

THE COUNTRY RANGE GROUP
MAGAZINE FOR CATERERS

Stir it up

SPRING

APRIL
2026

A force
from
Yorkshire

Ruth Hansom



TACKLING THE SUMMER OF SPORT | A FOCUS ON NUTRITION WITHIN CARE CATERING
EX-OFFENDERS MAKING A FRESH START IN HOSPITALITY

Ingredient

Our cover star this month is the brilliant Ruth Hansom, who you can read all about in this month's Leading Lights feature.

We love highlighting the incredible talent we have within our industry, as well as sharing your stories and supporting you with advice of experts across a variety of topics. This month we look at how hospitality venues can build a winning offering for the Summer of Sport and in the Health & Welfare feature on pages 18-19 we shine a spotlight on several foodservice companies who are proactively helping ex-offenders through training, mentoring and other support.

If you would like to feature within the magazine, or have a recipe to share please contact us at

editor@stiritupmagazine.co.uk

The Stir it up team



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As part of our environmental policy this magazine is printed using vegetable oil based ink and is produced to high environmental standards, including ISO14001 and FSC® certification. It is also fully carbon balanced.



EDITORIAL PARTNERS...



ALLERGEN REFERENCES

VG - Vegan V - Vegetarian



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Bouillabaisse Broth

05

Braised Brisket with Juniper

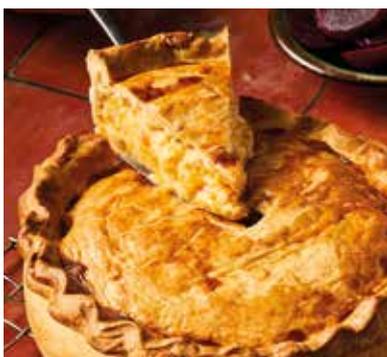
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Fresh FROM THE KITCHEN



America celebrates 250 years of independence this year and the popularity of its cuisine continues to dominate menus globally. We delve into the very latest Americana inspired trends to inspire your menus this summer.

SWEET – Comfort, nostalgia and indulgent escapism from the stresses of everyday life – American inspired desserts and sweet treats tick all the boxes. Prepare to see the iconic chocolate chip cookie elevated to new heights with the addition of miso or sea salt. Cinnamon rolls are being turned into every format you can think of, with the flavour being used in other foods and drinks. Banana pudding has been seeing a big following thanks to NYC’s famous Magnolia Bakery, and now it’s showing up in various formats, such as crème brûlée, cheesecake and even nachos. Another American classic, Key Lime Pie, is having a big revival, with its flavour profile also inspiring anything from doughnuts to milkshakes. Talking of revivals, remember the Baked Alaska? Well, it’s making a comeback and chefs are pairing it with classic flavours – think sticky toffee and apple pie.

SAVOURY – The sandwich in all its glorious forms has been well and truly heroed recently, and there is no end of American influence throughout menus and concepts. Take the grilled cheese, the Philly cheesesteak and sloppy Joe – all of these have travelled across the pond and been adapted for British and Irish diners – from Yorkshire pudding wrap versions to inspired loaded fries and elevated dishes using premium locally sourced ingredients. Of course, pizza must get a mention, with more experimentation and inspiration from regional specialities, such as NY style dough, Chicago deep pan and even fusions such as Detroit style Irish spice bag. Another American import – smash burgers – continue in popularity, with a focus on premiumisation. Think dry-aged beef and high end toppings. Finally, the ever-popular Tex-Mex nachos are firmly remaining on menus, with regional additions such as haggis, and even sweet versions.



Key Lime Pie flavour cocktail

thefoodpeople.
inform | inspire | realise potential

From thefoodpeople’s Americana 2026 Trend Report

Cooks CALENDAR



APRIL

5TH APRIL – EASTER SUNDAY

Turn Easter leftovers into menu magic with this Leftover Lamb Tagliatelle recipe from Opies. Silky tagliatelle with smoky lamb, anchovy, blistered tomatoes and crisp capers combine to create a flavour-packed dish, perfect for showcasing sustainability with springtime flair.

21ST APRIL – NATIONAL TEA DAY

Refresh your spring menu with Iced Tea inspiration from Signature by Country Range: brew it strong, serve chilled with citrus and herbs - an easy, profitable way to elevate soft drinks with on-trend flavour.

The full recipes can be found at www.stiritupmagazine.co.uk



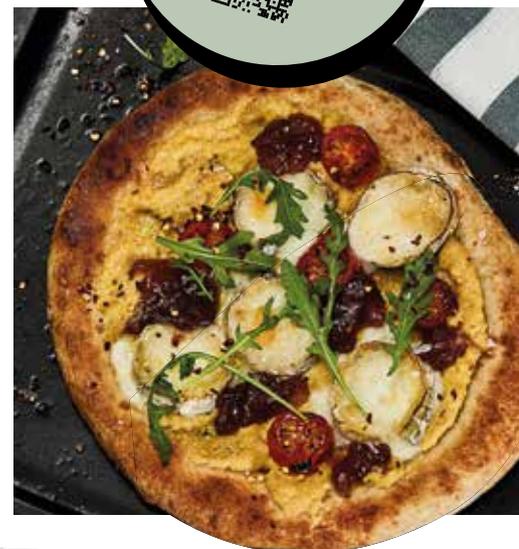
MAY

13TH MAY - INTERNATIONAL HUMMUS DAY

Celebrate International Hummus Day with a vibrant flatbread topped with creamy hummus, roasted tomatoes and tangy goat's cheese. Finished with fresh herbs and olive oil, this Country Range recipe delivers bold flavour and simple Middle Eastern inspiration for colourful, crowd-pleasing foodservice menus.

17TH MAY – WORLD BAKING DAY

Celebrate World Baking Day with this modern Mulled Rhubarb Crème Brûlée recipe from Carte D'Or, an elegant showstopper for busy foodservice kitchens. Spiced fruit, silky custard and a crisp caramelised top deliver seasonal flair with consistent results.



JUNE

15TH – 21ST JUNE – NATIONAL PICNIC WEEK

Celebrate National Picnic Week with portable dessert perfection: layered berry trifle jars made with Opies Summer Berry Compote and Stemmed Maraschino Cherries. Light, colourful and make-ahead friendly, they're ideal for alfresco menus.

21ST JUNE – FATHER'S DAY

Elevate Father's Day brunch with a standout dish: Knorr's Eggs Benedict with creamy avocado Hollandaise. Poached eggs and wilted spinach on toasted muffins with ham and smooth, avocado-blended sauce deliver indulgent, on-trend appeal for premium menus.

Thanks to Opies, Knorr, Carte D'Or and Country Range.

IN SEASON

Radishes

Pea Shoots

Sorrel



Bouillabaisse Broth

COOK TIME 2 HOURS 10 MINUTES

SERVES 6 - 8

INGREDIENTS

- 20g Country Range Tomato Paste
- 200ml Country Range Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 4g Country Range Cracked Black Pepper
- 2 bulbs of fennel, roughly chopped
- 2 red peppers, roughly chopped
- 10g sea salt
- 20g tarragon
- 1kg fish bones
- 1kg plum tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 2 pinches saffron
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 40g butter
- Salt and black pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Add the olive oil to a large frying pan on a medium heat and add the fennel for 3-4 mins without colouring it.
2. Add the red peppers, sea salt, tarragon, pepper and cook for another 2-3 mins.
3. Add the fish bones and tomatoes and cover with water before bringing to a simmer.
4. Skim off any scum, add the tomato paste, saffron and bring it back to a simmer. Cook for 1.5 hours or until it has reduced by a third.
5. Blend and then pour through a fine sieve and use a ladle to squeeze out the goodness from the solids. Pour through a fine chinois and then add the lemon juice. Pour back into the blender with 40g butter and blend. Season, pass through a fine sieve again and then chill until needed.

Readers' lives



NAME: Stuart Nichols

JOB TITLE: Head Chef

PLACE OF WORK: The Ship Inn, Wadebridge in Cornwall. <https://theshippinnwadebridge.co.uk/>

HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN THE CATERING INDUSTRY? 23 years

CLAIM TO FAME? I cooked for our current King and Queen.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CUISINE TO EAT? Anything cooked over a fire. I got a smoker about 9 years ago and I have been mad on caveman cooking ever since.

WHAT IS THE MOST ENJOYABLE PART OF YOUR JOB? It's when you have those tough moments and you're under the pump and as a team, you pull through and get it done.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU WERE EVER GIVEN AND BY WHOM? It was from my old tutor at college called Shirley Sweeney who was an ex-RAF chef. She said to be a good chef, you need to understand the ingredients, the methods and how and why they react in certain ways. It has always given me a desire to ask and find out why rather than simply following a recipe.

WHAT'S YOUR TIP TO CUT WASTAGE IN THE KITCHEN? It starts when you construct and devise your menu. Make sure the ingredients you select can be prepared and used multiple ways.

WHAT IS THE LAST RESTAURANT YOU ATE IN? Beachcomber in Minehead, Somerset.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE COUNTRY RANGE PRODUCT AND WHY?

The Maple & Agave Syrup is exceptional. It's a great natural product that I use for sweetening desserts and dressings.

WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE TAKING OVER IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

Physical and mental wellness seems to be growing in importance so I think healthier choices are going to continue to grow in popularity. That could be more whole foods or high-fibre dishes.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE DISH TO COOK?

Dive-caught scallops, cooked in the shells over the embers of a fire, served with a lemon and parsley butter and a fresh pickled fennel salad.

DEAD OR ALIVE – WHICH THREE PEOPLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO COOK FOR THE MOST?

My grandad Gordon Turner. He passed away before I was born and he was a chef in the RAF.

Julia Barnett - my first employer, a home economist who was strict but it would be nice to thank her and show her what she helped create.

My incredible wife Sarah-Jane. I rarely get the chance to cook for her so it would be nice to go all out for her.

Country Range Maple & Agave Syrup
Pack Size: 620g



Watercress

Rhubarb

Rocket

Nettles

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* Source: Circana (UK) Ltd, Foodservice, UK, Jelly (Category Defined by Premier Foods) by Supplier, Value Sales, 52 WE 11th May 2025



UNSUNG HERO

Colin Brown Celebrates A Decade of Success At Holley Park

While the celebrity and Michelin-starred chefs often take the plaudits and headlines, chef Colin Brown is one of the thousands of unsung heroes going above and beyond to feed, fuel and educate the next generation of schoolchildren across the country.

After beginning his kitchen adventures as a teenager in London, Colin moved to the North East, where he worked in fast-paced restaurants and hotels before taking a break to work as a support worker with autistic children.

Missing the day-to-day life and buzz of the kitchen, Colin decided to combine his passion for cookery and nurturing children by taking on the Head Chef role at Holley Park Academy in Washington in Tyne and Wear in 2016. Since joining the Academy, Colin and his team have been instrumental in turning the school's food offering around and building its reputation for excellence.

"We're incredibly lucky to have Colin. He's not just a talented chef but he truly cares about the kids and their relationships with food. He has been integral in ensuring that mealtimes at Holley Park are about much more than just food," says Lianne Pye, Holley Park Academy Office Manager. "In addition to providing the nutrients and nourishment that the pupils need to grow, learn and maximise their potentials, mealtimes are now crucial in bringing pupils together, creating excitement, celebrating inclusivity and encouraging healthy choices in a fun and engaging way."

With a focus on homemade meals, varied and inclusive menus for all dietary requirements, regular theme days and creative initiatives involving both children and parents, Colin and his team's enthusiasm have helped put the kitchen at the heart of school life.

"Colin and the team's passion shines through each and every day, and in every aspect of

"Since joining the Academy, Colin and his team have been instrumental in turning the school's food offering around and building its reputation for excellence."



the food offering and service.

Whether it's the themed events, the Kid's Choice Kitchen where pupils vote for their favourite meals, parent consultations or after school cookery classes, every initiative is designed to boost uptake, foster involvement and ensure that every child feels included and excited about food and mealtimes."

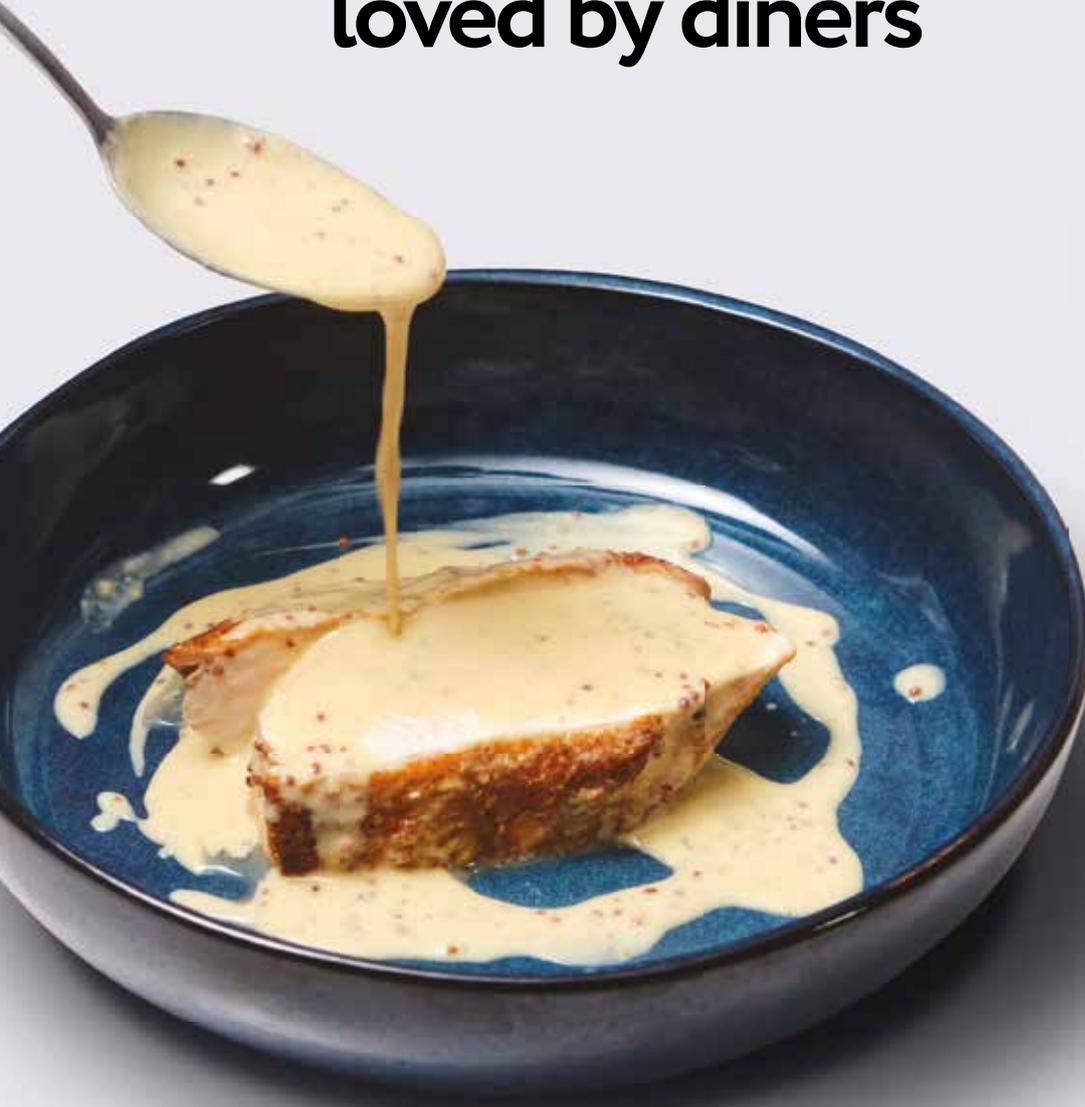
The impact of these initiatives is clear to see for all. Overall meal uptake has risen to 84%, with participation climbing to almost 95% on themed days, demonstrating the popularity of the approach and its effectiveness in making school meals inclusive, engaging and enjoyable.

Some of the pupils' favourite dishes include chicken curry, pizza and the weekly carvery roast, but recent themed days have also helped them discover international delights such as mini beef tacos and sticky Chinese style chicken wraps. With clear and concise information needed on ingredients to label salt, sugar and allergens, the kitchen uses a varied range of products from the Country Range portfolio including the eclectic selection of seasonings, herbs, spices and pizza dough.



Clockwise from top: (left to right) Sharon Lyall, Colin Brown and Leanne Robinson. Dishes from Holley Park.

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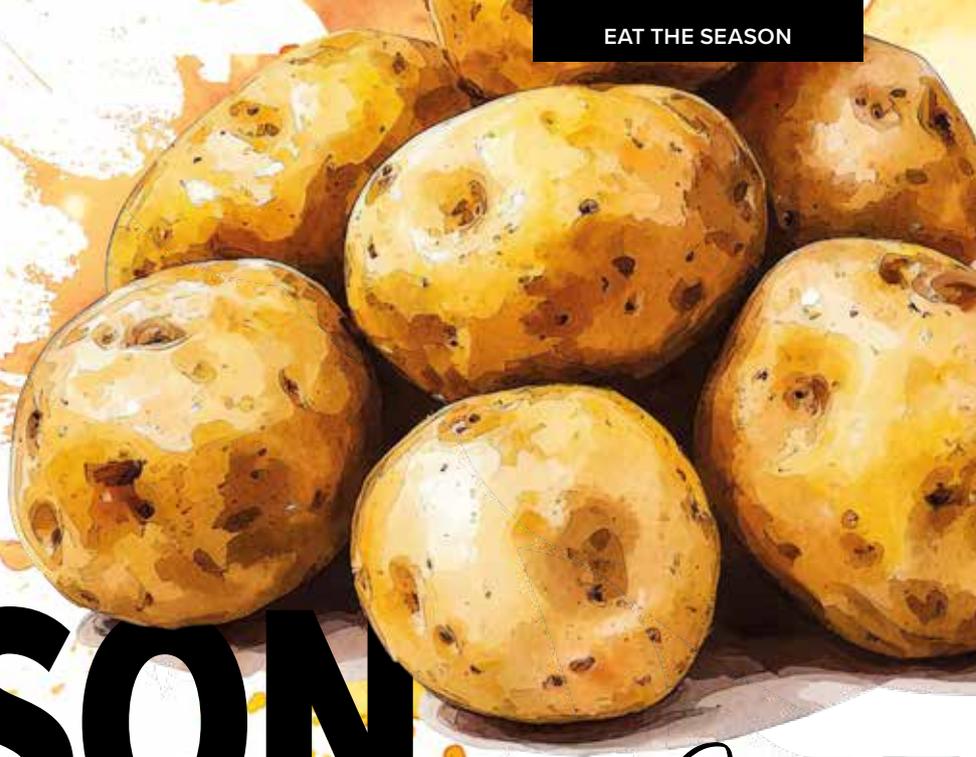
skip the cow

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EAT THE SEASON



Jersey Royal Potatoes



The history of Jersey Potatoes dates back to 1878 when local farmer Hugh de la Haye first discovered (and then planted), an unusually large potato with 15 eyes. The resulting early crop

provided distinctive, small kidney-shaped potatoes offering a beautiful texture and nutty flavour....and so, the iconic Jersey Royals were born!

Now one of Jersey's most famous exports, the tasty early spuds are regulars on seasonal tables and menus between April and July. Their delicate flavour and wonderful texture make them great for a wide range of dishes.

This month, we caught up with Head Chef Mark 'Ginge' Shawcross for some Jersey inspiration. Born in Oldham, Mark started working at Lingfield Racecourse before moving up through the kitchen and eventually on to work in several quality, food-led pubs in Kent. He joined the I'll Be Mother Group in 2021 as a pastry chef at The Beacon before taking on the head chef role at Kingdom near Tunbridge Wells in 2022.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

If you happen to have leftover Jerseys, they don't need much attention to turn them into tasty treats. With wild garlic coming into the season at the same time, it's a no brainer to combine the two if you do have any leftovers. Simply make your own wild garlic butter, which can be frozen and used whenever you need to sauté any leftover Jerseys for tasty bar snack or side.

1/ HEAVENLY HASH

My Chorizo Hash is one of our diners' favourite dishes from our menu and I would probably be lynched if I ever took it off. It can work throughout the year with whatever spuds you have available, but it's even more of a treat during the Jersey season. It's simply sautéed Jerseys, onions, chorizo, parsley, a fried egg and a garlic aioli.



Chorizo Hash

2/ POTATO CAKES

I love to make potato cakes with Jerseys. I leave the skins on as they have loads of flavour and simply steam them and then crush them. I then add fresh seasonal herbs, anchovies and capers before using a mould to form the mixture into cakes, which are then shallow fried. They're a fantastic partner for the new season lamb.



Potato Cakes



Salted and Buttered

3/ STEAMY SPUDS

The best ingredients don't need much to shine, and Jersey Royals are truly a touch of class. I'm excited every April ahead of the new Jersey season. My first go-to dish is spud simplicity personified. Steam them, roll them in butter and give them a generous sprinkling of good sea salt. I'm not sure there will ever be a better way to eat them.

4/ BARBECUE BROS

The perfect foil for some seared barbecue meats, a simple Jersey potato salad is always a winner during spring and summer. I make my own mayonnaise using rapeseed oil that works wonderfully with the nutty nuances from the Jerseys. I will also add some soft herbs and then anchovies or pickled shallots to finish the salad.

For more information, visit <https://www.thiskingdom.co.uk/>



After bursting onto the food scene as a teenager when winning the Springboard FutureChef, it was clear to all that young chef Ruth Hansom was always going to succeed. Starting out at Boundary in Shoreditch, she then undertook a three-year apprenticeship at The Ritz, under the mighty executive chef John Williams MBE. Following a couple more competition wins and a number of stages, Ruth headed up the Luton Hoo Hotel, Pomona and The Princess of Shoreditch before moving back to the family patch in Bedale near Darlington to open her own restaurant, Hansom. We caught up with Ruth to discuss where it all began and her route to the top.

Ruth HANSOM

CHEF, AUTHOR AND BROADCASTER

What are your first memories of food and of cookery?

For me, it was growing that opened my eyes to food. I used to spend a lot of summers with my aunty and uncle who grew all kinds of fruit, so I remember making jams and apple pies. I wanted to recreate that at home so one weekend when my mum went away, I surprised her by digging up her back garden and replacing it with my own veg plot. It's funny that one of the first things I planted was a little twig-like apple tree. It never gave me so much as a single apple when I was at home and as soon as I moved to London, it came to life and started to produce. It's a big old tree now.

Do you still grow veg?

The patch is still at my parents' house, but I just don't have the time at present to grow my own. It's definitely something I would like to do more of in the future. We work closely with a kitchen garden over the road so I'm often over there picking things.

How did your passion for cookery develop?

It really was the Springboard FutureChef competition that was the turning point in my life. I always wanted to be a doctor and loved maths and science. I was also doing food technology as an option and the teacher recommended that I enter the competition. I have always been competitive and enjoyed extracurricular activities at school, so I actually ended up competing three times. Making the national final was really the moment when the doctor dream disappeared and a culinary future took its place. Before the competition, I had never really been to London so just being in the capital made a huge impression on me – the culture, the vibe, the eating scene. After winning, I had chefs giving me their cards and saying, 'if you come to London and need work, call me.' It was unreal. I realised I could literally jump right into this career, earn and learn at the same time. I was only 16 but I knew what I wanted so I found a flat on Gumtree, enrolled at Westminster Kingsway College and headed down to the bright lights of London.

Before FutureChef, what was your view of a career as a chef?

I didn't really know the career path of a chef. Until you have a taste of the industry, you just think being a chef is something you fall into or the plan B. Going to FutureChef and seeing the people who make up the industry and

how respected they are – seeing how much there is to learn to be the best and all the competitions and different career paths within the industry – it energised me and made me see being a chef as a career and lifelong passion, not just a job.

Why did you keep going back?

I loved my three years competing and was never going to give up until I won.

“Just being in the capital made a huge impression on me – the culture, the vibe, the eating scene.”

The first round was at the school, so that's not too scary, but then you're competing regionally and then the final so the pressure and nerves crank up.

Why are competitions so valuable?

They are brilliant for building confidence and skillset. Each competition will have a different brief, so it pushes you to develop, improve and ultimately grow. In the day-to-day job, there can often be a lot of repetition, so competitions give you a break from that. As a young chef, you're always cooking other chefs' dishes when you're learning your trade, so competitions give you a chance to be imaginative and test your skills and menu creativity. You also make some great friends. Being in London on my own, building a network of friends and contacts was even more important. The competition is so valuable in that regard. I still speak regularly to people I first met at the competition 15 odd years ago.

Tell us about the restaurant and its ethos?

We're nearly two years old now which has flown by. With the conditions in hospitality as they are, it's certainly not been easy, and

I was probably a bit naive but you have to take risks. The first three months were so challenging – just the shift from the Head Chef role to Business Operator. My husband and I didn't want to go down the backer route, so we have done - and still do - everything ourselves. I still take the reservations, I'm the only chef in the kitchen and my husband is our taxi service – dropping guests home. It's a nice way to have that early contact with our guests. I can ask about any special occasions, and it makes the visit more personal.

Is it just you doing all the cooking?

Yes, it's just me and it does have its challenges. I do have a friend who runs an event business who does help out here and there. We met on the Great British Menu and she is a fantastic collaborator. It works for both of us as she can use our kitchen for prepping so it's win-win.

It's also why I concentrate on a tasting menu. Guests don't have to choose anything and they know exactly what they are going to get – the best seasonal produce from the Yorkshire area and dishes created and plated by my own hand. The tasting menu means we can be ultra prepared for service and know exactly what we need to cater for and any dietary requirements. With à la carte, you often over prep and waste time really. On my own, that's not something I can afford to do.

For more information or to book, visit www.hansomrestaurant.co.uk



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*70% of consumers agreed when comparing new recipe versus previous recipe in taste testing.



5 ways to use

JUNIPER BERRIES

SUMPTUOUS SAUCES

Simply grating juniper berries into savoury sauces can elevate and provide depth. It adds a floral peppery note.

FRUITY FUSION

The fusing of fruits and juniper is another brilliant combo. My favourite would be a Pear & Juniper Crumble. Yum.

DECADENT DESSERTS

Juniper berries are unbelievable in desserts, and you can do so much with them. Simply added to a caramel is sensational but they are superb in custard as well.

BANGING BRISKET

I blend juniper berries, salt, sugar and rosemary in a brine and I marinate a beef brisket in it for a week before slow cooking.

FINISHING OVER FIRE

Juniper to finish off venison on the fire provides a lovely aromatic smokiness to the meat. Use berries - or even better - a few branches of juniper and literally drop them on the coals right at the end.



Country Range
 Juniper Berries
 Pack Size: 300g

This month our guest chef is the mighty Adam Handling MBE, who in addition to flying the flag for British food and hospitality is a now a proud champion for Springboard FutureChef. No stranger to winning competitions himself, Adam won the Scottish Chef of the Year, British Culinary Federation's Chef of the Year and was Great British Menu's 'Champion of Champions'. The Adam Handling Group now features two bars, a chocolate shop and four restaurants including the Michelin-starred Frog in Covent Garden. For more information, visit www.adamhandling.co.uk. Here's Adam's five ways with Country Range Juniper Berries.

Braised brisket with juniper



SERVINGS 6
COOKING TIME 180 MINS
PREP TIME 30 MINS



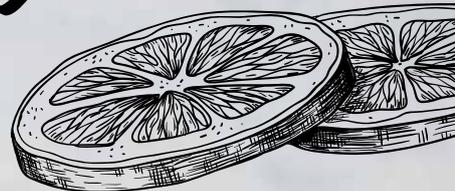
INGREDIENTS:

- 1tsp Country Range Juniper Berries
- 1kg beef brisket
- 1/2tsp Country Range Dried Mixed Herbs
- 1 small diced carrot
- 2 Country Range Bay Leaves
- 1 stick of diced celery
- 50ml vegetable oil
- 1/4 sliced small leek
- 1 small diced onion
- 100ml red wine
- 500ml beef stock
- Season to taste

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C / 160°C fan.
2. Brown the beef brisket in hot oil and add to a suitable oven dish with a lid.
3. Add the diced vegetables and season with a little salt and pepper.
4. Add the red wine, mixed herbs, juniper berries, bay leaves and beef stock. Simmer for three hours in the oven with the lid on.
5. Once the meat is tender, slice and serve with its own juices.

Summer, Sorted



Summer is around the corner and if you're looking for some fresh ideas for your menu we've got some new sweet sensations and fresh inspiration for you this month. Whether you're looking at launching new concepts, refreshing dishes, or cutting costs, our three-tiered own brand portfolio offers a comprehensive range of ingredients – whatever the objective, occasion or budget.

A Trio of New Desserts

Proud to lead the way when it comes to sweet innovation, we're over the moon to launch our latest selection of dazzling desserts that are as decadent and delicious on the eyes as they are on the tastebuds. The new range includes:

A refreshing and tropical delight, this incredible value dessert is a flavour sensation, with an orange sponge layer soaked in mango and passion fruit, topped with a mascarpone vanilla syllabub swirled with a mango and passion fruit purée, finished with a tropical yuzu glaze and a sprinkle of raspberry crumb.

COUNTRY RANGE MANGO & PASSION FRUIT TORTE
1 X 14 PRE-PORTIONED



NEW



This nostalgic tray cake includes 18 generous portions which can easily be cut smaller for a little afternoon treat. The flavours of the cake evoke childhood memories, with a shortbread base topped with a layer of seeded raspberry jam and a sprinkling of raspberries, topped with an almond flavour coconut sponge and finished with a sprinkling of desiccated coconut. Perfect with a generous dollop of custard!

COUNTRY RANGE RASPBERRY & COCONUT TRAY CAKE
1 X 18 PRE-PORTIONED

Our Signature summer showstopper is a beautiful, light twist on an Italian classic. Soft vanilla sponge layers are filled with white chocolate and mascarpone mousse, zesty limoncello mousse, and Sicilian lemon curd. To finish it off, it has been hand finished with delicate white chocolate shavings and shards.

SIGNATURE BY COUNTRY RANGE
SICILIAN LEMON TIRAMISU DESSERT
1 X 14 PRE-PORTIONED



SCAN HERE
to see all of
the recipes
featured on
this page

SNACK ATTACK

With people's eating habits changing and purses continuing to be squeezed, the traditional diet of three sit down meals a day is taking a back seat, with snacks and small plates filling the gap.

Whether it's global street food inspired, twists on classics, on-the-go solutions or healthy options, the race is on for chefs to go big with the small. Here are three ideas to kick-start your summer small plates menu.



Arancini

An endlessly versatile option for your snack menu. Make them bite-sized or giant, meat-filled or vegetarian, with cheese in the middle for the ultimate cheese pull. This version is filled with veggies and is suitable for vegans, using Country Range Multi-Use Tomato Sauce for an easy punch of flavour. Panko breadcrumbs add extra rustic texture.



COUNTRY RANGE PANKO BREADCRUMBS
PACK SIZE: 10 X 1KG AND 1 X 10KG

COUNTRY RANGE MULTI-USE TOMATO SAUCE
PACK SIZE: 6 X 3KG

We use Country Range products throughout our menu and they are a chef's dream, especially when we're under intense pressure to feed a lot of people without the luxury of time – Head Chef



Pigs in Blankets [↗] with Hot Honey

SPOILER ALERT! We are bringing out our own Country Range Hot Honey next month, so get planning it into your menu! The popularity of this sweet and spicy combo is undeniable and now that pigs in blankets are a year-round phenomenon, this is a match made in small plates heaven.



**COUNTRY RANGE PIGS
 IN BLANKETS**
PACK SIZE: 1 X 60



Chicken Wings [↗]

The perfect crowd-pleasing snack or sharer which can be changed up to keep your menu fresh whilst keeping costs low. Country Range Steam Cooked Chicken Wings are a blank canvas for you to be as creative as you like with flavours and cooking methods, from sticky to crunchy and hot to sweet.

COUNTRY RANGE STEAM COOKED CHICKEN WINGS
PACK SIZE: 5 X 1KG



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TACKLING THE SUMMER OF SPORT

This year's FIFA World Cup, taking place from Thursday June 11 to Sunday July 19, offers huge potential to increase footfall and drive revenue. For the first time, the tournament will be hosted by three countries - the USA, Canada and Mexico. The event also features an expanded format of 48 teams, which means a record 104 matches will be played across 16 host cities.

There will be a significant time difference as many matches will kick off in the UK between 5pm and 9pm, which works well for after work and dinner customers, although several high-profile games may start as late as 2am, which presents an opportunity to extend trading hours.

"For pubs and bars, this is a prime opportunity to apply for Temporary Event Notices to extend licensing hours, while also making sure you have the correct licences to show the games," says Jane Pendlebury, CEO of HOSPA (Hospitality Professionals Association). "Establishments can benefit from a late kick off by "creating a night-owl atmosphere with late-night snack menus. This can turn a quiet Tuesday into a bumper session, while hotels can consider match-and-stay packages for guests who would rather book a room than navigate a long journey home after a 1am finish," she says.

"It is also worth considering the drowning-sorrows market by offering a commiseration discount to keep people in their seats"

At the end of the match, to further extend trading hours, operators could consider hiring a local DJ for the night to keep the momentum going.

"With 48 nations participating, you have a global array of culinary inspiration to draw from," enthuses Jane. "Instead of a generic menu, you might introduce a World Cup small

plates selection featuring typical foods from the host countries." Dishes could include tacos, shakshuka, loaded sliders, match-day burgers, lobster rolls, or poutine (fries, cheese and gravy).

Drinks menus can be equally creative with themed cocktails and promotions. For example, American cocktails such as the Manhattan, The Caesar from Canada or the classic Margarita from Mexico.

When building your offering, think about promotional mechanics such as World Cup table and viewing packages that include food and drink for groups or a room-and-screening pass at partner venues for hotels. Jane also suggests offering 2-for-1 deals for a short window after a high-scoring game, or providing free side dishes every time a home nation player finds the back of the net. "It is also worth considering the drowning-sorrows market by offering a commiseration discount to keep people in their seats even after a tough result," she says.

Antony Woodcock, owner of Parliament House Hotel, Edinburgh, and managing director of Gig, recommends supporting teams with temporary staff. "These unusual trading hours may be harder to staff with permanent employees, so operators may need a helping hand with temporary staff," he says. "Temporary workers are particularly valuable here, allowing operators to cover early starts, late finishes or short peak periods without committing to long-term rota changes. You can either build a pool of local workers yourself, or use an agency to help you manage this."

OTHER SPORTING EVENTS TO CAPITALISE ON INCLUDE:

- **GLASGOW COMMONWEALTH GAMES** – Thursday July 23 to Sunday August 2
- **WIMBLEDON TENNIS** – Monday June 29 to Sunday July 12
- **CRICKET – WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP IN ENGLAND** – Friday June 12 to Sunday July 5
- **GOLF – THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS AT ROYAL BIRKDALE, SOUTHPORT** – Thursday July 16 to Sunday July 19

MAKING A FRESH START

Giving ex-offenders a second chance

Several foodservice, pub, café, food and bakery companies are proactively helping prisoners find employment through training, mentoring and support. Some companies such as The Clink offer training kitchens and restaurants inside prisons, while others focus on prison leavers. The overall aim is to reduce re-offending by providing new skills and a meaningful job as they rebuild their lives, while easing the problem of staff shortages in the hospitality industry.



LEADING THE WAY

Lee Wakeham, an ex-offender supports others like him through his business HM Pasties, based in Oldham, Lancashire. Lee's pies, pasties and sausage rolls are sold throughout northwest England. He also provides catering services to Liverpool Football Club, and supplies 79 Co-op stores in Manchester. "HM Pasties was built on my belief that employment changes lives," says Lee. "I've lived it myself and when you combine commercial success with social impact, you give people a genuine second chance and create strong businesses and communities."

Currently HM Pasties employs 13 people including five prison leavers, although this number may change depending on future expansion.

Through its HM Pasties Foundation, the social enterprise provides one-to-one mentoring and workplace training in the bakery for ex-offenders, covering topics such as food hygiene and health and safety, while supporting them with practical life skills such as confidence and communication. Lee says "We help trainees build the skills and confidence to move into long-term work, with the focus on helping people adapt to the routine, teamwork and mindset of sustained employment - not just technical baking skills. Many participants are on licence towards the end of their sentence or have recently left prison and are struggling to gain employment. They don't need prior experience in catering, motivation and commitment matter more. Providing jobs with

dignity and clear progression reduces re-offending and boosts community outcomes."

If a business is hesitant to take on an ex-offender, Lee suggests starting with work trials or part-time roles. "Partner with specialist services who can help manage risk. Concentrate on transferable skills – many prison leavers are highly motivated and can be loyal employees."

SUPPORTING EX-OFFENDERS TO SWITCH-GEAR

In London, ex-offenders are being trained at The Dusty Knuckle bakery in Dalston, northeast London. It works with Switchback, a prison leaver rehabilitation charity. Hugh Fernley-Whittingstall, a patron of the charity, visited the bakery to speak to Switchback trainees. He told The Sunday Times "It's a reminder that the whole hospitality industry - catering, bakeries, can be very non-judgemental places to work. The Dusty Knuckle is exceptional – the whole thing is founded on the basis of providing opportunities to people who might otherwise not get them." During the 12-week programme, participants receive training on a section, whether it's front of house in the cafe, food preparation, mixing, shaping or baking bread. If, at the end of the programme, the trainee doesn't remain with The Dusty Knuckle, Switchback will continue to support them.

Switchback assigns a mentor to each of the 18 to 30 year-old trainees it works with. Amy Davidson from the charity says "Our model is centred on a meaningful one-to-one



relationship between mentor and trainee. This begins in prison and lasts as long as it takes after release. In stark contrast to the national average (which sees nearly half of prison leavers back inside within a year) only 9% of Switchback trainees reoffend, while over half move into long-term work.”

The mentor meets regularly with the trainee to support their goals. “We encourage trainees to be open-minded and give things a try,” she says. “We never force a trainee to work somewhere that doesn’t feel right. Some don’t want to work in a bakery, but after visiting and seeing the buzzy atmosphere, they may change their minds.”

Catering and food is a popular choice among Switchback trainees. Restaurateur Sina Faily, 24, is one of the charity’s success stories. After finishing the bakery training programme, he worked as a chef at several restaurants before opening a restaurant in London’s Battersea Power Station. Last November, he launched Bundem, a new £7m burger restaurant in Enfield, where he grew up.

For further information, visit:
www.switchback.org.uk/
www.newfuturesnetwork.gov.uk/

“They don’t need prior experience in catering, motivation and commitment matter more. Providing jobs with dignity and clear progression reduces re-offending and boosts community outcomes.”

Left and Below:
 Lee Wakeham
 HM Pasties.
 HM Pasties produces
 pies and pasties.



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

Elsewhere, Marston’s run The Excel programme via the Lock Inn at HMP Liverpool and the Crown & Key at HMP Stoke Heath. Developed in partnership with Novus Education and the New Futures Network, it supports prison leavers as they move into meaningful jobs.

Recently, the team launched a new hospitality training academy inside HMP Styal, a women’s prison in Cheshire. Named the Hope & Anchor, it trains up to 32 women every year in a purpose-built kitchen and restaurant environment, preparing them for Line Chef/Commis Chef level jobs. Todd Lockley, Senior Inclusion & Communities Manager at Marston’s says “This position is vital to our kitchen teams and is the biggest skills gap within our industry. The course is designed to emulate exactly what it is like to work in one of our busy pub kitchens. The Hope & Anchor allows the learners to gain vital skills, regain their confidence and reduce reoffending rates, so this project is bigger than just filling jobs.”

The first cohort of seven learners at the Hope & Anchor, HMP Styal is working towards the completion of their course. Todd says “Once the learners have completed the programme, we will then look to support the women with employment options once they are released into the community.”

His advice for hospitality companies interested in supporting ex-offenders is to contact the New Futures Network, the employment wing of the Ministry of Justice. “They have supported us from day one and help us to navigate the best way forward and ensure business risk is minimised.” The popular pub chain aims to increase the number of ex-offender graduates employed across its portfolio of sites by 25% this year.



Trainee prepares dish at Marston’s training academy inside HMP Styal.



The kitchen at Marston’s training academy inside HMP Styal.

Angel Delight Chimney Cake with Strawberry and Pistachio



These soft sweet bread cakes are a great alternative way to serve Angel Delight. You can fill the chimney cake with any flavour and drizzle with chocolate and sprinkles or a topping of your choice.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Cooking Time: 12 minutes
Serves: 10

Ingredients

500g McDougalls White bread and Roll Mix, prepared
50g caster sugar
5g cinnamon
150g Angel Delight Strawberry Whip
300ml cold water
50ml double cream
200g strawberries, diced
100ml white chocolate
50g pistachios
20g freeze dried Strawberries

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, 350°F, gas mark 4. Oil 10 cannelloni tubes. Roll the bread mix dough into a square and cut into 10 stripes (each weighing 50g).
2. Mix caster sugar together with the cinnamon and put it onto a plate.
3. Roll the dough around the cannelloni tube, then brush each tube with water and roll in the sugar and cinnamon mix, so you get a light dusting on each chimney roll.
4. Bake in the pre-heated oven for 12 minutes then, remove from the tubes from the cake and leave to cool.
5. To make Angel Delight strawberry whip, pour the 300ml of cold water into a mixing bowl fitted with a whisk. Add the Angel Delight and whisk for 30 seconds at a slow speed. Scrape down and whisk for a further 4 minutes at high speed. Then add the cream and whip and whip for 1 minute or until firm and pipeable.
6. Pipe the Angel Delight into the cooled chimney cakes and finish with a drizzle of white chocolate, strawberries, freeze dried strawberries and pistachios.

Allergens: Wheat, Milk, Egg. May contain: Soya

THE POWER OF FIVE

Building food confidence,
one dish at a time.

CRuNCH, a charity which launched only two years ago, aims to tackle the rapid decline in cooking skills and food confidence among teenagers. The charity works with secondary schools by teaching students how to cook five simple, healthy meals before they leave home. The Cook 5 programme is fully funded and is built around five core dishes, five essential nutrition messages and is taught at the school once a week over five weeks.

Kate Percy, founder and CEO, says “Young people were leaving home without the ability to cook even a handful of simple, healthy meals. Food education has been squeezed in schools, and less cooking is happening at home. Teenagers are growing up surrounded by ultra-processed convenience food. When teenagers are taught to cook, they not only learn about food, but also discover independence and confidence.”

Recipes range from how to cook eggs, healthy pancakes, soups, stir fries, rice and pasta to classic burgers, ragus, koftas, falafels, vegetarian curries, dahls, pad Thai noodles and fajitas. The recipes are flexible, affordable and can be adapted for different cultures, diets and school facilities. Each

“The classes are different to school cookery lessons. Students are actively involved and encouraged to experiment – they love playing around with spices!”

course ends with a celebration where parents and carers join their children in the kitchen, strengthening links between school and home. “The classes are different to school cookery lessons. Music may be playing in the background, students are actively involved and encouraged to experiment – they love playing around with spices!” says Katie.

As a result of these cooking courses, schools report improved engagement and pride among students. “We’ve seen children who were shy or disengaged in school light up in the kitchen and take that positivity back into their homes and classrooms,” says Kate.

Jeanine Preece, Associate Assistant Principal at CLF Post 16, an education centre in Bristol for 16 to 19 year-olds, says:



Above:
Students
learning
to make fajitas

Opposite:
Kate Percy,
founder and
CEO of
CRuNCH



"Many of our students had never cooked before, but by week five they were cooking for their families. The change in their confidence has been amazing to see."

Currently, CRuNCH operates in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, but the model is designed to scale nationally. Kate says "If a school in Birmingham or elsewhere is interested, we can support them through resources, training and partnerships, even if direct delivery is not immediately possible." The charity collaborates with local authorities and other charities working in this field such as Chefs in Schools. Its goal is to make Bristol the UK's first 'Cook5 City', where every teenager leaves school able to cook five healthy meals.

Elsewhere in the country, the Prept Foundation is working with primary and secondary schools to deliver immersive cooking experiences in the classroom. Through the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts' Adopt a School programme, Prept teaches primary school children in Sussex and beyond a variety of topics including; identifying different fruits and vegetables, where different varieties come from, bread-making, how to set a table, and undertake role-play activities set within "a restaurant". The four one-hour sessions are taught in schools - no special equipment is required to participate.

For secondary schools, the course is designed for Years 7 to 11 and is tailored to each school's facilities. Students learn from professional chefs affiliated with the charity, who teach them vital cooking skills and inspire them with the possibility of a career in hospitality.

Visit www.crunchtime.org.uk or www.prept.foundation/ for further information.

McDougalls Lime and Chocolate Mousse Pot



Tangy lime mousse, great made with water or coconut milk, and topped with a Chocolate Angel Delight layer. Serve as it is or top with chocolate decoration and why not serve with a biscuit?

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: N/A

Serves: 10

Ingredients

80g McDougalls No Added Sugar Lime Jelly
920ml Water or coconut milk
150g Angel Delight No Added Sugar Chocolate Whip
350ml Cold water (for the Angel Delight Mousse Whip)

Method

1. To make the McDougalls No Added Sugar Lime Jelly, bring the water or coconut milk to the boil. Remove from the heat and add the McDougalls No Added Sugar Lime Jelly, whisk to dissolve then divide between 20 pots.
2. Leave to cool, the jelly will set within an hour.
3. To make the Angel Delight topping, pour the 350ml of cold water into a mixing bowl fitted with a whisk. Add the Angel Delight Chocolate Whip and whisk for 30 seconds on slow speed.
4. Scrape down and whisk for a further 5 minutes at high speed.
5. Once the jelly is cool, pipe the Chocolate Angel Delight on top of the jelly and keep chilled until needed.

Allergens: Milk.

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IT'S GAME-ON FOR PUBS & BARS

According to industry research consultants, KAM Insight, interactive games and activities in venues offering food and drink is trending. From classic games like darts and ten pin bowling, to more modern options such as axe throwing, digital darts or even virtual reality experiences, operators are using the competitive nature of their guests to their advantage, encouraging them to stay longer.



Almost 30% of UK adults have visited a competitive socialising venue in the last 12 months and the frequency of these visits are steadily climbing. Blake Gladman, Strategy and Insight Director, KAM says "It's more than a trend – it's becoming a mainstay in modern social life - 41% are returning at least once a month, up from 35% last year. It's not just dedicated venues seeing this benefit – 64% of consumers have visited a traditional pub or bar that offers competitive socialising and 80% said it enhanced their overall experience."

Venues offering competitive socialising are popular for special occasions such as a family outing, birthday celebration, quiz night, after work drinks or a fun date night. Blake says "It's also breaking the rules of traditional nights out as 77% say they need less alcohol to have a good time in these spaces."

Below, top and bottom: Shuffleboard and digital darts are trending games for a great night out.



Beyond entertainment, the report reveals that competitive socialising offers psychological benefits too such as improved mood, increased enjoyment, reduced stress and a greater sense of belonging. Blake says "It turns out that playing games and sharing new experiences isn't just fun, it's meaningful with 83% thinking you can make more memories when visiting an experiential leisure venue whether its laughter over a game of darts or the adrenaline rush of mini golf."

There are several chains providing competitive socialising such as

"Competitive socialising offers psychological benefits too such as improved mood, increased enjoyment, reduced stress and a greater sense of belonging."

Boom Battle Bar, with a variety of games such as shuffleboard and mini golf; Putt & Play at Hollywood Bowl offering indoor mini golf with multiple interactive courses and Axperience with its axe throwing sessions.

For those planning to introduce interactive games, its best to start small and build from there. Blake says "If you're thinking about adding competitive socialising to your pub or restaurant, don't overcomplicate it. You don't need huge investment or fancy tech to get going. Simple, classic games like darts, pool, skittles or even board games can instantly make your place feel more fun and sociable. Once you know what your customers enjoy, you can try adding bigger attractions such as shuffleboard tables, interactive quiz nights, or themed competitions or tournaments. The main thing is to make sure the games fit naturally with the atmosphere you already have, so they feel like part of the experience rather than an add-on. People love coming together over a bit of friendly competition, and if you give them a reason to stick around longer and come back more often, it'll pay off."

Consider starting with low-cost fun activities such as digital darts, tabletop games or cards, interactive quiz nights, board games nights or themed bingo. To encourage repeat visits, try running tournaments, seasonal themes or new game formats. Visit www.kaminsight.com for more information.



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HEADS UP

*Giving time is becoming
hospitality's wellbeing win*

When we talk about wellbeing in hospitality, the conversation usually focusses on rotas, pay, late finishes and the pressure of service. All of this is true, but there's another lever that's quietly proving powerful. Giving people paid time to volunteer as part of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) program is helping employees achieve a new found sense of purpose.

Volunteering places teams and individuals in a different environment where the job may still be hands-on, but the pressure has lifted. Rather than chasing covers, the dynamic shifts to helping others, and that detail matters. National volunteering research from NCVO in 2023 found 75% of volunteers said it improved their mental health and wellbeing, with social connection a major driver. The Oxford University research team has also pointed to volunteering as a wellbeing intervention that stands out because it builds belonging and meaning, not just coping skills.

The good news is that hospitality businesses are already putting this into practice.

In Cork, Trigon Hotels introduced a paid charity day for every team member, timed with Ireland's Workplace Wellbeing Day in 2022. One of their most successful projects was the creation of a new sensory garden at the Cope Foundation – a charity that supports children and adults with learning disabilities.

Across the hotel sector, Red Carnation Hotels allocates two volunteering days per employee each year, which staff can donate to a charity of their choice. Examples shared by the group range from community projects to local charity support, and that choice is the point. Autonomy is a mental health multiplier. When people pick the cause, they're more likely to feel pride, agency and connection, rather than feeling like a corporate outing.

Award-winning pub and restaurant business, Cambuscuisine, gives each restaurant team two charity days a

year to volunteer with a charity of their choice. They also run a community fund which supports charities who give people a second chance in life. They raise the money by offering guests the opportunity to add £1 to their bill. In 2025, the Cambuscuisine Community Fund awarded 56 grants totalling £206,499 across a wide range of primary issues from arts and culture to mental health, social inclusion and homelessness.

Team-led volunteering like this can soften hierarchy. You get chefs, front of house and managers side by side, doing something practical with a shared goal. That shared "we did it" feeling can travel back into service, especially for newer team members who are still settling in.

If you're considering charity days, keep it simple. Make sure it is paid time away from work and is easy to book. Offer solo options for people who want headspace, and team options for those who want togetherness. Ask your staff what they want to do, or if they want to lead a project, then celebrate the stories together. In a sector built on service, giving time to your team can be one of the most rewarding wellbeing benefits you can offer.



The Quiet Power of Everyday Food

Residential care catering for older adults sits at a crossroads of nutrition, comfort and pleasure. Meals need to deliver energy and key nutrients while staying familiar, affordable and easy to eat. Superfoods can help, but only when they are used with a light touch. This is not about sprinkling exotic powders on plates. It is about choosing ingredients that work hard nutritionally, fit easily into existing menus and taste good.



Broccoli, pea & spinach soup

Smoked mackerel fishcakes served with a rocket, spinach salad

In a care setting, the most effective superfoods are those that are familiar, widely tolerated and easy to source. “The most effective superfoods for older adults quietly raise protein, fibre and omega 3s while suiting soft textures. Oats, berries, leafy greens, oily fish, red lentils, Greek yoghurt, eggs, sweet potato, tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil, ground flax or chia, turmeric and walnuts are my staples. They support energy, gut and heart health. Used in familiar formats, they work well for dementia care and fit smoothly across home care, live in care and 24 care at home,” says Carol Imrie, Director, Careline Home Support Ltd.

ADAPTING RECIPES WITHOUT REINVENTING THE MENU

The easiest way to introduce superfoods is to adjust recipes residents already know and enjoy. Start by adding rather than replacing and think about texture first. “Pair kale with mashed potato for a comforting twist, mix berries into custard or sponge puddings, and add seeds to bread rolls for crunch without changing flavour profiles. Some seeds can be soaked or boiled before blending to incorporate as a smoother consistency,” advises James Brown, Executive Chef, Unilever.

Superfoods work best when they hide in plain sight, so further pairings could include leafy greens with mild cheese or a creamy sauce to soften any earthy notes. You can also add oats to meatballs or burgers for moisture and fibre, without changing flavour. “Overcome resistance to unfamiliar flavours or textures by introducing small amounts in familiar dishes—e.g., spinach in shepherd’s pie or berries in traditional trifles,” says James.

Carol Imrie agrees, saying “I keep dish names familiar and introduce gradual tweaks, prioritising soft, moist textures or smooth purées when chewing or swallowing needs support. Keeping classic shapes like pies, fishcakes and familiar breads means fortified dishes still feel like home. Salmon and pea fish pie with dill feels classic yet brings omega 3s, and porridge with stewed apple, cinnamon and chia stays soft and high in fibre. For dementia care, colourful, recognisable finger foods like salmon fishcakes or fruity yoghurt pots encourage independence and steady intake.”

However, it’s important to be aware of how some superfoods react to medication. “Some dark leafy greens can make blood thickening and blood thinning medications work less effectively,” warns Brent Trowbridge, National Hospitality Manager, Bupa Care Services. “The same goes with any allergies. We know that nuts and seeds can be great superfood additions, but allergies to these items are also common.” Checking in regularly with home management and medical teams will avoid mistakes.



Top three superfood ideas from Brent & Paulius, Bupa Care Services

- Adding ingredients like peanut butter and blueberries to porridge for crunch and taste
- Pairing granola with natural Greek yoghurt
- Instead of adding butter to mashed potato, mash in avocado for extra creaminess and healthy fats

For something a little more unusual, that still fits comfortably in a care setting, try the following

- Gentle coconut lentil curry with sweet potato and spinach, served with soft rice
- Butter bean and vegetable hotpot with thyme and a soft oat topping
- Baked aubergine and lentil moussaka topped with Greek yoghurt
- Oily fish chowder with oats blended into the base for body and fibre
- Pea, spinach and mint soup for colour and freshness
- Creamy oat and mushroom soup with herbs
- Blueberry and banana baked oats, served warm with yoghurt
- Apple, oat and seed sponge served with custard
- Soft carrot and orange cake made with ground flaxseed

Lentil curry

LET RESIDENTS LEAD THE WAY

As you continue introducing new ingredients, make sure you involve residents to increase engagement and gather new ideas. “We’re seeing that residents’ diet choices are slowly shifting, so it’s best not to assume, and instead get them involved in the conversation,” says Paulius Krikscinuas, National Hospitality Manager, Bupa Care Services. “For example, in the past, traditional meat-based dishes were popular with most residents, however we now find that it’s around a 50/50 split between residents who prefer meat, and plant-based options. Also, one of our residents recently shared her own idea for moussaka topped with natural Greek yoghurt, so we incorporated it into the home menu where she lives.”

Nutrition should never shout louder than flavour and be mindful that residents eat with their eyes first, even in a care environment. Colour matters, so ingredients like berries brighten desserts and greens give a gentle hue that signals freshness. Avoid muddy colours by blending thoroughly and seasoning well. Ageing can dull our taste perception, so herbs, gentle spices and a touch of acidity from lemon or tomato help bring food to life without adding salt.

Rather than loading one meal with superfoods, think about spreading their use across all day parts. “Some superfoods, like avocados, nuts and seeds, plain Greek yoghurt, eggs and blueberries lend themselves

well to breakfast meals,” says Brent. “For example, avocado, sliced or mashed on toast. You could also top the toast with seeds or eggs. For residents with modified texture diets, avocados can be added to a smoothie for a creamier, nutritious texture. Superfoods can be paired with other ingredients to help boost calorific intake for residents that need it too, e.g., adding bananas or peanut butter to smoothies.”

Paulius agrees, saying “Oily fish can be made the star of the show across day parts at least twice a week. From fish pie to kippers and grilled salmon, choosing days of the week for fish dishes can help theme your menu and inspire ways to present oily fish in different ways for your residents.”

Portion size also plays a role in care catering. Smaller, nutrient-dense servings often work better than large plates that overwhelm. Superfoods help here by packing more nutrition into less volume. “Swapping to wholegrain bread, pasta and rice, stirring two tablespoons of milk powder into sauces or mash, and replacing a third of mince with red lentils all lift protein and fibre to support nutrient-dense servings,” recommends Carol.

LOOKING BEYOND THE EXPECTED

For homes keen to offer something a little different, there is room to experiment. A warm lentil and vegetable dhal, cooked slowly and mildly spiced, offers comfort as well as plant-based protein and fibre. Served with soft rice or flatbread, it feels hearty and warming rather than unfamiliar. Berry and oat breakfast bars, baked soft and cut into small portions, work well as mid-morning snacks and can help support energy intake between meals. A savoury oat and vegetable bake can stand in for quiche, delivering fibre and protein while holding its shape well across different texture requirements.

Superfoods are not a trend to chase. In residential care catering, they are tools. Used thoughtfully, they boost nutrition, support health and keep menus interesting without unsettling routines. Focus on familiar ingredients, gentle adaptations and consistent execution. When superfoods feel like everyday food, everyone benefits.

Blueberry & banana
oats with flaxseeds

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Cheese & Onion PIES

With her kitchen career kicking off as a catering student at Blackpool & Fylde College in 1981, Salford-born but Blackpool-raised Lorraine Pickles has to be one of the college's true success stories.

With her 20-year anniversary of working at the college she studied at fast approaching, Lorraine's passion for feeding, fortifying and helping students build positive relationships with food continues to know no bounds. The college currently has over 13,000 students and 1,100 staff members across five sites with a new £65million multiversity complex in construction and set to be operational in 2027.

"Due to the sheer numbers we cater for, speed of service is key, so we have a variety of concepts for students to choose from," says Lorraine. "We cater for the halls of residence, cafeterias, we have a Starbucks, a bakery concept similar to Greggs, and various street-eat vendors. Takeaway culture is the clear winner for the students, and it is a challenge to get them sitting down and eating with knives and forks."

"We offer free breakfasts for all the students, which includes cereal and muesli, and classic lunchtime snacks such as filled jacket potatoes, sandwiches and a salad bar. Forget lamb, chicken rules the roost and anything in a wrap is incredibly popular. We simply can't afford wastage, so we try to give the students what they want and if the demand isn't there, it won't stay on the menu."

"We have student reps, forums and feedback cards at all the tills so we're constantly tweaking the menus and running specials. While we love to be globally creative, we're also very proud of our northern roots so I'm sharing a proper northern pie recipe. This is a firm favourite with our students and we would be in trouble if we ever took it off the menu."



LORRAINE PICKLES

20 PORTIONS

INGREDIENTS

Pastry

- 480g Country Range Cooking and Baking
- 750g Country Range Plain Flour
- 3 medium eggs

Filling

- 1 large onion

- 1.1kg mixed grated cheese (we do mature cheddar and Red Leicester)
- 16 eggs
- 1ltr milk
- 2tsp mustard
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Rub the sieved flour and margarine together (do not over mix if doing it on a machine).
2. When the margarine has been rubbed into the flour, incorporate the egg. Gently bring together to form a light dough (Do not overwork the pastry).
3. Wrap and leave to rest in a refrigerator for 30 mins before using.
4. Dice the onions and cook in water until soft, drain.
5. Add the onion to the mix cheese and mix well.
6. Mix the eggs, milk, mustard, salt and pepper in a separate bowl.
7. Roll out the pastry making two fan rings.
8. Add half of the cheese mixture to both.
9. Gently stir in the egg mix.
10. Top the pie with a pastry lid and egg wash.
11. Bake at 160 degrees (fan oven) for approx. 55 mins until cooked.



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*Behind The Beans: Coffee in 2's: Hotels, Lodgings: Food & Beverage Report 2025. Nestlé Professional

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THE MARKETPLACE

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HAVE A BREAK: KITKAT® HOT CHOCOLATE COMPETITION LAUNCHES

Foodservice operators can tap into the growing demand for indulgent hot drinks with NEW KitKat® Hot Chocolate Sachets, the perfect blend of creamy indulgence and an iconic, universally loved brand. Each pre-portioned KitKat® hot chocolate sachet delivers that familiar biscuit taste consumers adore, ensuring a consistent, brilliant break every time whether that's in a café, hotel, workplace catering and food-to-go setting.



It's a simple way to add excitement to your drinks menu and turn everyday breaks into real moments. Enter this month's Country Club competition page to be in with a chance of winning a bundle of irresistible KitKat® Hot Chocolate Sachets, find out more on page 51.

Weetabix Sets Out Clear Path to Net Zero with New Sustainability Report

Weetabix has published its 2025/26 sustainability report, outlining a clear, science-aligned path to



net zero emissions and deeper environmental stewardship. The report highlights progress across responsible sourcing, lower-carbon production, packaging improvements and social impact. Notably, trials with reduced nitrogen fertiliser and regenerative techniques expanded to larger wheat fields, resulting in over 800 tonnes of lower-carbon wheat used in more than 30 million Weetabix biscuits on UK shelves.

The company has also made significant strides in reducing its Scope 1 & 2 emissions, with targets validated by the Science Based Targets Initiative. Beyond environmental action, Weetabix continues longstanding community support, redistributing more than 25 million breakfasts through FareShare and Magic Breakfast and investing in workforce development and inclusion.

Despite agricultural challenges, the report reflects practical progress and a commitment to building a responsible, future-focused food system. The full sustainability report 2025/2026 is available now on the Weetabix website: <https://weetabixfoodcompany.co.uk>.

Délifrance

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Introducing our new premium hot sandwich range - ready to heat, impossible to beat.

From the hearty All Day Breakfast Wrap to the zesty Cajun Chicken Ciabatta, we've taken favourite combinations and elevated them with quality ingredients.



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30g x 100
5 FLAVOURS



A PICTURE OF HOSPITALITY



As creative as she is passionate about photography, Majella Taylor has been capturing the heart and soul of hospitality for over 15 years. Currently running her own photography and social media house - aptly named Pavlova and Cream - in London, she understands exactly how to make an image speak a thousand words. It's therefore no surprise that we were excited about the opportunity to gain the benefit of her advice this month.



WHAT DOES "AUTHENTIC" FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY MEAN TO YOU?

It's about telling your story, showcasing your venue, food, and even suppliers in an honest, genuine way. It's far easier, and far more rewarding, to be honest than to spend time constructing a version of something you think your customers want to see. Dining out isn't just about the dishes on the plate; it's about provenance, personality, and the people behind the experience.

WHAT LIGHTING SETUPS WORK BEST FOR RESTAURANTS?

Most importantly, stay away from the pass. The lighting there is harsh and unnatural, and it can be challenging to work with. Soft, natural light is always your best friend. Indirect daylight works beautifully, and shadows shouldn't be feared either; they can add depth and atmosphere to an image.

Simple setups tend to work best. It's about finding a look that suits your venue's personality.

WHAT FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY TRENDS SHOULD BE EMBRACED/AVOIDED?

Authenticity and imperfection are definitely having a moment, and for good reason. "Perfectly imperfect" images, with drips, crumbs or half-eaten plates, feel more natural and relatable. Bringing in hands, movement or even faces can help tell the

story of the experience and make the viewer feel part of it, rather than just looking in from the outside.

Pouring shots are another trend that continues to work really well. They're fun to create, add movement, and are always pleasing on the eye.

On the flip side, it's worth avoiding visuals that feel overly busy or cluttered, rely on harsh or flat lighting, or use heavy filters, especially over-saturation or artificial effects. Unrealistic close-ups that distort food, or stylistic gimmicks like extreme colour blocking that don't align with the brand or venue, can end up making food look less appealing rather than more.

WHAT PRACTICAL STEPS CAN A RESTAURANT TAKE TO BUILD THAT CONSISTENCY?

Create a short list of around five clear guidelines and pin it somewhere visible, on the fridge, in the office, or near the pass. This doesn't need to be technical; it can be as straightforward as "use natural light only," "shoot from a 45-degree angle," or "keep backgrounds clean."

Next, choose two or three reliable spots in the venue where the food photographs best and stick to them.

Finally, agree on a shared visual style. This could be a preference for soft, natural light, minimal props, or a slightly moodier feel.

IF YOU HAD TO GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO HOSPITALITY OPERATORS WHO WANT BETTER FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY TODAY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Authenticity is everything. Tell your story. Not just the food, but your team's story, your suppliers, and the people who make your venue. Dining out isn't just about the dishes on the plate; it's about provenance, personality, and the people behind the experience.

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Keeping Time-Honoured Traditions Alive

No matter what the cuisine, when you speak to a chef who specialises or enjoys exploring regional dishes, they will tell you how traditional cooking methods enhance and define flavour. Sometimes there are simply no shortcuts to success. Many chefs will tell you that drawing from the skills and expertise of those who have come before us, who generously gift recipes and techniques from generation to generation, is just as important as the ingredients themselves.

When so much is consumed and discarded online and through social media, slowing the pace down to celebrate chefs who are dedicated to upholding and extolling the virtues of tradition takes centre stage in this month's Melting Pot.



*Pav
Bhaji*



SANJAY AGGARWAL

Chief Spice Officer, Spice Kitchen and author of Spice Kitchen, Vibrant Recipes and Spice Blends for the Home Cook

One traditional dish I always come back to is Pav Bhaji. It's a classic Indian street food, but for me it's also proper home cooking. We ate it growing up at summer barbecues and on cold winter nights – the same dish – cooked outside or in, always comforting and generous.

The magic is in the method. My mum would temper whole spices in hot butter, then grind garam masala by hand in small batches, using blending techniques she learned back home in India. She'd even make the sev topping fresh, because the extra crunch and texture lifted the whole dish – even if it took longer, it was always worth it. Those traditional techniques build deep flavour and contrast.

Beef Wellington

Using time-honoured techniques, the dish develops rich, layered flavours without heavy sauces.



CHEF HAYDEN BARKLEY

Head Chef, Summat To Ate

Traditional techniques define who we are as chefs and as a food culture. My favourite dish to cook is Beef Wellington as it uses a different combination of techniques that require skill and precision. In this dish, the techniques used are pan roasting, classic French reduction, pastry work, including enclosure and lattice.

Beef Wellington reflects how French culinary techniques influenced British cooking. The searing of the beef plays a crucial role in flavour development due to the Maillard reaction. Correct timing is required to reduce the mushroom duxelle to ensure the correct moisture level in the Wellington and the correct thickness of pastry is required to achieve evenly cooked, flaked pastry.



JOHANNA WITCHELL

Marketing Manager, Tilda Ltd

Rice pudding is a dish steeped in tradition and many of our earliest food memories. For many it's school puddings with a skin on top and a dollop of jam, or a bowl lovingly spooned out by a grandparent, slow-cooked and meant to comfort. It's a recipe that has always been about simplicity, patience, and warmth, making it one of the most enduring classics in British kitchens.

A Coconut & Mango Jasmine Rice Pudding takes that familiar foundation and gently transports it somewhere sunnier. By using fragrant Tilda Jasmine Rice, the pudding retains its soft, creamy texture while gaining a naturally floral aroma that feels light and indulgent. Coconut milk adds richness without heaviness, while vanilla keeps the flavours grounded in tradition.



MARIA CHONG

Managing Director, Lee Kum Kee Europe

China is home to diverse culinary traditions, and one dish I particularly admire from my Cantonese heritage is Hakka-style Stuffed Tofu. This classic uses firm tofu filled with a mixture of protein and vegetables, then fried and steamed to achieve a delicate balance of textures.

The secret lies in seasoning — Lee Kum Kee's Oyster Sauce, Light Soy Sauce, Sesame Oil, and Mushroom Seasoning Powder bring rich umami while keeping the dish light and wholesome. By using frozen tofu and locally sourced ingredients, it remains cost-effective and easy to prepare in modern kitchens.

Ideal for warmer seasons, it delivers a healthy, balanced option that resonates with today's diners. More than a dish, it reflects Hakka culinary ingenuity and the enduring value of preserving authentic, heritage cooking techniques.



JAMES BROWN

Executive Chef, Unilever Food Solutions UK&I

Shakshuka — eggs poached in spiced tomato and pepper sauce is vibrant, healthy, and perfect for UK brunch culture and can be peaked by adding Knorr Al Fez Harissa sauce for fragrant spiciness.

The slow simmering of vegetables, layered spices, and poached eggs directly in the sauce creates a rich, sweet base. Use Knorr Al Fez Shakshuka Sauce, launching with Unilever Food Solutions, for speed and consistency while maintaining authentic flavour. Pair with British eggs and fresh herbs, rocket or pea shoots for a local twist.

MELTING POT



ABHISHEK KUMAR
Chef, Tanishq

Chargrilled Lahsooni Jhinga, with Cornish tiger prawns marinated in roasted garlic and garam masala and served with an avocado-mango salsa, is a dish I admire for capturing the essence of North Indian coastal cooking, where seafood is treated with care and its sweetness is enhanced by garlic, spice, and fire.

Using time-honoured techniques like dry-roasting garlic and whole spices, marinating, and chargrilling over high heat, the dish develops rich, layered flavours without heavy sauces. Roasting mellows the garlic and brings out nutty sweetness, dry-toasting the spices releases essential oils, and chargrilling adds smokiness and caramelisation while sealing in moisture for tender, succulent prawns.

In a contemporary kitchen, precise control of temperature ensures consistency, while the avocado-mango salsa adds balance and preserves the dish's cultural heritage. Garlic-forward seafood dishes like this reflect simplicity, and preserving these methods keeps generations of knowledge alive, connecting diners to both flavour and culture.

Tilda are giving away 5 bags of their 5kg Jasmine Rice to try this delicious traditional pudding found on their website <https://www.tilda.com/foodservice/recipes/coconut-mango-jasmine-rice-pudding/>



TEAR AND SHARE BRIOCHE MADE WITH KITKAT



SERVING SUGGESTION
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MADE WITH:
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SAUCE 1KG

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE TEAR AND SHARE

- 400g Strong flour
- 50g Caster sugar
- 3g Salt
- 120ml Skimmed milk
- 10g Dried Yeast
- 45g Butter, softened
- 100g eggs (2)
- 40g KitKat[®] Sauce

TO SERVE

- 40g KitKat[®] Sauce
- 20g Chopped Hazelnuts

70 min

10

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F).

In a saucepan, gently heat the skimmed milk until it simmers. Remove from heat and add the dried yeast. Allow it to bubble slightly.

2. In a mixing bowl, combine 3/4 of the strong flour, caster sugar, and salt. Pour the milk and yeast mixture into the bowl, then add the softened butter and eggs. Mix well until a sticky dough forms.
3. Gradually add the remaining flour, bit by bit, and continue mixing until the dough becomes smooth and elastic. Cover the bowl with cling film and let the dough prove for 1 hour, or until it doubles in size.
4. On a floured surface, roll out the dough into a rectangle shape. Spread the KITKAT[®] Sauce evenly over the dough, leaving a small border around the edges.
5. Starting from one of the longer sides, tightly roll up the dough into a log. Using a sharp knife, slice the log into individual rolls, about 2-3 cm thick.
6. Arrange the slices in a lined baking tray, leaving some space between them for expansion.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for approximately 30 minutes, or until the brioche turns golden brown on top. Once baked, remove from the oven and let it cool slightly.
8. Drizzle additional KITKAT[®] Sauce over the top of the brioche, and sprinkle with chopped hazelnuts for added flavour and texture.

FOR MORE INFO PLEASE VISIT:
<https://nestleprofessional.co.uk/brands/maggi>

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Easter tradition with a twist



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FOR CHEFS



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serving suggestion



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Mini Chocolate Cake Selection
1 x 48



Reduce waste and serve according to demand this Easter.

serving suggestion

TIME SAVING SWEET TREATS

For quick and easy dessert pots that make a great afternoon treat in a care home or a crowd-pleasing grab-and-go option, fruit fillings can be used hot or cold in all manner of desserts, from warming crumble pots to indulgent cheesecakes. Why not combine the two with this toffee apple crumble cheesecake?



Toffee apple crumble cheesecake

Making ends meet

BEYOND THE PIE

This month, Paul Dickson talks about the benefits of having fruit fillings in your arsenal and not just for making pies.

I'm a big advocate for making every product you have in your kitchen work hard for its place. If something only has one use, think carefully about how much you really need it, or if it can be used elsewhere on your menu. Fruit fillings are a great example of this, as whilst you may predominantly use them to make pies and tarts, they can add flavour and cut costs in so many other areas of your menu too. Of course, there is always a place for fresh fruit, but in instances where you're looking to use stewed apples or an abundance of cherries or strawberries out of season, a tub of fruit filling won't just save on cost, but it also takes out the time of cooking down your fruit and ensures consistency that fresh fruit doesn't always deliver. I've included a few ideas here where you might not naturally think to use fruit fillings, but you absolutely should.



Paul is a Home Economist and food stylist working in London and the North West, creating exceptional visual stories in film & tv, on social media and in print. All of the recipes and videos featured in the article can be accessed online at www.countryrange.co.uk/recipes or by scanning the QR Code.



DRINK IT IN

Spring and summer are the perfect time to refresh your cold drinks menu, and fruit fillings are your friend when it comes to adding bold, fruity flavours without having to stock loads of fresh fruit that only lasts a few days. Whether it's a mocktail, a smoothie or a milkshake – keep your menu fresh and exciting without breaking the bank or creating waste.



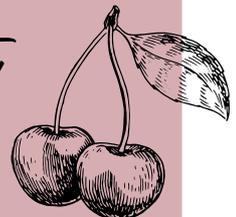
Apple crumble milkshake

Cherry pastry twist



A Fruity Twist

Sweet pastry treats to go are more popular than ever and you don't need to be a top patisserie extraordinaire to add something homemade to your offering. In fact, here is a great way to reduce food waste whilst creating a delicious pastry that can be enjoyed any time of the day. Use your fruit filling of choice (here I've used cherry) and twist it into some puff pastry – great to use up surplus pastry. Bake and drizzle with chocolate for an indulgent but low-cost addition to your food to go menu.



Strawberry daiquiri





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Rising Star

SCOTT HODGSON

HEAD CHEF, SOLSTICE, NEWCASTLE

When and how did your passion for food and cooking begin?

I was a greedy kid, plain and simple. I loved eating new and different foods and was always on the hunt for something I didn't have to share with my siblings – hence my lifelong love of winkles and the tragically small bounty you'd find at the end of Christmas in a tub of Celebrations.

I was probably the only kid growing up in the 90s who flat-out refused turkey twizzlers and freezer-burned turkey drumsticks, so clearly the obsession with fresh, decent food started early.

Did you have any early disasters in the kitchen?

At university, I really got into cooking, and one day, while wandering around St John's Market in Liverpool, I came across a whole rabbit for sale. I'd eaten rabbit stew on a family holiday in Malta and again at a campsite with my scout group, so naturally I decided to cook a full rabbit feast for my flatmates. It... didn't go down well.

I once cooked liver and onions for a flatmate, too. She's vegan now. I'll let you draw your own conclusions.

What did it instil in you?

What stuck with me was the camaraderie. I remember thinking, I can't believe I'm getting paid for this – it's so much fun. Kitchens are like a sport: hard work, pressure, teamwork, and at the end of service, you either win or lose and come back stronger the next day.

One other very important lesson I learned early on was to never do drugs – willingly, anyway. On a staff night out, one of the chefs spiked my drink. It was one of the worst experiences of my life, and the hangover lasted about three days. That alone put me off for good.



When did you decide that cooking would be a career?

I still shock myself that this is actually my career – and that I'm being asked questions like this. There was never a grand plan. Just a determination to keep my head down, keep grafting and keep pushing forward. I've come up for air and suddenly... here we are.

What have been the hardest times in your career?

Competing on Great British Menu was easily the hardest moment. My career had been on a steady upward trajectory, and it was the first time I'd really faced adversity and failure – and very publicly.

It knocked my confidence badly, but it also taught me resilience and perspective. You don't grow without a few bruises.

Who are your food heroes?

John Williams, without hesitation. He's from the North East, from a working-class background like mine, and rose through the ranks to become executive chef at one of the most prestigious hotels in the world.

When I took my mum for afternoon tea for her 50th birthday, he made us feel genuinely special – showed us behind the scenes and even sent out a birthday cake. He still has that North East warmth and charm.

Whenever I see him at industry events, he's like the godfather – everyone wants a word. He's exactly the kind of chef and human I aspire to be, and I hope I'd stay just as humble if I ever reached that level.

Best advice you were given?

From my dad: "There's no cheat in life." At the

time, I didn't really appreciate it, but now I live by it. He's a tradesman and a craftsman, and it's clear that putting the hours in is what sets you apart. There are no shortcuts in this industry – your weaknesses will always catch up with you.

Describe your cooking style.

Bold, punchy flavours presented elegantly. The dial's always moving depending on season and the skill level of the team, but there are fundamentals I don't want to drift too far from, at least for now.

What's the best thing about hospitality?

Right now, it's the camaraderie between restaurants. Everyone knows how tough things are, and there's comfort in knowing your friends and peers are facing the same challenges. It really helps the mindset.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

The goal has always been for my partner and me, who's also the restaurant manager at Solstice, to have our own restaurant. Every decision and sacrifice we've made has been towards that.

Tell us about Solstice and the philosophy behind the food

Solstice is a 14-cover fine-dining, tasting-menu-only restaurant where chefs cook the food and then come out to serve it themselves.

It's designed to feel like you're walking into our house and we're cooking for you. There's no menu at the start, so most dishes are served blind, which guests love. That set-up forces us to think deeply about every dish – not just flavour, but process. Can it be cooked calmly and cleanly? Can the chef then present it confidently? It's challenging but incredibly rewarding, and the interaction with guests is special.

Last restaurant you ate at

Restaurant Hjem – it was part of their celebration last week before moving into the new space.

Favourite restaurant

Jordnær – hands down.

Smoked Craster Kipper



Smoked Craster Kipper Dashi

INGREDIENTS

- 500g water
- 50g daikon, sliced
- 25g fresh ginger, sliced
- 20g kombu
- 1 sheet nori
- 8g mirin
- 1g salt
- 1/2 leek - chopped
- 1 smoked Craster kipper

METHOD

Combine all the ingredients for it, except the kipper, in a saucepan. Bring to a simmer, then take off the heat, cover, and allow to sit for 15 minutes. Bring back to a boil. Add the kipper and allow it to infuse for 3-4 hours. Strain.

Smoked Kipper Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 6 shallots
- 6 garlic cloves
- 700ml white wine
- 700ml Noilly Prat
- 1.5ltr cream
- 750ml dashi stock (from the recipe above)
- Salt
- Lemon juice
- 2 x Craster kippers (from the recipe above)

METHOD

Sweat shallots, garlic in oil adding a little smoked butter and caramelise until golden brown. Add white wine and reduce, then add the Noilly Prat and reduce a lot again. Add the dashi and the Craster kippers, reduce liquid by 50%.

Add the cream and reduce by 50% again. Check consistency and taste. Pass through a chinois before seasoning with salt and lemon juice. It may need reducing further to achieve the correct consistency.

Kipper Rillete

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x Smoked Craster kipper (using recipe above)
- 1tsp crème fraîche
- 1tsp natural yoghurt
- 1 x lemon (zest)
- Fresh lemon juice
- Smoked Maldon Sea Salt
- Chives
- Dill

METHOD

Pour boiling water over the kipper, leave for a couple of minutes. Remove, then gently flake the kipper away from the bones. Add the crème fraîche, yoghurt, zest and chopped herbs. Season with lemon juice and sea salt.

To Serve

Present the kipper by pressing it into a ring cutter in a bowl, top with thinly sliced potatoes cooked in smoked butter and crispy nori. Place a lid over the bowl and smoke the dish before revealing at the table and pouring the sauce over the top.



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Summer of Sport, Summer of Service



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Closing date for the competition is 30th April 2026. All winners will be notified by 31st May 2026. Postal entries can be sent to: Country Range Group, 4 & 5 Jupiter House, Mercury Rise, Altham Business Park, Altham, Lancashire, BB5 5BY. Full terms and conditions can be found at: www.stiritupmagazine.co.uk/about

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