from, then try the wines from the region as you read it. Treat it as a bit of fun, and you’ll find that as you get to understand more about the local terroir and history, your enjoyment will increase.

Laurent says that a little understanding of the classic wines can help. “Find a grape you like and find vineyards that execute it really well. This way you get to know what characteristics a pinot noir or a chardonnay, for example, should have. This will give you a sound basis from which to begin a wonderful journey.”

Sage advice from four people whose dedication to their craft has given them the skills to navigate through the complex, ever-changing and sometimes mildly treacherous world of the fermented grape. Follow their lead and your personal wine journey might start to convince you that this ancient drink really was a gift from the gods.



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Features.

Butcher's

RUMP

350g 400g

6.35
x100g

SIRLOIN

300g

RIB EYE

300g 350g

8.00
x100g

FILLET

300g

COTE DE BOEUF

800g

7.80
x100g

T-BONE

700g

CHATEAUBRIAND

800g 1kg

12.50
x100g

PICAN

Bone in

Sirloin

→ 350g, 650g, 750g

COUNTER REVOLUTION

Luke Mackay, a food writer and former shopkeeper, on how the food retailers of the past—the butcher who only sells cuts of meat, the fishmonger with nothing but fresh fish—have been forced to evolve, with fascinating and often highly creative results

WORDS: LUKE MACKAY

IMAGES: CHRISTOPHER L PROCTOR

When I announced four years ago on various social media outlets that I was about to open a food shop that contained a butchery counter, a female friend who happened to be a fan of historical fiction sent to me the following quote from *Secrets of a Summer Night* by Lisa Kleypas, which rather burst my bubble: “How can a butcher’s son be filthy rich? Unless the population of London is consuming far more beef and bacon than I’m currently aware of, there is only so much income that a butcher is able to garner.”

I can now attest with tragic first-hand certainty, as the now former-owner of a butcher’s shop, that selling meat over a counter will not make you ‘filthy rich’ or even ‘not poor’. That said, *Secrets of a Summer Night* is sadly out of touch when it comes to a modern London butcher’s income streams. And not just butchers, for food retail in London has seen a creeping evolution over the last decade—and nowhere is this more obvious than in Marylebone.

It struck me last week as I wandered along Moxon Street and then meandered south along Marylebone High Street, before finally finding myself in New Quebec Street that I couldn’t find any ‘food shops’ despite the preponderance of shops selling food. This might sound counterintuitive and indeed contradictory—Marylebone is, after all, feted as a food lover’s destination, resplendent as it is with independent butchers, fishmongers, cheese shops, greengrocers, delicatessens and wine merchants. None though are really what I would describe as ‘pure food retail’, selling only raw ingredients with which to construct meals, cooked at home.

My father was born in the 1940s and brought up on an estate in Pimlico and has lived in London for most of his life. He was talking over Christmas of his childhood and, in particular, butchers. He remembers animals being delivered live for slaughter on site—maybe a cow, a pig and a couple of sheep per week. Slaughtered, butchered, sold. The whole carcass, butchered, would sit

there until each morsel was sold, from the snout to the tail. How simple a business plan that looks now, when you are more likely to find a pulled pork sandwich or Moroccan lamb wrap to eat on the go than an ox heart or tripe with which to create a nutritious dinner. Similar examples abound: a cheese shop with attached wine bar, a fishmonger’s shop with fruit de mer platters and sushi to eat either on the premises or at home, a wine merchant housing a basement restaurant—all can be found in Marylebone today, and I’ll bet you a plate of delicious toro sashimi t’was surely never thus.

In the course of finding out why this has happened, I spoke to lots of Marylebone business owners or managers and they all warmed my cynical heart. I had unfairly assumed that my questions would be met with defensiveness and disparaging comments about rents and business rates and a general ‘not like the good old days’ mentality that I alluded to in the previous paragraph. Not a bit of it—every single one was imbued with an almost effervescent positivity about the ongoing evolution of selling food. I found it incredibly inspiring, as I always do when I talk to passionate food people.

That said, as a former chef and vocal advocate of home cooking, especially long slow cooking of cheaper cuts of meat, offal and ‘old fashioned’ fish like herrings, I did, on further reflection, become a little dispirited. We used to love liver, for example—in 1974 a typical household bought 36g of it per week, but by 2014 the figure had fallen to just 3g; a 92 per cent drop. Offal, familiar to a wartime generation that eschewed waste, has fallen out of favour among younger, more squeamish Britons. The consumption of pizza on the other hand has increased by 1,000 per cent in the same period. Of course, that offal still exists, but now enterprising butchers will process it into pâtés, parfaits, pies and forcemeats to be sold from the butcher’s ‘deli’ counter. Or as Amelia Latham Wake of The Ginger Pig puts it: “For us, it’s all about our dedication to nose to tail butchery—

Features.

Counter revolution

using all of the animal carcass and reducing waste. It's not so much a diversification thing. Our hot roast lunches, as well as the products we handmade for our deli counter, are made using the same high welfare meat we don't manage to sell on our butchery counters, as well as the trim. This is a great way of reducing waste."

Not one trader moaned about footfall or parking or any of the other myriad problems that make modern food retail so incredibly difficult, but were instead attuned to the change in their customers. This is something that I found out, possibly too late and certainly to my cost, when I opened my shop. I naively expected that people were as excited as me by



For us, it's all about our dedication to nose to tail butchery. Our hot lunches and deli products are made using the meat we don't manage to sell on our butchery counters, as well as the trim. This is a great way of reducing waste

seeing a gleaming array of fresh offal, skirt, belly and shanks as well as the more 'accessible' items. I imagined passing commuters popping in for some kidneys to devil for a delicious weekend breakfast or some ox cheeks for a warming weekday stew. What we actually sold was loads of chicken breasts and fillet steaks, and despite my very best efforts we just couldn't get enough people to actually cook to make having a butchery counter viable. The same with our fish counter, which in the early days was swathed in glimmering fresh fish from Cornish day boats out of Newlyn—hake and turbot, mackerel and brill, megrim sole and line-caught bass, among many, many others—but then we just sold lots of salmon fillets and prawns.

So, having frozen and eaten as much protein as we could, we then realised that we needed a menu, but we didn't have a kitchen, an oven or extraction—any of the things that are required to cook food. We became 'creative'—we had to—and we changed over a period of three years from approximately 80 per cent retail and 20 per cent prepared food to almost exactly the opposite. The 'shop' is now essentially a café/restaurant that sells a few groceries.

And so it is in Marylebone—though not quite to that extent. The utterly indomitable Nic Rascle of La Petite

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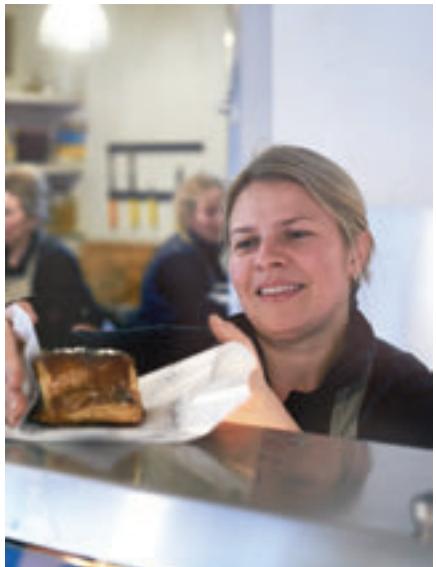
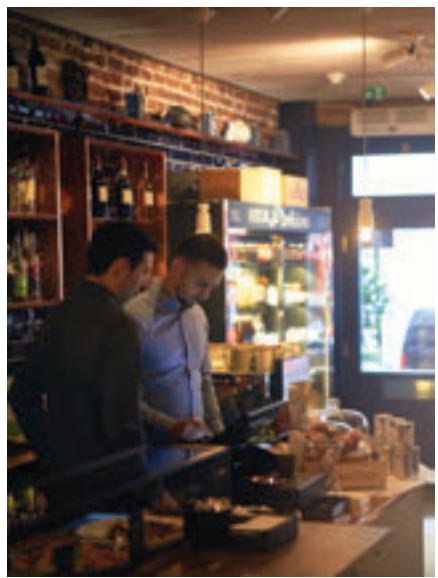
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Poissonnerie has thought about this a lot. "In the 1950s people cooked meals from scratch," he says. "Fishmongers used to close at 2pm because the housewives would shop in the morning; now we do 30 per cent of our turnover between 5pm and 7pm." Opening hours are one thing, but perhaps more pertinent is his current sales mix. At his gorgeous shop on New Quebec Street, around 60 per cent of his sales are ready-to-eat food, as opposed to 40 per cent fresh wet fish. He puts this down to a lack of knowledge in how to prepare fresh fish, but also makes the fascinating point that in his other shop in Primrose Hill the figures are reversed because of a higher proportion of families buying their fish, as opposed to busy professionals and older couples who typically live or work in Marylebone. "They don't like the smell of fish in these beautiful apartments," he shrugs.

Nic has adapted his offer to the point where fish soup, Japanese curry, sushi rice bowls and siu mai (steamed dumplings) are among his biggest-selling items. He is currently in the process of developing a basement seafood bar to take the concept even further. You can buy some of the absolute best fish in London if you like, but you can also have a skilful chef do the hard work for you if you are cash rich and time poor. He sums up by saying: "It is just

Boxcar Butcher & Grill



Features.

Counter revolution



the evolution of what the customer expects—we have to adapt to what people want; if I just sold fish I would close tomorrow.”

A few doors down on New Quebec Street, I found it fascinating talking to Ricky Williams from the relatively new Boxcar Butcher & Grill. The ‘and Grill’ is important in this context—this is not an old butcher’s shop that has changed with the tide, rather one that resolutely set out from the beginning to be both butcher and restaurant. “In London,” Ricky says, “the old-school butcher that just sells meat has gone away.”

Hence at Boxcar you can take a seat next to the meat refrigerator and pick your rib eye to be char-grilled



In the 1950s people cooked meals from scratch. Fishmongers used to close at 2pm because the housewives would shop in the morning; now we do 30 per cent of our turnover between 5pm and 7pm

over charcoal (you wouldn’t want that smell in a Marylebone flat...). You can sup on a decent rioja while someone else buys their sausages and chops, and after your boozy dinner you can pick up some bacon for the inevitable hangover. In terms of sales split, Boxcar is currently about 20 per cent butcher and 80 per cent restaurant, but Ricky fully expects the split to even out over time with the hope that dining customers will return as butchery clients.

Food retailers add value to their bricks and mortar in other ways, too. Rococo on Moxon Street has a chocolate classroom downstairs, which hosts chocolate tastings and pairings. La Fromagerie lays on workshops and special dinners, and can be hired out for private cheese tastings. Sourced Market offers a packed schedule of supper clubs, takeovers, discussions and masterclasses. The Ginger Pig and La Petite Poissonnerie offer classes to teach traditional butchery and fishmongery skills—not only do these have the obvious advantage of putting money in the till, but teaching locals how to, for example, dress an oyster, prep a lobster or make a string of sausages will hopefully lead to increased retail sales as customers become more confident.

Many businesses in Marylebone court the private chef market

too, as well as branching out into event and office catering, offering specific preparations for premium ingredients and delivering it within allotted times. The key lesson that I learnt as a shopkeeper is that you cannot under any circumstances rely on people to walk into your shop, beautiful as it may be, and spend their money. You have to give them what they want; you have to utilise every part of the day; you have to make every square foot of real estate pay for itself by being creative and canny; you have to offer more than your competitors, push the boundaries of your license—and you must, must, must move with the times.

With wine merchants like Le Vieux Comptoir offering a full food menu and cheese shops like La Fromagerie offering seasonal dishes from their kitchen and incredible cheese and charcuterie boards to eat in and take away, this is no trend—food and wine shops have changed for better or worse for ever. To combat online grocery sales, changing socio-economic norms and price increases on everything from grain to business rates, the shopkeeper of yore is now extinct. Arkwright, were he to open on Moxon Street tomorrow, would now have to add sushi skills or grocery masterclasses to his repertoire—being ‘open all hours’ just doesn’t, I’m afraid, cut it any more.



MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL

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marylebonefoodfestival.com

Food.



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Uncle Seymour spent his life travelling around Europe. He enjoyed the finer things in life alongside the most pleasurable, between which he did not distinguish

QA

TONY CONIGLIARO

A giant of the London drinks scene and the man behind the innovative menu at Seymour's Parlour at The Zetter Townhouse on wicked uncle Seymour, the importance of aesthetics, and why he rejects the term 'molecular mixology'

INTERVIEW: ELLIE COSTIGAN
IMAGES: BENNY ROBINSON,
ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL,
ADDIE CHINN

You've been on board as drinks consultant for The Zetter Townhouse since its inception in Clerkenwell. How did your involvement come about?

Mark and Michael [Sainsbury and Benyan, respectively—co-founders of The Zetter Group] used to drink in 69 Colebrook Row, my first cocktail bar in Islington—that's how I met them. At first, they were looking at opening a restaurant, but they realised they couldn't have another restaurant opposite Bistro Bruno [Bruno Loubet's eponymous restaurant, which closed in 2015], so they decided to open a bar instead. That's where I came in. We started talking about the concept and, along with designer Russell Sage, we came up with the idea of Aunt Wilhelmina. We built up her character and curated the bar around it: from the furniture, to the drinks, and how the space should be presented. She was our muse, if you like. It's her townhouse—it's like the home of an eccentric aunt.

Then came The Zetter Townhouse Marylebone and with it, Seymour's Parlour, owned by the fictional 'Wicked Uncle Seymour'. How would you define his personality?

Wilhelmina is uncle Seymour's niece, so we took that idea and put it onto a slightly different track. Uncle Seymour spent his life travelling around Europe, under the guise of visiting universities, museums and sites of interest, while drinking his way through the major cities and their brothels.

Seymour was a generous man, but not without fault—he was prone to arrogance and envy. He enjoyed the finer things in life alongside the most pleasurable, between which he did not distinguish. Both bars have a very 19th century feel, but Seymour's Parlour is slightly more masculine.

How is his character reflected in the drinks menu?

The drinks are inspired by Uncle Seymour's life: his Grand Tour and the debauchery that ensued, but also his life in London. We use this as a reference point when creating the menu and new drinks—both in terms of the flavours, and the ingredients we used. It has some European influences, but it's not necessarily a European cocktail menu. The bar and its menu have evolved over the years to reflect the addition of new stories, revolving around this character we've created.

How often does the menu change? Talk us through some of your latest creations

Around every six months—though we don't always completely change the menu. The almond sour is a recent addition, comprising saffron gin and a toasted almond syrup. We have a carob old fashioned, which is cocoa butter rum with carob and dandelion bitters, then the turf club, which is Old Tom gin, dubonnet, a grape reduction, Peruvian bitters and grass. So, you can see we use the structure of classic drinks, but twist them to make use of

ingredients Uncle Seymour would've come across on his Grand Tour.

Does each drink have its own 'story'?

Totally, yeah—we start with an idea, and then build the flavours around it. For example, the rake cocktail is inspired by the famous painting by William Hogarth, which is currently in the Sir John Soane's Museum. There are references to the painting and the story that surrounds it, which we did a lot of research about.

You make everything for your own bars in the Drink Factory, your research centre and creative space—is that the case for Zetter, too?

Not for every drink. They make the more basic stuff at Seymour's Parlour itself, but we do make and come up with the more complex components at the Drink Factory, our HQ. It's the centre point, where everything gets made and where everything is figured out—the puzzle-solving centre. We've got all sorts of kit: everything from centrifuges, vacuums, distillation units and freeze dryers, to run-of-the-mill pots and pans.

Is there a theatrical element to cocktail-making? How important are aesthetics?

I think it's less about theatrics and more about service—well-executed drinks that taste great. Certainly at Seymour's Parlour, the setting is quite thematic, so that takes care of all the drama. In terms of the individual drink, aesthetics are very, very important. We look at how

Food.



Uncle Seymour's tea
Above: Seymour's Parlour at
The Zetter Townhouse



everything fits together: how the drink works with the glass and the garnish, if there is one. These things are endlessly discussed, tried out and worked on. It's certainly not served on a whim. For example, the turf club is served in one of our martini glasses, so it's very elegant, and it has one big strand of grass that comes off it. It's minimalist; the grass gives it a reference point, without being over the top.

You've been cited as the Heston Blumenthal of cocktails for your 'molecular' approach to mixology—would you agree with that?

I disagree with the term 'molecular mixology'—it doesn't really describe much. It's a term that was put on what was perceived as a particular way of doing

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There are certainly bits of science and technology that we use, but it's more like a craft or an artistic endeavour, in so far as it says something about the person that's creating it

things, but I think what a lot of people do is far more romantic than just looking at things through a scientific lens. There are certainly bits of science and technology that we use—information that we get through science and working with food scientists—but it's far more creative than that. It's more like a craft or an artistic endeavour, in so

far as it says something about the person that's creating it. It's a point of communication, I think. If you were to look at a great painting, yes you'd look at how it was painted and the technical aspect of it, but that's not what the painting is; it's just the means to get the painting made.

You've recently opened another bar on the outskirts of Marylebone, Bar Termini Centrale. Tell us about that.

It's got a very similar feel to the original Bar Termini in Soho, but there's more food—we've got a kitchen now, which is great. Some of the drinks are specific to this location, too, so for example we have a bergamot negroni on the menu, which is new. We've done a lot of research into really old school Italian drinks—we found a drink called il pinguino, a non-alcoholic digestif from an old bar in Palermo Sicily, which we have on the menu. There's a lot of interesting stuff going on over there.

With four of your own bars, the Drink Factory and of course your consultancy role at The Zetter Townhouse, do

you ever miss just being behind the bar, where your career began?

I'm mostly at the Drink Factory, but I do visit all the sites as often as possible. I don't think it's a question of preferring either or, it's just the reality of owning a business and a creative space, as well as training staff and all the rest of it. At a certain point you can't be behind the bar all the time. Though I'm still completely hands-on in the creative process, I love hosting events and being down there seeing the customer—I enjoy all of it. The aim now is really just to focus on the bars I've got. Will I open another? Only time will tell.

SEYMORE'S PARLOUR
The Zetter Townhouse
28-30 Seymour Street, W1H 7JB
thezettertownhouse.com

8th-18th MARCH 2018
Marylebone Food Festival

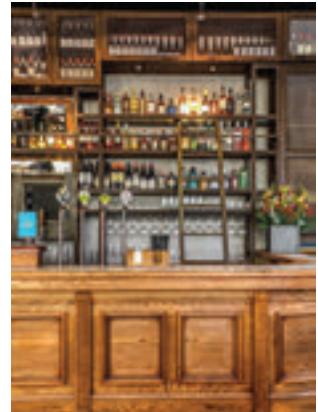
SPECIAL SOURCE

Andrew Tajudin, head chef at The Coach Makers Arms, on the importance of working with great suppliers

WORDS: ELLIE COSTIGAN

When done well, a pub that serves food can be a brilliant amalgamation of two of modern Britain's greatest triumphs: the old fashioned boozer and the hearty, unpretentious dinner. To do it well, though, both atmosphere and food must be on point—something that Cubitt House's new Marylebone outpost, The Coach Makers Arms, works hard to achieve. And when it comes to producing top notch, praise-worthy pub food, it all starts with quality ingredients.

"We're very hot on seasonality. When a vegetable is at its peak, that's when you can get the most out of it—we use what's available, because that's what's best," says head chef Andrew Tajudin. A close relationship with suppliers is, therefore, essential in guaranteeing the quality of produce. "Our veg suppliers are very good at letting us know when something has just come into season, and what's tasting particularly good at the moment," he continues. That communication with suppliers is, he says, essential to the daily development of the menu. "Mark Leatham, owner of Lyons Hill Farm, hunts



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We're very hot on seasonality. When a vegetable is at its peak, that's when you can get the most out of it—we use what's available, because that's what's best

game himself and will let us know what he's shot recently. Our fish suppliers in Lyme Bay, who work on day boats, email to let us know what they've caught that day, so I know what will be arriving tomorrow. It's as quick as that—as fresh as it can possibly be."

Many of the farms from which Cubitt House sources its meat raise heritage pigs, lamb and cattle—simultaneously saving these animals from near-extinction, and ensuring meat that's better in quality and fuller in flavour than its commercial counterparts. "We use rare breed, middle white pork from Huntsham Farm, a 400-year-old family-run farm in the Wye Valley," says Andrew. "Its fat content is higher than most modern meats

and accordingly, the taste and texture of the meat is superior." Similarly, Lyons Hill white park cattle, another rare and ancient breed regularly seen on the restaurant menu, is allowed to grow to full maturity before slaughter, as is the farm's Hebridean lamb. "The resulting meat has much more character," says Andrew. "It's important to us that all of the produce we receive is grass-fed, sustainable, and fully traceable."

Carcasses arrive whole and are butchered on site, so every part of the animal is utilised. Andrew and his team even cure their own charcuterie. "At the moment we've got venison prosciutto, an air-dried ham made with Iron Age pork, lamb coppa, beef bresaola. We do the whole process ourselves: come up

with our own spice blends and recipes, and make a call on length of aging, depending on what we're looking for," he says. "It means we can really put our name on it."

The entire menu changes quarterly, "but we adapt it depending on demand and the advice of our suppliers." At the moment you can expect mussels in Guinness cream; Iron Age pork with fennel shoots, apple and pink fir potatoes; slow cooked egg with celeriac, mushrooms, caramelised shallots and buckwheat cream; and, of course, many of your pub classics. "It's all about ensuring what we offer is the best it can be," says Andrew. "It's all part of being a chef."

THE COACH MAKERS ARMS
88 Marylebone Lane, W1U 2PY
thecoachmakersarms.co.uk

MY FAVOURITES

PATRICIA MICHELSON

The owner of La Fromagerie, describes her favourite items from the store's shelves

Beaufort chalet d'alpage

£46.25 per kg

My favourite cheese at this time of year is the beaufort chalet d'alpage. It's the cheese that started the business, so it's the one we take most pride in. It's a high mountain cheese with a great flavour, perfect with a glass of white wine.

2016 Chignin, Anne de la Biguerne, Jean-François Quénard, Le Villard, Savoie, France

£18.50

Some of my favourite wines are white—especially with a hard cheese. This is because of their acidity. Tannins can be a block to all the acidity that is going on in the cheese, while crisp, racy acidity in a wine will really open up those flavours. Savoie wines also have that smooth butteriness that you associate with a chardonnay.



This one is produced very close to where the beaufort comes from, in the foothills of the Alps, near Albertville.

La Fromagerie biscuits

£3.35

We created our own range of biscuits because we didn't like the ones we saw in the shops—they were too sweet, or didn't have the right sort of crack. The ones I eat most are the rye and the caraway. The aroma of the caraway really lends itself to washed-rind cheeses in particular, while giving you that crunchy textural thing.

E5 Bakehouse sourdough

£6.30

For me, a bread must have a really good crust to it—I want it to crackle. I like sourdough breads because of the slow fermentation process. I keep this loaf throughout the week and

when it gets too hard, I toast it. I think breaking bread—not slicing, but breaking—then topping it with butter and cheese is one of those simple pleasures which, when you get it right, creates lasting memories.

Miele de Pyrenees sunflower honey

£13

There is a lot of very cheap honey out there, manufactured by feeding bees sugar, but we go to a lot of trouble to get some of the most beautiful honeys in the world. In the Pyrenees, only those who commit to working in a certain way are allowed to keep hives. It is a vast area with great biodiversity, from rhododendron flowers to fir trees to acacias. Each honey has a different colour and texture. The one I like best is sunflower—it is quite



oily with a beautiful colour. I love it on toast or in my green tea.

Vacherin mont d'Or

£13.45

Vacherin mont d'Or comes to the end of its season in mid-March, so now is the time to make the most of baking it into a lovely gooey fondue. I can never quite decide what I like best with it, potatoes or bread—at this time of year, a good crusty bread might have the edge.

2009 Château Falfas Le Chevalier, Côtes de Bourg, Bordeaux, France

£35.35

If I am going to have a red, I like it to have a bit of body. This Bordeaux has class, without being overpowering. The tannins are mellow and smooth. I'm an old-fashioned girl when it comes to wines, and I like the Old World. I think New World wines are designed to embrace a variety of different food, whereas Old World wines have a close affinity with cheese.

Fontaine des Veuves butter

£3.75

Whatever we source, it must have meaning. We want to understand the people who produce it; who they are, what they are doing, where they are getting their inspiration from. One of my favourite things, for example, is butter. We have all different kinds: Italian, English, French, and we have raw milk butter, which is quite rare these days. Fontaine des Veuves is one such—unsalted or with salt crystals. It is beautiful. It really enhances your meal.

LA FROMAGERIE

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



INSIDE KNOWLEDGE

EDUARDO TUCCILLO

Chef proprietor of Twist Kitchen on choosing and cooking the perfect steak

When buying beef, I insist on meat from Black Angus cattle that are less than 24 months old. The only way to know this is to ask your butcher. Look for meat that appears moist, and is free of stickiness. Beef should have virtually no odour, unless you are buying dry-aged meat which can have a corn-like smell. You want beef that is an even, light red—almost pink in colour. Beef with a dark red or purplish hue comes from an old animal. In the industry, they're referred to as 'dark cutters'—meaning it's at the lower end of the quality spectrum.

The most important thing is choosing the right butcher.

Sometimes they buy meat from all over the place and you really don't know where it's from—what the cow has been fed, how long it has been hung for, or how old it is, and also how it has been treated during its life and when slaughtered. Our supplier makes sure the cows do not stress at any point; you can taste that in the meat.

I don't think there is such thing as the 'perfect' way to cook a steak—but there are ways you can make it good. We season ours with sea salt, Szechuan pepper and black pepper, to give it a bit of a kick. Once cooked and rested, we cut it into tiny slices, plate it up and drizzle with a special sauce. It's nothing fancy: just a little bit of smoked garlic, honey, and barrel-aged white wine vinegar, which has this kind of woody taste.

My opinion is that the right way to eat a steak is medium-rare. But it's about personal taste. I don't think it hurts if someone wants it well done, but to me it doesn't make sense because you are killing the flavour.

I believe there is a golden rule for any meat you're cooking: it has to be at room temperature before you cook it. Even a hamburger. It is always best to let it rest for at least 15 to 20 minutes when you take it out of the fridge. Especially for the Josper oven—350C of charcoal and smoke. Put it in cold and it will be a mess. It's important for it to rest after it's cooked, too. The meat needs to be relaxed; soft and tender.

It is difficult to recreate a Josper-cooked steak at home, but you can almost replicate the effect with a barbecue. You just need good charcoal—we use three types here: two from the UK, one for the heat, one for the smoke, and one from Canada which is proper oak wood, which gives it a very unique taste. Otherwise, the process is the same.

The t-bone is my favourite steak. It has two cuts of meat attached to the same bone, and they are the most luxurious cuts: the fillet and the sirloin. The fillet is very lean and tender, while the sirloin is very different in texture, but full of flavour. Here, we choose the t-bone because we want to create that feeling of primitiveness—we cook on the fire, serve it on the bone.

TWIST KITCHEN

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

STILL MOVING

Johnny Neill and Din Jusufi on the new spirits being conjured up by Marylebone Gin and 108 Brasserie

WORDS: CLARE FINNEY

It's the beauty of the still that strikes you first: the gleam of the copper pot; the tight, serpentine coil of the cold-water pipes; the small, submarine-like window into a world of vapour and botanicals. The word 'still' describes quite perfectly the feeling it engenders as you watch and listen to the spirit, as it oscillates between hard liquor and invisible vapour.

There is something particularly remarkable about the location of this particular still, dubbed Isabella by its owner Johnny Neill, founder of Marylebone Gin. Rather than being tucked away on an industrial estate, it is in 108 Brasserie, standing quietly and proudly beside the restaurant's much-leaned-on marble bar, central to both the room itself and to the exciting



changes that bar manager Din Jusufi hopes to bring about this year. While Marylebone Gin has proved truly distinctive and incredibly popular, Din, Johnny and the team at 108 can't help but feel Isabella can do even more.

"This year will be all about gin," says Din. Now the still is in place in 108, he and Johnny want to produce another limited-edition gin, called Marylebone Irish Lavender Expression. "It will be lower in alcohol and more floral—more rose, lavender and orange blossom, as well as juniper. We want a gin to go with a nice slice of grapefruit, as well as in cocktails."

Right now, they're still formulating the recipe, "but if you can imagine a blend of Silent Pool, Bloom and Marylebone gins, that's

the kind of flavour we're aiming for." Of course, it will resemble Marylebone Gin (after all, it has the same parents) but instead of cutting it with water to a 50 per cent ABV, Din and the team will cut it closer to 40 per cent—"so we'll end up with 60 litres in total, which is a win!" he grins broadly.

The botanicals—the orange blossom, the rose petals, and others that shall not be named—sit in the neutral grain spirit in a big pot hidden within the cabinet. This mixture is heated until it vaporises, at about 50C. Isabella's lid and column are made from copper, which reduces sulphide content during distillation so the gin, when it condenses at the end of the process, tastes and smells purer. The still's 'thumper' also increases

the proof and purity of the gin, by providing a second distillation. "She looks small, but in eight hours we can produce 50 bottles," says Din proudly.

The final product is still, quite literally, in the pipeline. But it sounds—and if the beautiful still is anything to go by, looks—promising. Come this time next year, Din even hopes to be serving barrel-aged versions of this gin. "We want to be known as one of the best gin bars in London," he informs me seriously—and while I'm no expert (at least not in a commercial sense), I can't help but think setting up your own bespoke distillery and producing your own gin 'live', as it were, seems a good way to start.

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

GUESTS AT THE FEAST

FRENCH FORTNIGHT AT CAROUSEL

WORDS: ELLIE COSTIGAN

"Often when you think about French food, you think rich, heavy, classical cuisine. We want to show that this doesn't represent contemporary France," says co-owner of Carousel Ed Templeton, ahead of the venue's two-week French takeover at the end of February. "We wanted to do something to showcase that gastronomical movement and when drawing up a 'hit list' of chefs, we were particularly excited about two: Anton Orjollet of Elements in Bidart, and Julien Hennote of Le Pourquoi Pas."

Both chefs fiercely represent the ingredients of their respective regions. "Anton is based in Bidart, in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques area of south-west France," Ed explains. "His food is an expression of that. He uses organic produce from within a 70km radius: cured meats from mountain pigs, fresh fish from the Atlantic, lovely locally-grown fruit and veg. He cooks without gluten, sugar, or lactose and on fire, predominantly—it's proper raw, elemental cooking, without any gadgets. He doesn't even

freeze anything." Julien, meanwhile, is more traditional in his approach: "He's classically trained and tends to cook more refined, haute cuisine. Julien's menu is seafood-focused, as is fitting with his restaurant's situation on the coast of Brittany—things like abalone (large sea snails), scallops, John Dory, oysters. He's an innovative young chef, who does some really ambitious things with produce."

The pair's creative challenge is to recreate their signature styles using the best of British produce. "We're really hot on working with British produce," says Ed, "so we often offer up the producers we have connections with: meat from Yorkshire, foraged food from Kent, fish from small day boats in Cornwall, shellfish from Essex or Scotland. The chefs then cook their own dishes, but with British ingredients which means the menu only exists for that week—which is pretty cool." The chefs are free to flex their culinary muscles. "We want to encourage people to take risks, but guests put their trust in us to give them a great dining experience and because of that, we need to find that happy medium between being creative and allowing the chef to maintain their integrity, without being alienating. It's a balance. Otherwise, it's totally up to the chef. They have a set budget, but if they want to push themselves to do, say, an extra course, that's fine by us."

CAROUSEL
26th February–10th March
71 Blandford Street, W1U 8AB
carousel-london.com

Anton Orjollet



TOP TIPPLES

LONDON BEERS

THE WIGMORE SAISON NO 2

The small-batch approach taken by independent brewery Brew by Numbers in Bermondsey allows the Wigmore pub to change its house offering to fit with the season. The current brew is rye-based, with added spices, orange and bay leaves, making for a dry and deliciously fruity saison.

THE WIGMORE
15 Langham Place
thewigmore.co.uk

SUNRAY PALE ALE

Produced with minimal intervention—no filtration, no finings, no pasteurisation—by Canopy Beer Co under the railway arches in Herne Hill, Sunray is a refreshingly light and fruity, easy-drinking pale ale.

THE GRAZING GOAT
6 New Quebec Street, W1H 7RQ
thegrazinggoat.co.uk

KIWI SOUR

Available on tap (from half pint to two-litre growler) at Sourced Market, the Kiwi Sour is a lively and acidic sour ale, with sweet, tangy exotic fruit notes. It's a 'wild' ale, brewed canal-side in the former print factory occupied by Crate Brewery in Hackney Wick.

SOURCED MARKET
68–72 Wigmore Street, W1U 2SD
sourcedmarket.com

TUBER VIRTUOSO

Sybil Kapoor sings the praises of her favourite farmers' market stall, The Potato Shop—a source of expertise, bonhomie and extraordinary spuds

WORDS: SYBIL KAPOOR
PORTRAIT: ORLANDO GILI

Stepping into Marylebone's farmers' market on a Sunday morning, it's easy to miss The Potato Shop, hidden behind a gaggle of people eyeing up the neatly arranged crates of potatoes as they wait their turn in the queue. You are more likely to spot the ginger curls and cheerful expression of Steve Whitehead than you are the potatoes he deftly sells to his customers.

Draw closer and you will find that potato varieties and their natural attributes are a matter for serious discussion here. No one is deluded into thinking that one spud is much like another. Quite the opposite—it takes time to choose the right variety. This stall is like an unofficial meeting place for potato-lovers, and many feel the urge to discuss the relative merits of different varieties. I've found myself ardently advocating to complete strangers the sheer sweet deliciousness of mayan golds. "They make amazing oven-chips—just toss them in olive oil, sliced and unpeeled, then roast for 40 minutes or so in a hot oven," I confide, before biting my lip, fearful at the thought that I might cause a shortage. This is, after all, my only known source. (When I have to do without these ultra-sweet potatoes for a month or two each summer, until the new crop has been harvested, I usually console myself with the slightly fluffier, ultra-potato-tasting wiljas.)

Other customers listen intently to the surrounding conversation, before discussing with Steve what to purchase. If ever a man could read your taste in potatoes, it is he. Speaking

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Forget the lavender fields in Provence; maris peers have really pretty purple flowers, worthy of any flower border. Marie Antoinette used to put potato flowers in her hair

with a soft Kentish burr, he establishes what you want to cook and which potato varieties you normally eat before imparting any recommendation. Such enquiries are essential, given that he sells around 34 different varieties.

Potatoes are categorised in a number of ways. First by their season, as in earlies, second earlies and maincrop.

Common commercial varieties are often differentiated from older or specialty strains—for example, the creamy-fleshed cara (good for baking), a widely-grown potato that dates back to 1976, is separated from knobbly lumper potatoes, which first appeared around 1800 and are rarely sold these days (both available here). Lumpers were the mainstay of the Irish potato plantings during the catastrophic 1845-50 famine and, according to Alan Wilson in his book *The Story of the Potato* (essential reading for any potato enthusiast), are not a flavoursome variety.

Most commonly, potatoes are categorised by their culinary characteristics, including skin colour, flesh colour and cooked texture. The

latter ranges from the waxy smoothness of ruffles, to the ultra-dry, crumbly consistency of king edwards. Silken-fleshed, chestnut-flavoured ruffles, for example, are perfect for salads, especially when dressed with olive oil or mayonnaise, whereas the dry nature of a king edward is ideal for fluffy mashed potatoes, as it will absorb as much butter and milk as you care to add.

You might think that buying some creamy-fleshed nicola potatoes or red-skinned, medium-dry désirées from The Potato Shop is no different to buying the same from a supermarket—but you'd be wrong. Bite into a soft chunk of market-bought nicola in an onion potato frittata or eat a forkful of désirée boulangère and you'll be struck by their intense flavour. It's the closest you can come to eating home-grown potatoes without actually going out and digging the soil yourself.

"All the potatoes are from Morgew Park Estate, grown on the sandy loam of what was once the old bed of the River Rother," Steve explains. The farm follows a traditional five-year crop rotation, with winter cereals and oil seed rape to limit the risk of potato pests and diseases. In the summer the fields turn purple, white and mauve with the potato flowers. During this time, The Potato Shop stall takes on a festive air, with jam jars filled with yellow-eyed potato flowers. "Forget the lavender fields in Provence; maris peers have really pretty purple flowers, worthy of any flower border," enthuses Steve, before adding by way

Steve Whitehead of The Potato Shop



of a curious fact, “it’s said that Marie Antoinette used to put potato flowers in her hair”—which I feel might come in handy in the potato queue.

The sheer number of specialty and heritage potatoes that the stall sells is extraordinary. You may go intending to buy a tried and tested variety, but you will no doubt find yourself tempted into trying an

extra bagful of unfamiliar tatties, such as thin-skinned sieglinde or the waxy linzer delikatess. Then there are all the older varieties, such as the yellow-fleshed pink fir apple and fine-flavoured belle de fontenay. These can double up as ‘new’ potatoes and taste equally good buttered, tossed into salads or added to curries. Those of a more traditional ilk will find it impossible

to resist trying aromatic, black-skinned, deep-eyed arran victory potatoes (so-named in 1918, in celebration of the end of the war), or the superlative kerr’s pink, which can be mashed, chipped, sautéed or turned into rosti potatoes.

Steve, who was born and bred in Tenterden, looks the very image of a stalwart Kentish countryman.

He combines bonhomie with exceptional potato knowledge. As David Hobbs, one of his regular customers, explains: “I have been buying from Steve for as long as I can remember him being there. We do not buy potatoes unless we buy them from him. You know you are onto someone that knows his stuff when a customer asks, ‘Can you remember what potatoes I bought last week?’ and within a couple of questions, he knows!”

It’s as though he brings a fresh Kentish breeze with him. Great bunches of wild garlic leaves and egg boxes filled with speckled guinea fowl and pheasant eggs appear alongside the potatoes in the spring, reminding his London customers of rural life, with its wellington boots, nettles and wildlife. Behind him sit one or more of his four working dogs: jack russells Lily, Fern and Charlie, and Moss, a jack russell-lakeland terrier cross. They’re an added bonus to many customers. “He always lets my son go behind the stall to see his dogs,” says David—although Steve admits that when elderly customers get down on their hands and knees to say hello to them, he worries whether they’ll be able to get up again.

As Sunday afternoon drifts by and Londoners daydream of a country life, Steve and his dogs will be driving home to Kent to the beat of the Stone Roses or Nirvana. Perhaps he will have home-grown wiljas with his supper. It’s his desert island potato.

THE POTATO SHOP
Marylebone Farmers’ Market
Cramer Street car park, W1U 4EW
lfm.org.uk

Food.



FOOD PHILOSOPHY

DIEGO JACQUET,
CHEF PATRÓN OF
ZOILO

INTERVIEW: ELLIE COSTIGAN
IMAGES: JADE NINA SARKHEL,
ALLAN STONE

1—I was born in Buenos Aires, but I moved with my parents to Patagonia, in the south of Argentina, and my heart is still split between the two places.

2—Like any other Argentinian kid, I was into football—all I wanted to do was to play professionally. But I had an accident when I was 14 and lost some vision in my left eye. It had quite

an impact on my life, so I decided to study hotel management. I studied how to cook as part of that and asked Francis Mallmann, my teacher, if I could apprentice in his restaurant. The rush of the kitchen, everybody pushing—it was chaotic, but at the same time organised madness. I just fell in love with it.

3—At El Bulli, Ferran Adrià taught me how to push myself. After that I was not afraid to work 100 hours a week—we were working 18, 19 hours a day. I also worked with Nils Norén in New York, an amazing chef. He was not afraid to get his hands dirty, and he was better than anyone else: faster, cleaner, more skilful. That was a big lesson for me—the higher the position, the better you need to be.

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We start with the produce and then we see what we can do with it. I talk with the team about what we've done before and try the produce in a different way. It's like composing music

4—As the head chef and owner of Zoilo, I need to be ready to jump in at any moment. If the guy on the meat section isn't doing well, I need to say, "Alright, step aside, just watch." And that is going to send a message worth a thousand words, because everybody saw me at the pass and the respect is just there—they think okay, this guy has still got it, he can still cook!

5—When I was a young chef, it was not like today where you have the internet and you can click to get a cookbook, watch YouTube to see what happens in a Michelin-starred kitchen. Then, to get to know what the big chefs were doing you had to come to Europe. It was a long journey. It felt like the promised land.

6—Being an Argentinian restaurant means people come through the door with a preconception: a big piece of meat, rustic cooking, comfort food. What we are doing is much more balanced. Argentinian food is actually very diverse. It's still a treasure to be discovered. We love meat, but we also have a coastline with beautiful fish. In Patagonia, we

have amazing lamb, saffron, cheeses, wild boar, river trout. On the coast, we have scallops, langoustines, octopus. You go to the south you have crab, the north you'll find melons, papayas. It's intoxicating, the amount of produce.

7—Pizza is the most common street food in Argentina. You go to the stadium to watch a match—because of course we're very passionate about football—afterwards, it is religion in Argentina that you get some beer and eat some pizza. The day is not complete without it.

8—We are driven by the seasons. There is nothing on the menu that is not seasonal. We start with the produce and then we see what we can do with it. I talk with the team about what we've done before and try the produce in a different way—puree it, grill it whole, put it in the dehydrator. It's like composing music.

9—I don't enjoy cooking at home. I need to be alone, I need space. At home, I don't enjoy everyone in the kitchen talking, sharing and having a laugh—which is actually what it's supposed to be about!

10—This year, I will run my fourth marathon. I am training now, and last year I didn't do anything, so it is tough. I started running for fun, but my job is so physically demanding it has become a necessity. If I don't run, I cannot perform as well in the kitchen.

ZOILO
9 Duke Street, W1U 3EG
zoilo.co.uk

C U B I T T
H O U S E

‘Footballers spend 90 minutes
pretending to be hurt. Rugby players spend
80 minutes pretending not to be.’

Rugby Six Nations 2018

3rd February - 17th March

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QA

JAY PATEL

Founder of the Japanese Knife Company on cold forging, master knife makers and why Japanese chefs like to give their blades a day off

INTERVIEW: VIEL RICHARDSON
IMAGES: CHRISTOPHER L PROCTOR, DAVID STETSON

When did your love of knives begin?

I had sold a previous clothing business and had taken time off to travel the world, exploring my passion for cooking. I was in Japan and had done a 'stage'—a culinary internship—in a small izakaya (gastropub) restaurant in Shin-Matsudo, just outside Tokyo. Me and the chef

patron Matsumoto san became firm friends and when I left, he presented me with a beautiful yanagiba knife. 'Yanagiba' means 'willowleaf' and the blade is designed for cutting boneless fish. That knife fundamentally altered the way I thought about preparing food.

What was it about the knife that had such an effect?

I was not a professional chef and like many consumers and domestic cooks—and professional chefs, for that matter—I saw chopping ingredients as a chore. The way this knife just seemed to glide through whatever I was cutting and the sense of control it gave was wonderful, it made you want to slice more things. Humans created the knife even before we controlled fire—there is something about using a knife that goes deep within our psyche.

What is so distinctive about Japanese knives?

In western cooking, the food is generally cut after it has been cooked on heat of some kind, and before it's presented to the diner. For a large proportion of Japanese cuisine—and this goes far beyond sushi, to things like donburi, sukiyaki, shabushabu, yakiniku—the chef's job is to cut the food and bring it to the table raw, so their task is to make the finest cuts they possibly can. Because of this, there is a different approach to making the knife.

Blacksmiths from Rajasthan in India discovered almost 2,000 years ago that if you took a piece of iron and folded it over before beating it flat,

the layered piece of iron was stronger than a single piece of the same thickness. They also discovered that beating together metals with different qualities—one soft and the other hard—results in a blade with properties that neither of the original materials possess, such as being able to hold a sharp edge for longer. These skills reached Japan by a very circuitous route over many years—possibly involving Vikings, but precisely how is shrouded in myth and mystery. We do know that they arrived in Japan at least 1,000 years ago.

What is the difference between Japanese and European knives?

As the knife edge gets sharper it gets thinner and therefore weaker, so you need a way of maintaining that edge. The Germans—who make the best European knives—achieve this by toughening the steel, so that the edge is inherently stronger. The Japanese, however, believe the most important thing is to be able to maintain the working edge yourself, which can be difficult with hard German steel.

The Japanese developed a system called 'warikomi', which means laminating, whereby the finished blade has a thin core of very hard steel, which supplies the cutting edge. The outside of the blade is softer steel. When you rub the blade against the sharpening stones you remove soft steel more quickly and reveal the harder steel in the centre. This structure makes them easier to sharpen, as well as helping the knife stay sharp for a long time. However, this

type of blade is much easier to damage if misused.

I am in no way denigrating German knives, they produce some fantastic blades. In fact, the most expensive series of knives we sell is German. We don't keep the most expensive ones in stock, but there is one maker whose knives sell for £138,000 each.

You hear a lot about layers. How important are they?

The thing is not to get hung up on the number of layers a knife has. The question you should be asking is, what is in the middle, what is my cutting edge made of? But one with more layers will usually be easier to sharpen and look nicer.

Does the way you use a knife have an impact on which you should choose?

If you are the kind of person who is heavy-handed, and prefers to cut straight through the whole joint when, for example, preparing a chicken, then traditional Japanese knives are not for you. You need a German knife with harder steel. With the Japanese knives you need to break the joint first, then the knife will slide smoothly between the bones, giving you an extremely clean cut.

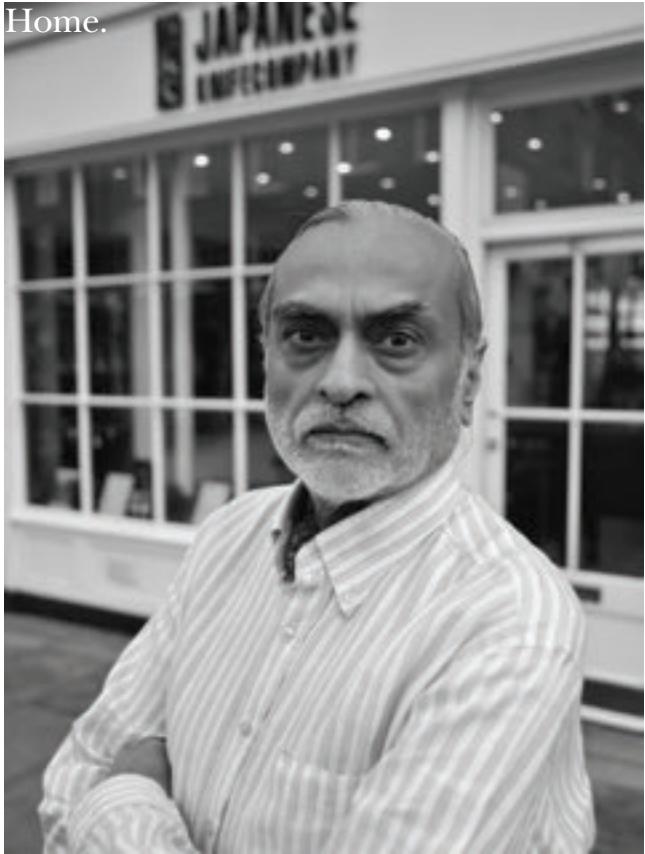
Can this be limiting for the busy chef?

Yes it can, which is why we have worked with a forge in Japan to develop a new type of knife that behaves like a German, but cuts like a Japanese. It is very strong and hard-wearing, but can do delicate cuts if needed.

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For a large proportion of Japanese cuisine—and this goes far beyond sushi—the chef's job is to cut the food and bring it to the table raw, so their task is to make the finest cuts they possibly can





We used what is called a 'cold forging' technique, where the metal is worked at room temperature, which the Japanese don't really like to do. The forge master was very doubtful at first, but once he saw how the knives performed he was convinced.

You trained with a Japanese master knife maker. Tell us about that.

When I returned to the UK, no one knew how to sharpen the knife Matsumoto san had presented me with. After a supposed 'expert' had ruined it, my wife said: "You like Japan, you seem passionate about knives and know people there. Why not go back and learn how to do it yourself?" So I went back and asked Matsumoto san to introduce me to

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Japanese chefs treat their knives with great respect. We've had European chefs bringing their knives to the shop to be sharpened with fish scales still on them—you would never see that in Japan



his knife maker. Because Matsumoto san was a man of high status, the knife maker, Takeo Murata, agreed to take me on out of respect for him.

It was very hard, but incredibly rewarding. I trained in a tiny little hamlet of about 12 houses and the only person who spoke any English was a child of one of the blacksmiths. I basically spoke no Japanese, so he translated for me. The day I started, Murata san laughed at me, saying: "What on earth are you, a gaijin [outsider], doing trying to learn something only the Japanese can do?" He said I would last two weeks. I was there for seven years, and we became great friends.

What is it that drives the Japanese to produce such high quality?

They believe in the pursuit of perfection. Murata san is now 90 years old and I saw him on a recent trip to Japan, still in the workshop. I asked why he was still there. He said: "When I stop learning, I will stop working." He has been making santoku knives, general-purpose chef's knives, since he was 13 years old. They sell at about £300 and are the equal of some costing thousands. For me, he is the best santoku maker in the world. It is about that passion for achieving the absolute best he can.

Do Japanese chefs take a more spiritual approach to their knives?

There is an idea that they have a more spiritual connection with their

knives, but that is only a reflection of the fact that they have a spiritual connection with all things. In Japan, many of the top chefs buy their knives in pairs, using them on alternate days to give each knife a day's rest. It may seem a bit over the top, but it is part of the culture. These knives do an enormous amount of work in the hands of a true master and will suffer from molecular fractures and metal fatigue.

Japanese chefs treat their knives with great respect. We've had European chefs bringing their knives to the shop to be sharpened with fish scales still on them—you would never see that in Japan.

What is your advice for buying a Japanese knife?

If you are choosing an expensive knife for a gift, it is good if the person you are choosing it for is there, especially for their first knife. The same style of knife can be different weights and balanced for the front, middle or back of the blade. After holding several knives, one will just 'feel right'. Japanese knives are like fountain pens and over time will wear according to the user's hand. After a while it will never seem as sharp to someone else. These knives do take some emotional investment, they must be used properly and looked after. But the reward is a beautiful object that is a delight to use and one that will give you many years of excellent service.



MARYLEBONE FOOD FESTIVAL

8-18 MARCH 2018

MARYLEBONE STREET KITCHEN

Saturday 17 March
Moxon Street Car Park

Eat
Drink
Experience

An afternoon of eating and drinking experiences, from masterclasses and workshops to tastings and talks, with street food and drinks from Marylebone's restaurants and retailers. Free to attend.

108 Brasserie at The Marylebone Hotel, Amanzi Tea, As Nature Intended, Boxcar, Clarette, Coco Momo, Fishworks, Hoppers, La Fromagerie, Sourced Market, The Coach Makers Arms, The Grazing Goat, The Natural Kitchen, The Providores and Tapa Room, Trishna, Yeotown Kitchen, Zoilo, plus more to be confirmed.

marylebonefoodfestival.com

Home.



HOME HELP

Jenny Deeming,
founder of Cologne
and Cotton, on
laying the perfect
table

INTERVIEW: CLARE FINNEY

How have approaches to table setting changed?

A lot of people just don't want the formality of traditional table settings these days. We don't want to be scrabbling about in the drawers for matching napkins when we come home from work. More people eat in their kitchens now, even when they are entertaining—and our food is often more informal

too: sharing plates and so on.

Why do you think that is?

It is interesting, isn't it? The British don't really set as much store by table linen and table cloths—not like they do on the continent. The French have spent years trying to sell us expensive linens and napkins, but we find they just don't go. Personally, I think the nicer dinner parties are the more casual ones where nothing matches: unmatched glasses and napkins, some wild flowers in the middle, lovely candles of different shapes.

What about eating al fresco?

Our gorgeous block-printed tablecloths from India are great for al fresco dining. The block prints



the colour of your walls?

I think if you're matching your tablecloth to your walls you are probably going too far. Some people do, but it is a lot of effort. That is why the Indian block-printed table cloths work so well: they're bright, patterned, and they aren't expensive, so you can get two or three. At Christmas, our red linen tablecloth sold well, but you can't go wrong with white. We have a lovely ivory leaf cotton damask tablecloth which is very classic, very elegant—almost hotel-style, but robust too—as well as a hand-embroidered one in Venice lace. If you want to avoid white, but still want something sophisticated, grey and taupe can work well. We have a lace-edged linen table cloth in taupe.

I want to do some table décor, but I also really like my table. Is there a halfway house?

If you've a lovely scrubbed wooden table or some such, you might not want to cover the whole thing with a table cloth—in which case, we have beautiful embroidered placemats like the Honfleur. They have a stunning border, stitched by hand in Vietnam. If you're having 12 people over for dinner, you want something basic but pretty. Those, some napkins, some candles and some flowers would work very well.

Any other top table tips?

It's the company that matters—fine wine and good company. That's why we're setting the table in the first place.

How do you decide which colour tablecloth to go for? Do you have to think about

5

FIVE OF THE BEST CASSEROLE DISHES



Clockwise from top left:
John Leach American-style bean pot
David Mellor, £109

Black toast enamel casserole pot
Emma Bridgewater, £49

Terra.Cotto conical saucepot in mint
The Conran Shop, £79

Crane C1 casserole dish
Another Country, £135

Terra casserole small by Jansen+Co
Skandium, £70

QA

CHANTAL COADY

The founder of Rococo Chocolates on rococo art, packaging design and the influence of her Persian roots

INTERVIEW: CLARE FINNEY

Art and design are clearly inherent to Rococo—the name itself is that of an art style. What exactly inspired 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. They said, "That is brilliant!" It was only then 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.

How did the name manifest itself in the business?

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. When Rococo first opened in 1983, we had pink candy floss walls, sugar chandeliers and Botticelli on the ceiling.

And the iconic blue and white pattern?

The pattern we have now is the third incarnation of the design, and has become the cornerstone of our branding. It was inspired by a 19th century illustrated French catalogue of chocolate figures, brought to me by an antiquarian bookseller. "You have to buy this," he told me. "It's expensive, but I'll give you a discount. I know you'll do something good with it." At the time it was about a month's salary. I bought it and, looking through, got the idea of photocopying the images, cutting them out and laying them out as a random repeating design. The printer loved it, and it has remained at the core of the brand. 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.

Are you particularly interested in Rococo art?

I didn't study it much at college, but I have come to love the music, the art and the whole idea of the Enlightenment period. I was in Potsdam earlier this year and we visited the Emperor Frederick III's palace. It was amazing—like a German Versailles. One particularly lovely thing about rococo is that it's asymmetrical by definition, because it's about forms that occur in nature. There was an exhibition I saw at the V&A a long time ago, which showed how they dipped crayfish into porcelain, fired them, and the inside got so hot it would vanish, leaving the crayfish's perfect form.

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.

Last year you joined forces with Roald Dahl's estate to create chocolates inspired by his books, and at

Christmas you launched a range of chocolate and clothing in association with Jigsaw. How do you decide who to team up with?

The Roald Dahl project was a dream for us—literally. I used to dream about chocolate after reading his books as a child. Jigsaw meanwhile actually approached me to do an accessories collection. It sounded fun, and I like their style: classic, but a bit quirky. We've been working together since early last year: there's a purse with a gold chocolate coin inside it and a series of wristlet wallets and wash bags, and even a set of pyjamas in the classic blue and white print.

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. The garden at our Belgravia store is Moorish in design, for example, as are the tiles in my bathroom at home. It was that which in part inspired me to create our Moroccan mint bar.

Why do some other European countries have a more refined chocolate culture than we have?

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

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The Roald Dahl project was a dream for us—literally. I used to dream about chocolate after reading his books as a child





we were 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.

How far have we come 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.

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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

How significant has investing in your own plantation in Granada been in ensuring the ethical and qualitative value of your chocolate?

It's very important. It's complicated, of course, and quite political, but I do think the big producers could do more than they are in terms of fair trade. It is all about adding as much value as you can to where the



WHAT'S ON

EXHIBITIONS

SETUKO ONO

15th February—
9th March
Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation
13-14 Cornwall Terrace,
NW1 4QP
dajf.org.uk

Setsuko Ono, younger sister of Yoko, began formal artistic training during her 28-year career at the World Bank, and only began exhibiting after retiring in 2003. Since then, her installations have been exhibited across the US and Japan. This exhibition will mark her debut in the UK, with a display of cut-out steel sculptures, welded by Setsuko herself, alongside mixed-media paintings inspired by the artist's interest in international politics.

cocoa is being grown. If you think about a regular high street bar of chocolate, the amount of cocoa contained 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 finally gets to the cocoa farmer is very, very little. What we try to do is ensure that more of the value of the bar stays within the farmer's local economy. Watching that happen in our estate in Granada has been fantastic: they are very 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.

ROCOCO CHOCOLATES
3 Moxon Street, W1U 4EW
rococochocolates.com

BREAKING SHELLS

Until 10th March
The Koppel Project
93 Baker Street,
W1U 6RL
thekoppelpproject.com

Nine contemporary artists explore representations of and narratives surrounding the female body, through sculptures, paintings, drawings, videos, and installations. Themes include the relationship between the body and identity; how women are represented in

art and popular culture; clichés surrounding black women; sexuality, sex work and fetishism; and language use.

LESS IS MORE

Until 16th February
Daniel Raphael Gallery
26 Church Street,
NW8 8EP
danielraphael.co.uk

A group exhibition of small works—from surrealism, to landscape painting, to geometric abstracts—by European artists such as Samuel



Clockwise from above:
Jessie Makinson; Setsuko Ono;
Douglas Gray; Antonio Calderara



Ageborn Hencher, April Jackson and Magdalena Sevcik. The exhibition is inspired by the Renaissance practice of assembling tiny artworks in a cabinet, which important guests were invited to view.

ANTONIO CALDERARA: PAINTING INFINITY

Until 17th February
Lisson Gallery
67 Lisson Street,
NW1 5DA
lissongallery.com



Italian 20th century artist Antonio Calderara was initially known for his figurative paintings, but the last decades of his life saw him make a decisive shift in style towards the abstract. His later works, on show here, see a move towards a more geometric, reductive approach, making use of simple forms and subtle colour. Featuring key works, the exhibition will highlight this important period in Calderara's practice, encompassing oil paintings and works on paper.



IN BETWEEN

Simple forms hand-painted with abstract patterns from ceramicist Lara Scobie, textured paper works from Jorge Sarsale, coloured Plexiglas panels from Tom Henderson, and the familiar paper figures of Rachel Shaw Ashton—all come together in a show which, through the use of shadow and pattern, is designed to play with our sense of perception.

7th February—2nd March
jaggedart
28a Devonshire Street,
W1G 6PS
jaggedart.com

METROPOLIS: CELEBRATING THE WORLD'S GREATEST CITIES

21st February—
10th March
Thompson's Gallery
3 Seymour Place,
W1H 5AZ
thompsonsgallery.co.uk

In an exhibition of painted works, Thompson's Gallery artists such as Douglas Gray, Michael Kidd and Mark Thompson capture the culture and atmosphere of some of the world's greatest cities, including London, Paris and New York, in an eclectic array of styles.

ALPHA PLUS ART & DESIGN ART EXHIBITION

17th—23rd March
A&D Gallery
51 Chiltern Street,
W1U 6LY
aanddgallery.com

A showcase of two and three-dimensional works from nursery to sixth form-aged students at independent schools across London, including the local Portland Place and Wetherby schools.

MUSIC

CUARTETO CASALS: BEETHOVEN AND AURELIANO CATTANEO

24th March
Wigmore Hall
36 Wigmore Street,
W1U 2BP
wigmore-hall.org.uk

Spanish string quartet Cuarteto Casals—quartet-in-residence at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya in Barcelona—returns to Wigmore Hall

Cuarteto Casals



with a performance of early and middle period Beethoven, and Aureliano Cattaneo's Neben, as well as new works.

ACADEMY SONG CIRCLE: VALENTINE'S CONCERT

14th February
Royal Academy of Music
Marylebone Road,
NW1 5HT
ram.ac.uk

The Song Circle—a small group of the Academy's most accomplished performers—performs love songs, both solo and duet, in English, French and German, exploring the theme of love in a variety of moods: flirtatious, sentimental, sad, bitter and, of course, romantic. The recital will culminate with the annual 'Schubertiade', given by candlelight in 19th century costume.

LECTURES

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF DRUG RESISTANT INFECTIONS

6th March
Royal Society of Medicine
1 Wimpole Street,
W1G 0AE
rsm.ac.uk

Dame Sally Davies, chief medical officer for England, advocates globally on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Practices such as misuse of medicine, poor infection control, global trade and increased international travel have given rise for concern in recent years about the future effectiveness of antibiotics, without which even minor medical treatment could become high risk.

EUROPA: CONNECTING IDEAS ACROSS BORDERS

15th February & 20th March
RIBA
66 Portland Place,
W1B 1AD
architecture.com/RIBA

A new generation of designers discuss approaches to architecture in countries that share borders, but not necessarily ideologies—and how, ultimately, this shapes their respective landscapes. In February, the focus will be on the planning practices of Italy and Switzerland, while March's talk sees some of the region's top architectural practices casting light on the situation in the Baltics.

Culture.



Amerika Square

FILM

AMERIKA SQUARE

25th February
Hellenic Centre
16-18 Paddington Street,
W1U 5AS
helleniccentre.org

Written and directed by Yannis Sakaridis (based on the book *Victoria Does Not Exist* by Yannis Tsirbas), Amerika Square tells the timely tale of the encounter of two Athenian men—best friends Billy and Nakos—with Syrian refugee Tarek. Set in the midst of Greece's economic crisis, the film explores the human side of the immigration debate. Actor Ksenia Dania will also perform a musical recital between showings, and talks with the producer, director and one of the actors will be held following both of the day's screenings.

THE POST

23rd—24th February
Regent Street Cinema
309 Regent Street,
W1B 2UW
regentstreetcinema.com

At a time when the media's role in mediating politics and people is firmly in the spotlight, Steven

Spielberg's latest drama seems particularly apt. When US military analyst Daniel Ellsberg (Matthew Rhys) panics the Nixon administration by leaking damaging Vietnam War documents, Kay Graham (Meryl Streep), publisher of the Washington Post, has to decide whether to put the paper's existence on the line in the name of press freedom.

THEATRE

MISTERO BUFFO WITH PANOS VLAHOS

28th February—
3rd March
The Cockpit Theatre
Gateforth Street,
NW8 8EH
thecockpit.org.uk

In *Mistero Buffo*, written in 1969, Nobel Prize-winning playwright Dario Fo's take on the popular mystery plays of medieval Europe re-imagines biblical stories via seven comic scenes, which together denounce the political and religious elite and give a human dimension to the concept of miracles. Acclaimed Greek actor Panos Vlahos will perform this new adaptation for the first time in London.

BOOK REVIEWS

WORDS: SASHAGARWOOD

THE SCIENCE OF FOOD MARTY JOPSON £12.99, Michael O'Mara

Marty Jopson is the resident scientist on the BBC's *The One Show*. I'm not entirely sure what that means, having limited knowledge of popular culture after about 1950, but *The Science of Food* is an informative, conversational whistle-stop tour of the intersections between our everyday life with food and the science behind it. It's full of casual gems of interest, low stress and low pressure, but generally enhances your understanding of quotidian experiences, which is always good. Jopson covers such weighty topics as the addictive properties of caffeine and chocolate, the physics behind how knives work, how best-before and use-by dates are calculated, the thermodynamic and conductive properties of various kitchen materials, and his experience of instant mashed potato.

The *Science of Food* wears its undoubted learning relatively lightly, with a colloquial tone that renders bacteria as bugs and scatters contractions liberally, but it's all interesting and engaging stuff. Did you know that dried foods like instant coffee, milk and soup are produced using a drum dryer? Or that 90 per cent of North Americans consume some form of caffeine every day? Have you ever stopped to consider what common saws like the 'five-second rule' (nonsense, by the way, and Jopson has the experimental data to prove it) or 'fat means flavour' actually mean, and where they might come from? Jopson wisely uses these familiar concepts as jumping-off points to examine bacteria growth and surface adhesion, or the molecular structure of fats and lipids and their contribution to our perceptions of taste.



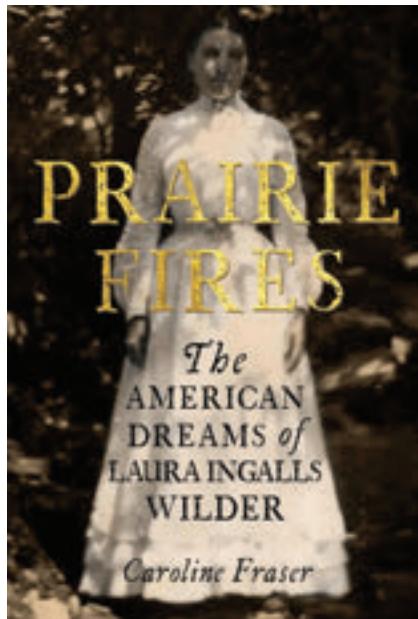
Some of this stuff is genuinely useful—as a paid-up subscriber to paranoia about food hygiene, thanks to an unpleasant history of food poisoning, I found the information about use-by dates genuinely reassuring, while my husband was delighted to know that there are molecular as well as production reasons why instant coffee doesn't taste anything like actual coffee. Jopson's book may not be the weightiest book in the history of the world, but if you're interested in either food or science, it's definitely worth a bash.

PRAIRIE FIRES CAROLINE FRASER

£20, Fleet

As a lifelong reader of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the meticulously researched and widely insightful Prairie Fires blew me way. Both an intimate and detailed biography of the woman (or women, if you count Wilder's daughter and editor Rose Wilder Lane) behind the Little House series and a sound historical analysis of the ideology and practical impact of the American West, it is both gripping and deeply learned. Fraser combines erudition with a genuine passion for Wilder's work and a substantial understanding of her historical context, and the result is a delightful, compelling and occasionally disturbing tome.

Prairie Fires starts before Laura Ingalls was born, with white settlers' abuse of the Dakota, the US-Dakota war and its horrific aftermath, and then the history of the Ingalls and Quiner families (that of Laura's mother) and their experiences in America. It's fascinating and huge in scope, casting Laura's tales of her pioneering family in a new light even before Fraser begins to fill in Wilder and Lane's determinedly 'free and independent' picture with details of somewhat shady town dwelling, repeated farming failure and the outside employment that kept the family afloat. That was one of the most shocking aspects of this book: not only that both Charles Ingalls and Almanzo Wilder entirely failed to make a living at farming (to be supported by federal intervention,



civil service work and their womenfolk), but also the widespread ecological devastation that the land rush brought, destroying irreplaceable swathes of prairie and causing not only the devastation of native communities, but the plagues of locusts and climate change that Wilder describes.

Prairie Fires neatly and devastatingly undermines the American Dream of independence and self-reliance, yet does so with a loving attention to historical ephemera and the precise emotional details of Laura's relationships with her family, her husband and her unspeakably awful daughter Rose. It's a fascinating, compulsive tale, profoundly insightful and ultimately disquieting.

THE PANTHER IN MY KITCHEN BRIAN BLESSED

£20, Sidgwick & Jackson

Perhaps alone of all the inhabitants of the British Isles, before reading this book I was only aware of Brian Blessed in the vaguest terms. I'd only seen him on Who Do You Think You Are? and been impressed by all the boozing. So I approached The Panther in My Kitchen warily, only to be amused and charmed, rather despite myself, by the determinedly wholehearted life choices Blessed depicts.

Aptly subtitled My Wild Life with Animals, this is a memoir of all the animals in Blessed's life, a group not limited to dogs and cats or even Shetland ponies, but including orangutans, gorillas, baby tigers, clouded leopards, reticulated pythons, giant lions and the panther of the title. It's all rollicking fun. From the devoted cat Tibby who follows a young Brian to and from school, to his attempts to rescue a lonely orangutan from depression through wrestling, to the visiting lion that mugs his plumber, it's heartwarming and frequently laugh-out-loud funny. The bit where female gorillas repeatedly attempt to divest our hero of his trousers and his dignity made me chuckle for at least five minutes.

There's the odd uncomfortable moment—my response to any man informing me of his virility is unlikely to be enthusiastic, and describing someone as possessed of "breasts the size of moons" and a "rear end with its own postcode" seems in excess of necessary character information—but it's relentlessly entertaining, and the majority of the time Blessed passed with flying colours my stringent rules about not being an arsehole. His compassion for the animals in his care, his aggressive anti-bullying stance and his willingness to put not just his money but his body, home and resources where his mouth is, is nothing short of admirable.

There's a serious edge to all this, though. Many of Blessed's menagerie are rescue animals who have been subject to horrendous abuse; even those who haven't been physically attacked have suffered greatly from human misuse and misunderstanding. Juan the orangutan, for example, was kept in isolation with no trees or company, and succumbed to depression and aggression after years of inappropriate care, despite Blessed's efforts. The Panther in My Kitchen argues effectively for greater compassion towards all animals. It's worth reading not just for an enjoyable insight into a variety of dynamic and eccentric characters of all species, but also as a thought-provoking essay on the ways in which we take the natural world for granted.

Style.

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If I hadn't done this, I'd probably have been a chef. I am a total foodie. I find cookery therapeutic—you have to put your heart and soul into it



QA

DINNY HALL

Creative director of the eponymous jewellery brand on breaking rules, wearing diamonds and loving food

WORDS: JACKIE MODLINGER
IMAGES: ORLANDO GILI

Dinny Hall is both an iconic jewellery designer and consummate retailer, whose dedicated following includes the likes of Madonna, Elizabeth Hurley and Kristin Scott Thomas. Her latest (fifth) bijouterie boutique that mushroomed on Marylebone Lane—an English sausage shop in a previous incarnation—just before Christmas is testament to her talent.

Cue a treasure trove: signature hoop earrings, a staple in every girl's jewellery box, in bamboo or twist design; dangling star or heart necklaces; twist 'spike' earrings inspired by the Lisbon archaeological museum's Celtic gold collection; 'pinky' signet rings; coloured gemstone rings (tourmaline, tanzanite, sapphire); latticed

Moroccan frieze drop earrings; arm candy that includes cuffs, 'wave' bracelets, 'curve' bangles and Dinny's take on the tennis bracelet.

Creative director of her eponymous label, she has just blown in from her Norfolk farmhouse retreat—her faithful miniature schnauzer Bobo in tow. Dinny (real name Deborah) is a nickname taken from a character in a John Galsworthy book.

From an early age, fashion and jewellery were Dinny's passion, and have remained constant throughout her life. "My mum loved jewellery, but I think I probably love it even more. There's this story about when I was a little girl, I flogged her engagement ring—I swapped it for a Barbie Doll! That was my first jewellery transaction.

"I didn't actually know I wanted to be a jewellery designer until I was on my foundation course at St Albans School of Art. I liked making things; I discovered that cutting out metal was something I really wanted to do," she recalls.

Hers has been a long journey spanning 31 years, sometimes travelling a rocky road, with her American agents going bust and a burglary at her Hampstead store. The secret of her survival? "Enthusiasm—I just jump every hurdle. I might knock them down sometimes, but I get over them," she concedes.

"Your ego has to be bruised," believes Dinny: "So many designers start out with an enormous ego—you have to be bashed up to get going again. I got to a point

where my rise was quite meteoric, I have to say. I was in the right place at the right time, championed by fantastic people, and had amazing help"—like Liberty, whose loyalty has endured to this very day (she has a concession there), and her collaboration with milliner Stephen Jones and fashion designer Rifat Ozbek, which lasted seven years. "I think that quietly—because I don't make a big noise—everyone's really pleased to still be in business after all that time," she muses.

So how did Dinny get to the top of her game? Let's flash back to the start of her brilliant career.

What was your very first job?

A Saturday job, in a bakery in a place called Bovingdon—we lived just outside that village. It put me off chocolate eclairs for life. But it did help me to get up to London by train to go shopping in Kensington Market and buy myself clothes, which I spent every penny on.

So you were into fashion back in the day?

My mother was very beautiful and she wore Biba. She would wear little pillbox hats with pink mini-skirts. When I was that young, it was the tail end of 'hippie' and the beginning of 'glam', so I had a floaty 1970s skirt that was bias-cut and all uneven at the hem and these denim platforms with huge heels that I'd teeter around in. I was the most fashionable girl in the village.

I loved to draw. I used to go to stay in people's

houses and I would design clothes for them. I'd start imagining what they'd wear and I did cartoons. We used to live not far from this place called Nettleton, where Hugh Hefner had a Playboy Club. I used to see the girls when I was going for a walk or riding, so I started doing these funny 'bunny girl' cartoons. I was fascinated as to why women would want to wear pom-poms and ears. I have always been very creative and knew that I was going to go into design.

After your foundation course you got into Central St Martin's—quite a coup, no?

You know what, that's when I thought, WOW—they sent the boys to private school and they didn't get into a decent university, and I got into the best art school in England. I don't know how—I think it was probably my cartoons. My portfolio and sketchbooks were pretty full.

You must have been so chuffed when Liberty bought your Turkish-inspired graduation collection. How did that come about?

I am definitely a rule-breaker: the university was trying to make the jewellery into a kind of art form, while I was pushing it towards fashion and theatre. There was one tutor, Mick Milligan, who saved the day for me, otherwise I felt they were a load of old fogeys. When Liberty bought my collection it was like, there you are then! I was a maverick at that point, so I was delighted and it kind of gave me the confidence to strike out on my own.

66

We used to live not far from this place called Nettleton, where Hugh Hefner had a Playboy Club. I used to see the girls when I was going for a walk. I was fascinated as to why women would want to wear pom-poms and ears



Diamonds—are they your best friend?

I wear a lot of diamonds—that might sound a bit boring, but one, I'm a Taurus and it's my birthstone and two, they're indestructible. They make me feel I can wear them all the time, without worrying about knocking, scratching or damaging them. Three, they sparkle and they're uplifting. I've re-invented the diamond tennis bracelet, which is completely gorgeous. For me, it's that little twinkle that just makes the difference.

When you're designing, do you have a muse?

There have definitely been muses along the way. Nancy Cunard is one—she used to wear bangles all the time and I got very inspired by her. She was a real clunky-clunk. Another early muse was Josephine Baker, who used to wear these huge spiral earrings. Talitha Getty. She is wearing THE most stunning Ossie Clark dress in that iconic picture on the top of a building in Morocco, but she's not wearing any jewellery so I thought, I've got to design some earrings for Talitha. That's how the 'Talitha' range came about. It's like chain mail using the quatrefoil. Joni Kamen, an actor, is the face of our young customer—she's the niece of Nick Kamen who did the Levi's ads. Her mum, Emma, is a friend of mine. She's grown up wearing the jewellery.

What made you choose Marylebone as a location for your newest shop?

I always wanted to have a shop in Marylebone—

there's something about it being the only village in the heart of London. There are little things I know about it, like the fact that one of the only elm trees in central London is in Marylebone. It has memories for me: I used to do pilates in Thayer Street for 20 years, and I got to know it particularly well because my son went to Abercorn Prep School. When he was very little I picked him up from the school gates. I enjoyed wandering round—there is just an atmosphere, something real about London that's in Marylebone. However gentrified, however many shops have come in from all around the world, there's still something very 'London village' about it.

Will you be spending much time in Marylebone?

Yes, I'll certainly eat here—at Sourced Market—and when people ask me where to stay in London, I say Durrants Hotel. The Wallace Collection is amazing, they have the best collection of armour ever and I love the way the porcelain is shown in those extremely OTT rococo rooms. I loved the fact that there was a



sausage shop here—and you've still got The Ginger Pig and La Fromagerie, of course. Though some areas can lose their way, Marylebone seems to be able to re-invent itself.

This is a special issue, devoted to food. Is food one of your loves?

If I hadn't done this, I'd probably have been a chef. I am a total foodie. Indian and Thai are my most favourite foods in the whole world. Number two's Italian. I find cookery therapeutic—you have to put your heart and soul into it. I've become quite good at cooking Indian food, I've really learned about the spices. I do things like prepare my ginger, garlic and curry leaves and put them in the fridge, so I can use them quickly. I fuse southern



Indian food with things I have learned in the north, and Thai and Sri Lankan cookery. My interest comes from seeing the food cooked on my travels in the early 1990s, and I went to cookery classes when I was out there. Piers, my husband, cooks as well—he's probably more of a traditional cook. We take it in turns.

So, what comes next for Dinny Hall?

We'll probably start doing ear-piercing downstairs here. I have a lady who does it with a needle—the old-fashioned style of piercing, as opposed to a gun. We're bringing out our own range of simple keepers in 14 carat gold. I am designing a men's signet range and we'll do men's ID bracelets, too. That's because of the millennials—my 21-year old son and all his friends wear jewellery. I am designing a jewellery box that we're going to be selling and a pendant handbag clip—a chatelaine pendant in silver or gold—based around an orb that you can attach to your handbag.

How do you relax?

I might spend the whole day cooking on a Saturday or I might bake bread. Bobo helps; she has to go for a walk every day. I do pilates in Norfolk now on Friday and Saturday mornings. When I go to the Far East, I do yoga. I lead a very stressful, highly charged life, so I need to really build in time for a healthy body and mind, as well as having a bit of fun.

DINNY HALL MARYLEBONE
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DR LISA DAS

Gastroenterologist
at The London
Clinic on irritable
bowel syndrome, a
common but widely
misunderstood
condition

INTERVIEW: VIEL RICHARDSON
PORTRAIT: ALICE MANN

What is irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?

IBS is one of the most common conditions that we see in gastroenterology clinics, occurring in about 50 per cent of patients. It is essentially abdominal pain related to disordered bowel habits. That can be either a change in the frequency of going to the toilet or in the form of the stool when you do. But there can be other symptoms, too.

Why is it called a syndrome?

A syndrome is a collection of associated symptoms, as opposed to a specific disease process. It means that there is no single underlying mechanism causing the problem and is what we call 'multifactorial'. So technically there is no 'cure' as there is no disease mechanism to fight.

Is there a clinical definition of IBS?

There is a group of experts called the Rome Foundation, which focuses on improving treatments for gastrointestinal disorders. They have been working on IBS since the 1980s and the most recent definition from 2016 is called the Rome IV criteria. It defines IBS as "any abdominal pain that is associated with a change of the bowel habit, has been present for at least one day a week for the last three months, and started at least six months ago". There may be a range of other symptoms associated with IBS—these can include nausea, headaches, migraines, fatigue, joint pain and skin rash. There are many factors underlying IBS, but the exciting thing is that we are learning more about it all the time.

So, it is not purely a gut and intestinal problem.

We are beginning to realise that it is not. In fact Rome IV addresses that. We increasingly realise that we are dealing with disorders in the relationship between the gut and the brain—what we call the gut-brain axis. The new nomenclature is 'disordered gut brain interaction'.

How do patients generally present?

Everybody can have different symptoms. One person will have abdominal pain, one will have severe bloating, another could present with constipation or diarrhoea. They may suddenly develop this urgent need to get to the toilet, especially after meals. Also, the patient doesn't have to have one major symptom, but can have several that are all equally distressing.

What is actually happening during IBS?

We know it is related to several mechanisms: abnormal gut motility (which is the way the gut moves and pushes food along), as well as abnormally heightened sensation in the gut, or abnormal immune mechanisms, occasionally triggered by a localised infection in the gut. There is also this new understanding of how the gut-brain axis impacts on the syndrome. We are learning much more as we investigate that further, which should help develop new modes of treatment, and further research is ongoing.

Has there been a change in approach in your time as a gastroenterologist?

The biggest change is that

we now take IBS seriously. There is a small subset of clinicians who don't, but the majority of us positively recognise IBS as a clinical diagnosis. There is now a general acceptance that by targeting the symptoms we can make a huge difference to IBS sufferers.

Are certain people more at risk?

Females are 1.7 times



“

Anxiety and depression can be precursors of IBS and can also cause worsening IBS symptoms, which are themselves distressing—you can find yourself with a vicious cycle, spiralling downwards

more likely to get IBS. People suffering from anxiety or depression have a heightened risk. About 20 per cent of sufferers will develop it after a gut infection. It can also appear after a course of antibiotics. In this case, the underlying mechanism is thought to be connected to the ‘gut microbiome’, a collection of bacteria living in the gut. We need the gut

microbiome to stay healthy, and this is all too easily disrupted by antibiotics. Also, if you look at children who have had trauma in their lives, they are far more likely to develop IBS later in life.

So your mental state can impact on IBS?

Anxiety and depression can be precursors of IBS and can also cause worsening

IBS symptoms, which are themselves distressing—you can find yourself with a vicious cycle, spiralling downwards.

If untreated, can it lead to something more serious?

The simple answer is no. IBS patients have been studied over 30 years and there is no evidence of it developing onto something more serious.





If you have tried to get help in the past and have not been believed or well-managed, please have another try, because things are very different now

What would you say are the most common misunderstandings?

A major, and dangerous, misunderstanding is that bleeding from the rectum when you pass a stool is a symptom of IBS. This is absolutely false. Bleeding is not a symptom of IBS—if you see blood, this has to be investigated, because it can be a symptom of or precursor to some much more serious diseases.

Are there other symptoms that don't fit with IBS?

Yes, there are several 'alarm features' that suggest we may not be just dealing with IBS. These include sudden weight loss, or a family history of bowel cancer, colitis or Crohn's disease, or coeliac disease. Also, symptoms that wake people up in the middle of the night are not typical of IBS. It is incredibly important if you have been living with a series of symptoms for some time that you make sure to highlight problems that could indicate something far more serious.

After diagnosis, what is the next step?

You have to gain the patient's confidence; reassurance is so important. As you develop a self-management plan, the

patient begins to get a better awareness of their body. There are lightbulb moments where the patient realises what has been happening and you can see them physically relax. They stop worrying and start thinking. I have seen the simple act of understanding make a huge difference to patients. Suddenly, they are able to manage their condition in a way they couldn't before. There may be some dietary changes needed, and therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can play a part. This is about taking a multi-modality approach.

Are there medications you can use?

There is no miracle drug for IBS, so it is about managing the symptoms. We do have medications that target specific symptoms. One is a new guanylate cyclase medication called Constella (linaclotide), which works on receptors in the lining of the bowel. This increases fluid secretion into the bowel, which can help with bowel movements. It also increases the contractions which push things through the bowel, and additionally, it works on the nerves to reduce abdominal pain. In those people for whom it is

appropriate, it can be a life-changing drug.

There are also treatments that have arisen by re-visiting the literature. One area is 'bile acid malabsorption', which can cause chronic diarrhoea. Around a third of IBS patients have bile acid malabsorption, and there is existing treatment for that. Suddenly a third of your patients can be treated for a debilitating symptom that impacts on everyday life.

How does nutrition fit in?

This is of course incredibly important, but there is a great deal of confusion. Some people come in eating almost nothing, because they have restricted their diet so much. I can often tell them that they can return to a relatively normal diet, which is a revelation. Suddenly they can go out with friends and enjoy themselves again. You hear a lot about the low FODMAP diet, which can be very effective if properly followed with a dietician. But it can also be complex and difficult to understand, and I see many people who have tried it and given up.

Can there be a hereditary aspect?

At present, IBS is not thought to be hereditary.

There is familial clustering, however, which may be due to learnt social behaviour or environmental factors. On the gene side of things, there is no evidence of hereditary passing-on of IBS. It is, though, a current area of research.

What drives your interest in IBS?

The fact that it is so common and can be so hugely detrimental to people's quality of life. World-wide the prevalence of IBS is 12-15 per cent. If you look at the questionnaires returned by IBS patients, they are a long way below average on their quality of life scores, more in keeping with those with diabetes. These sufferers can also have lower productivity and higher absenteeism. With the right approach, we could help a great many of them.

What would you say to all those people with IBS, currently suffering in silence?

I would say that if you have tried to get help in the past and have not been believed or well-managed, please have another try, because things are very different now. IBS is something that can seriously impact on some lives. There is no cure as it is not a disease process, but management can be much, much better. Many people have been frustrated with visiting multiple physicians. Much has changed, and we are learning so much more about IBS. It is always worth another try, especially if symptoms are seriously affecting your work, your life and your relationships.



HOLDING THE LINE

Dentist Monica Rojas on preventative orthodontics, a treatment that tackles the causes of jaw misalignment and reduces the need for conventional orthodontics

INTERVIEW: VIEL RICHARDSON

My interest in preventative orthodontics started when my young son was having increasing problems sleeping through the night and seemed to not be breathing as smoothly as he should. I began to look into possible causes and found a body of research relating to mouth breathing and the consequences it has for general development, particularly of the jawbones. It became clear to me that this habit had precipitated my son's sleeping disorder. That was when I discovered Myobrace, a company that specialises in this area, which suggested that to correct this and other habits, preventative orthodontics and exercises could be a possible solution.

Poor jaw muscle development, while sometimes genetic, can often be caused by bad habits in early childhood. These include reversed swallowing (which happens when the tongue is not in the right position when swallowing), thumb-sucking, over-reliance on a dummy and breathing through the mouth. As well as poor muscle development, mouth breathing also significantly increases the rate of tooth decay, so it is definitely a habit to discourage.

All of these habits can cause the muscles involved in the act of swallowing to develop abnormally, with some muscles becoming stronger than they should be, and others remaining weak. This in turn distorts the jaw development as the child grows, leading to teeth misalignment.

In the UK, best practice is to delay any orthodontic treatment until children turn 12, but at that point we can be forced to remove teeth or move them around with braces to correct an established problem. Also, while traditional orthodontic techniques are very effective, you can get relapses because the original cause of the problem, the bad habits, have not been addressed.

Preventative orthodontics involves encouraging the proper growth of the jaws muscles by developing good habits. This is done placing a series of specially designed guides in the mouth, designed to ease the tongue and jaw into the correct position. The child wears the guides for an hour or two each day and then while they sleep. When each guide has done its job, it is replaced with the next in the sequence. Alongside these, the treatment also involves

a set of simple exercises designed to develop the appropriate muscles.

What we are doing is training the muscles around the upper airway to work properly so they develop as they should. We are essentially teaching the child how to breath and swallow properly. Treatment continues until the muscle development around the jaws and the airways is developing as it should. The earlier you start the treatment, the shorter it needs to be, and once the right habits have been established they are with you for life.

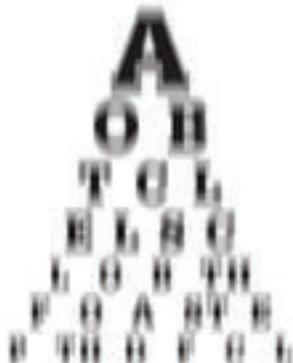
Children from four or five years old seem to be capable of doing the exercises and even sleeping with the guides. Even though this is an orthodontic treatment, there are no fixed appliances involved. It is all about muscle training and development, which you can turn into a game for the younger children. In some cases, if there is a more complex structural issue, perhaps a genetic component, there may be some conventional treatment required at a later stage, but this is very rare.

This type of preventative orthodontics is not as popular in this country as it is in other parts of the world. I think this is a shame, because done well it can help lower the risk of problems that go far beyond dentistry in later life. This is why I am so committed to offering it to our patients, especially to children—it can have a hugely positive impact on the rest of their lives.

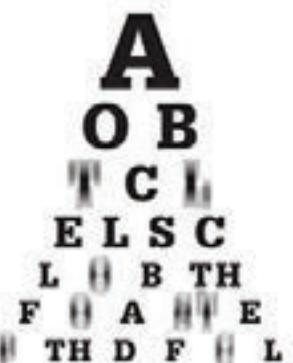
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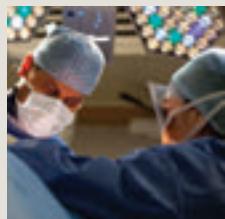
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ANDREW ELLINAS

The founding director of Sandfords on the digital revolution, stamp duty and the cosmopolitan quality of Marylebone

INTERVIEW: ELLIE COSTIGAN
PORTRAIT: ORLANDO GILI

Tell us a little about your professional background.

I started off in law, then I was in radio, before joining my father's property investment business. I set up Sandfords in the mid-1980s in Highgate. We moved here in the mid-1990s. Since then it's grown from a very small business into an established company that's well-known in Marylebone.

How have things changed in that time?

Certain industries were affected greatly by the internet, but until recently estate agency wasn't—it was simply another way to advertise property. We still came into a local office, advertised property on behalf of clients and found buyers. It's only within the last few years that the internet has really changed the way our industry works. One of the ramifications is that the agency is no longer limited to the immediate area in which its office is located. Traditionally, our area goes north to Primrose Hill and south to Oxford Street, which encompasses Marylebone, St John's Wood and Regent's Park. Now, we have instructions pretty much all over London. The internet allows that to happen.

What effect has that had on the industry?

The industry is changing, and I think it is going in two entirely different directions: there are agents such as ourselves, who develop very personal relationships with clients and where it's the skill of the people that counts. In this scenario, you employ that agent because you believe they know the market and know the buyers you want to reach. The other end of the market is where the property is simply stuck on the internet. That model is not one that we want to pursue. We are very much a property consultancy, rather than an agency. Everyone here has been in the business a long time. That's one of our core values: offering a personal service, and the knowledge and experience of those on the front line.

How much market fluctuation has there been over the last 20 years?

It's been a rollercoaster. Markets don't just ebb and flow, they're either on or they're off—it's like a tap. As an agency, you've just got to roll with it and adapt. The current market is tough, and I think it will be for some time. But, in many ways, this plays to our strengths. When the market is like this, the vendor needs somebody who really knows what they're doing. It's now that Sandfords shines, because we have the people and the knowledge to do that.

There have been several recent changes in taxation and property law. Have they affected the market?

Stamp duty changes had a profound effect on the market place. It's a transactional tax; it stops people from doing things. When you stop people from buying homes, people don't buy new carpets, washing machines, do up their house—so much of the economy is dependent on the life and strength of the property market. Stamp duty changes had a very dramatic and adverse effect.

The other thing the government did recently was bring in extra stamp duty for buy-to-let investors. That was particularly inequitable. No more than five years before that, the government was saying, "We're not going to have enough money to look after you when you retire, so you'd better make some arrangements to make sure you've got an income." They actively encouraged people to buy properties. Now, they've made buying second properties much more expensive and prohibitive. That's affected the market place too.

How does Marylebone compare with the rest of central London?

One of Marylebone's unique features is the amount to which it has become fashionable in the last 10 to 15 years. When I first moved to this area as a business, I nearly bought an office on Marylebone High Street but at that time it was pretty rundown. Now, it's exactly the opposite. It's become attractive to people all over the world.

Why do you think that is?

The high street is a great attraction. Its proximity

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to the West End, the fact that you can go across the Marylebone Road and you've got Regent's Park—there's so much going on here and it's so well located, in terms of getting anywhere else. I think people also like that there's a village feel: things like the Summer Fayre and the Christmas Lights switch-on show there's a community here.

And although Marylebone can achieve high prices, it's still pretty good value when compared with Knightsbridge or Kensington.

Do you have a core client base?

It's very diverse. I'm amazed every time I walk down the high street, how many people I hear speaking French—it's

a very international community. There are a lot of families that live in Marylebone—there are a number of very good schools that attract families to buy and to stay. Our clients are very private, so there are a lot of off-market transactions. There are people who live in the area who don't want people knowing how much they're worth and how much their property sold for, and therefore we have to be careful about what we disclose.

What sort of properties do you deal with?

Marylebone is very varied in terms of property. There are houses in Montagu Square, high end flats in Paddington Street, mansion properties in Portman Square, which are always going to be sought-after—and because of that there's no 'typical' buyer. We don't see many studio flats, but otherwise we deal with a wide variety of houses and apartments.

What's the best part of the job?

The satisfaction of seeing the company move forward.

Having worked in the area so long (and this being our special Marylebone Food Festival edition), do you have any particular favourite local restaurants?

There are two in particular I would mention: Fairuz, the Lebanese in Blandford Street; and Orrery, which is one of my favourite restaurants in the world.

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sandfords.com





ASK THE EXPERTS

Nicholas Jaffray of Jaffray Estates on portered mansion blocks

INTERVIEW: ELLIE COSTIGAN

What are the advantages of a portered block?

The primary appeal is the security of it. Porters provide access to the building and can hold keys for family members or staff; they can accept deliveries, and take care of any issues that may arise. It means there's somebody looking after the apartment when you're not there, which is a huge plus. It gives people peace of mind.

Another benefit is lateral space. Some of these apartments are up to 3,500 square feet, which is very appealing to large families—beyond these blocks there are very few new buildings that can offer that scale.

How long is a typical lease?

The Portman Estate and Howard de Walden Estate own the freehold of many of the mansion blocks in

Marylebone, and grant a lease extension for an additional 90 years. A lot of leases are currently 45, 70 and 80 years, if not already extended.

How are they managed?

Mansion blocks are run by managing agents, who manage the porters and day-to-day upkeep, as well as any necessary building updates. Typically, a buyer would expect to pay around £6,000 to £10,000 a year for a three bedroom, covering communal heating and hot water, running costs of the common parts and a sinking fund contribution for building upgrades. The biggest proportion of cost, however, is 24-hour portage, which for a lot of people, especially international buyers, is worth it.

These blocks are super-strict in terms of renovations—and if they're not, I'd question whether it's worth buying in that building. The bathrooms have to line up with the flats above and below, for example. There is a lot you can still do: many have been updated to include en-suite bathrooms and open-plan living space. But you have to get permission to change the layout or the purpose of rooms.

What advice would you give to buyers and sellers?

With higher transaction costs, buyers need to make sure they are making the correct choice, taking their time to view all suitable options. Pricing has become increasingly sensitive and people want to know they are buying at fair value. That said, buyers are still prepared to pay top money for a high-quality apartment. The key criteria for buyers (or developers) are a good floor plate and a good view, in a decent building in a prime location. On George Street, for example, Bryanston Court I and II, each have varying prices per square foot, floor plates and common parts—so do your research.

If you're trying to make an apartment attractive, install air conditioning—particularly if it's in a block popular with buyers from the Middle East. While new developments come with it as standard, not every building in the secondary market will allow this and you need to know what is permitted, so seek the necessary consents from the managing agents before carrying out major work.

What may look the same on the outside can be very different on the inside.

The way the building is run will be different. The tenants will be different. All those things we can offer advice on. It comes down to experience.

Any other insider tips?

Marylebone is a compact area and there are certain key blocks that we're very familiar with: I know exactly what prices have been achieved, the percentage difference between an apartment facing the front versus the rear, and the difference in value depending on the length of the lease. There are industry experts we work closely with who provide us with lease valuations, which can be crucial when valuing a property for a client or advising a buyer on a purchase. Having worked in the area for over 10 years, I also know what is happening in each building—when the common parts were last upgraded, for example, or what is scheduled for the near future, so I'm able to advise of any future hidden costs. In today's challenging market, providing facts, being transparent and being able to advise on these important points is key.

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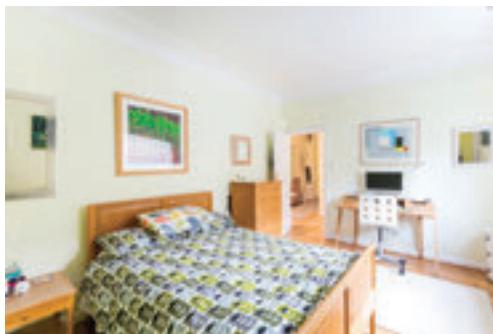
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NEW CAVENDISH STREET

MARYLEBONE, W1

£1,295,000
SOLE AGENT / LEASEHOLD

A delightful two double bedroom apartment with a long lease, on the second floor of a small apartment block of just five flats, wonderfully positioned along New Cavendish Street, very close to Portland Place.

The property is presented in superb condition and comprises a large entrance hall, a large, wonderfully presented bathroom with bath and shower, separate well-equipped modern kitchen, two double bedrooms and a generous reception room. The large windows invite plenty of natural light and is therefore very bright.

New Cavendish Street is located close to the shopping facilities of Marylebone and also the fashionable bars and restaurants and busy vibe Fitzrovia has to offer. Certainly a rare opportunity and one not to be overlooked. EPC Rating D.



Fiona Lilley
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PORTRLAND PLACE

MARYLEBONE, W1

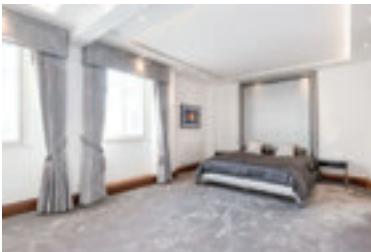
£1,495 PER WEEK + FEES
UNFURNISHED

A newly refurbished, extremely large (2,045 sqft) three double bedroom apartment set within this beautiful period conversion on Portland Place, located moments from Regent's Park, Marylebone High Street, and a short walk from Oxford Street.

The accommodation, which is located on the second floor (with lift) comprises a remarkably large reception room which is flooded with plenty of natural light, a newly fitted modern kitchen with integrated appliances, three large double bedrooms, two with spacious walk-in wardrobes and a good sized family bathroom with twin sink and shower over bath. The property benefits from high ceilings, large windows and feature fireplaces. Offered unfurnished. EPC Rating C.

Potential tenants should be advised that, in addition to rent, a tenancy set up fee of £252 per property plus £30 reference fee per tenant will apply when renting a property. Please contact us for further information on other charges that may apply or see our Tenant Guide which can be downloaded from our website.

JAFFRAY ESTATES



Baker Street, Marylebone NW1

Asking Price: £2,850,000

A new interior designed 3 bedroom 3 bathroom apartment for sale in a prestigious 24-hour portered building in Marylebone. The apartment spans over 1,700 square feet of lateral space, with 7 south facing windows at the front of the building.

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Montagu Square, Marylebone W1

Asking Price £2,850,000

A bright and well-appointed 2 bedroom 2 bathroom lateral apartment for sale, overlooking Marylebone's premier garden square. In need of some updating. Includes a lift, porter and share of freehold (995 years lease).

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Weymouth Street, Marylebone, W1

£1,850 per week

An amazing recently refurbished penthouse apartment. Open plan kitchen/living/dining, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, utility room, lifts, porter



Bryanston Square, Marylebone, W1

£1,275 per week

An elegant 1st floor flat with lovely views directly over the square gardens. Living room, kitchen open plan to dining area, 2 double bedrooms, 2 bathrooms (one en suite), lift, private square gardens



Chiltern Street, Marylebone Village, W1

£1,995 per week

A stunning 1st floor flat which has been newly refurbished. Living room with open plan kitchen, 3 bedrooms (all en suite), guest cloakroom, 24 hour porter, Juliette balcony, lift



Wimpole Street, Marylebone Village, W1

£775 per week

An attractive flat on the 2nd floor of this beautiful period building. Living/dining room, eat-in kitchen, 2 bedrooms (one with en suite shower room), further bathroom, lift



Grove Hall Court, St Johns Wood, NW8

£1,275 per week

A beautiful 1st floor apartment in this purpose built mansion block. Living room, dining room, kitchen, 4 double bedrooms, 3 bathrooms (one en suite), utility area, lift, porters



Hyde Park Square, Connaught Village, W2

£725 per week

A very spacious apartment with solid wood floors in a white stucco building. Living/dining room, kitchen, 2 bedrooms (both en suite), shower room, terrace and front garden

BRYANSTON SQUARE, LONDON W1

An extremely tasteful apartment in this very sought after portered block

£2,350,000 STC

SHARE OF FREEHOLD



The property is situated on the ground floor and has the very rare benefit of French doors from the drawing room and dining room onto the delightfully secluded private gardens. This is a wonderful opportunity for those wanting gracious living, offering all amenities in a completely safe environment with the benefit of reasonable service charges and Share of Freehold.

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24 Hour Portage * Private Gardens * Access to Bryanston Square Gardens * Underground Parking available by separate negotiation

WESLEY STREET, MARYLEBONE VILLAGE W1

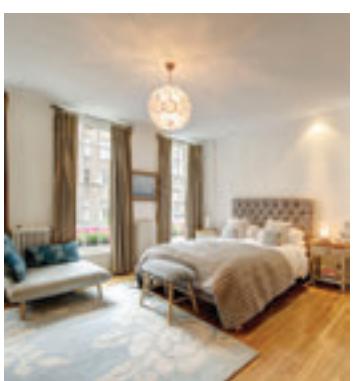
£5,950,000 STC

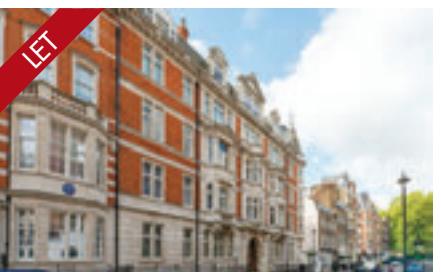
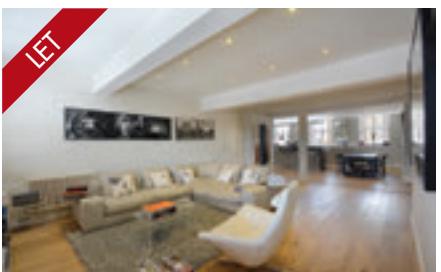
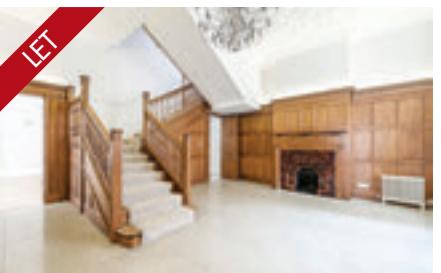
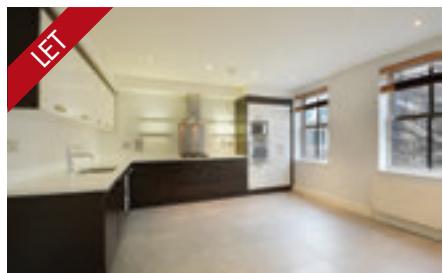
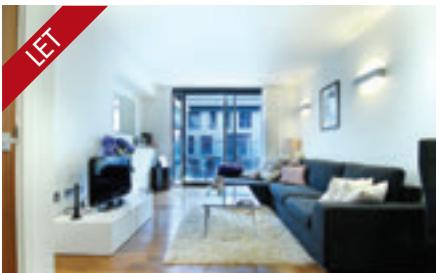
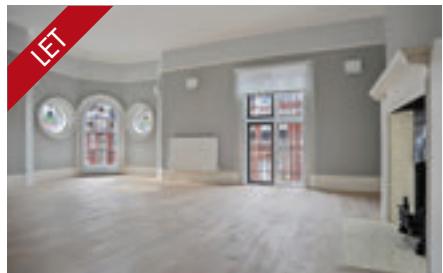
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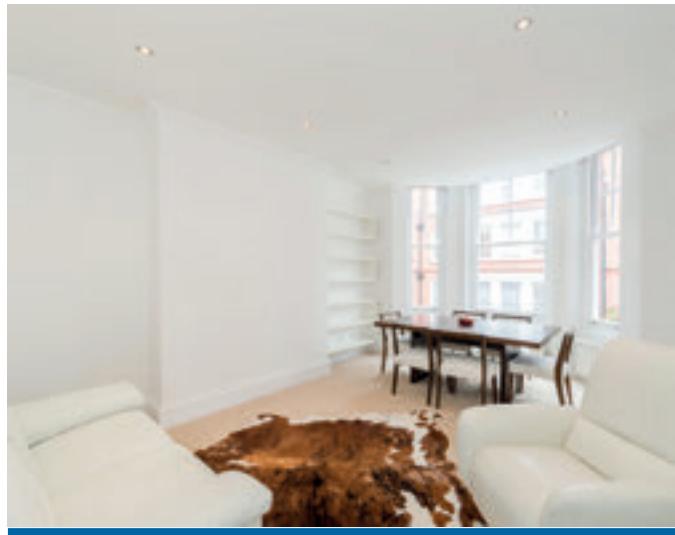


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Accommodation: Entrance hall, double reception room, kitchen/breakfast room, master bedroom with ensuite bathroom and dressing room, bedroom 2 with ensuite bathroom, guest cloakroom. **Amenities:** Patio, garden, 'hotel style' concierge, valet parking, 24-hour security, lift.



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PORLAND PLACE, MARYLEBONE VILLAGE, LONDON W1



A unique opportunity to buy a lateral apartment in one of the most sought after buildings in Marylebone. The apartment is approximately 2,344 sq.ft. (218 sq.m.). This rare apartment benefits from four bedrooms, four bathrooms and is situated on the third floor of a beautifully presented residential building. The apartment is in need of refurbishment and would make an ideal family home in the heart of Marylebone Village. Portland Place is ideally located for the boutique shops and restaurants of Marylebone High Street as well as the green open spaces of nearby Regent's Park.

Please see website for full details

SHARE OF FREEHOLD

PRICE ON APPLICATION

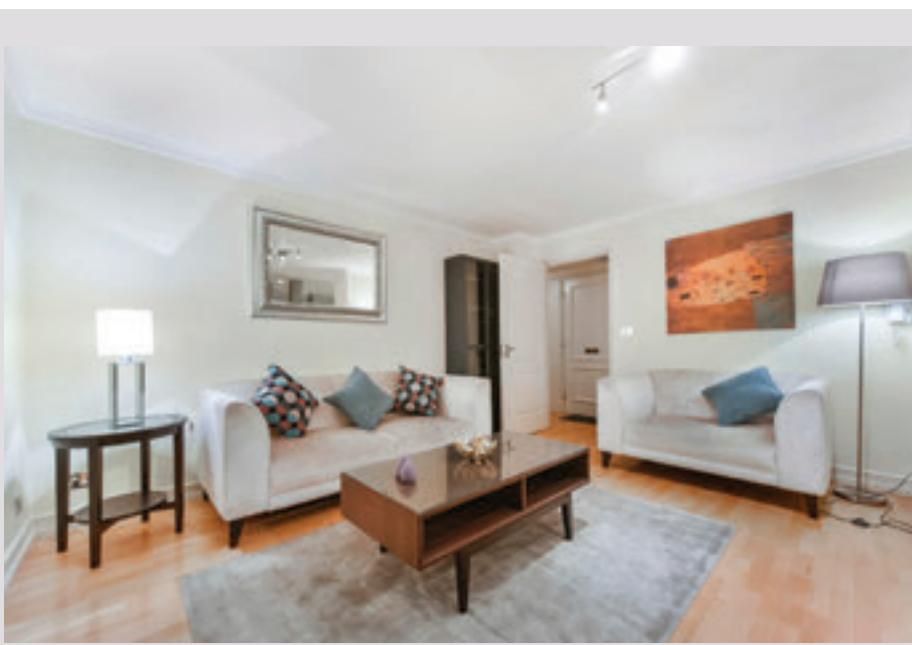
MANSFIELD STREET, MARYLEBONE VILLAGE, LONDON W1

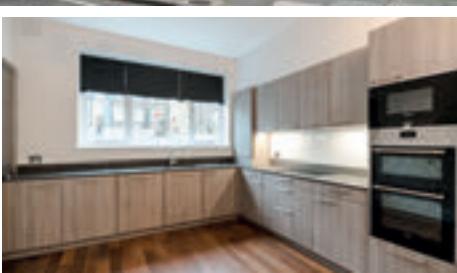
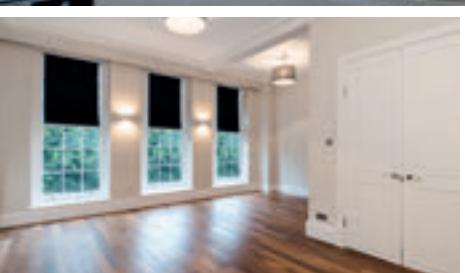
An impressive two double bedroom flat in this sought after, prestigious portered block. Ideally situated a few moments' walk from Marylebone High Street with its bustling cafes and restaurants and fabulous exclusive boutiques. Both Bond Street and Baker Street underground stations are a short walk away.

The accommodation comprises of two double bedrooms, a modern shower room, a fabulous open plan modern kitchen and spacious living room. The flat is furnished to a high standard with wooden floors throughout.

Please see website for full details

£750 PER WEEK





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Marylebone W1G

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EPC rating D

Guide price £2,000,000

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*Rent excludes reference and tenancy paperwork fees.
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