

Bite

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Winter 2025

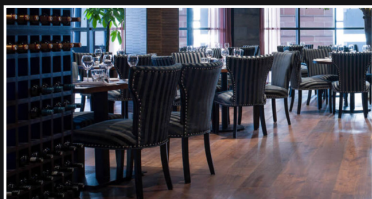
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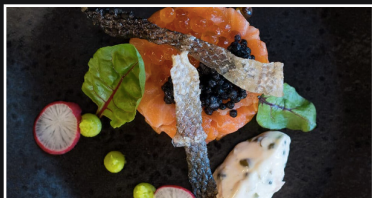
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Roberta Hall-McCarron's Christmas Pie
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MIX
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Salt 'n' Sauce

News & Shopping this festive season...



Just in time for the festive season, **Lannan Bakery** has opened its new Lannan Pantry at 31–35 Hamilton Place, Stockbridge. Led by baker Darcie Maher, the Pantry offers a selection of fresh produce, cheeses, cured meats, and Lannan's signature pastries. The compact space features a rotating menu of viennoiserie, including cardamom buns and custard slices, with seasonal specials expected. Doors opened quietly in early November, drawing steady queues and warm local interest. Open Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 4pm, the Pantry adds a fresh layer to Stockbridge's independent food scene— just in time for mince pies, morning loaves, and holiday grazing boards.

Walker's Shortbread is bringing back its beloved luxury Advent Calendar for Christmas 2025, offering a festive alternative to chocolate with 24 windows of signature shortbread in seasonal shapes. Adorned with tartan and whimsical illustrations of Santa's workshop, the calendar has sold out for the past two years and is expected to be in high demand again. Available from Ocado, Selfridges, and Walker's website (£20 RRP), it celebrates Scottish heritage and adds a touch of magic to the holiday countdown.



Looking to gift something truly indulgent this Christmas? Take inspiration from **Belvedere Vodka's** newest creation: **Dirty Brew**. This bold new spirit blends organic rye vodka with roasted organic Robusta coffee beans, delivering a rich, refined twist on coffee culture. Perfect for a decadent Hazelnut Affogato Shot.



A small-town butcher in Newton Stewart claimed Scotland's top steak pie title—beating nearly 100 entries in a national showdown in late October. S. Cronnie Family Butchers, run by Steven Cronnie and his family, won the **2025 Scottish Craft Butchers Award** with a slow-cooked, locally sourced pie that judges called “brilliant.” It’s the shop’s first-ever competition entry—and a proud moment for Wigtownshire.



Mandorle's handmade almond cakes are the perfect festive treat and stocking filler—gluten-free, dairy-free, and inspired by Italian tradition. Crafted in Scotland with just three ingredients, they're ideal for gifting or indulging. Find them online or at **Linlithgow Artisan Market**.



Looking for a gift that brings people together? *Feast* by MasterChef finalist Sarah Rankin is a celebration of connection through food. With nearly 100 recipes across 15 themed menus—from Hogmanay gatherings to summer picnics—this beautifully crafted cookbook champions seasonal Scottish produce and global inspiration. Whether you're gifting to a seasoned cook or

a curious beginner, *Feast* offers warmth, elegance, and a generous helping of joy. (£25.00, hardback)

Rosé for the Season G de Galoupet, a certified organic rosé from Provence, brings citrus, red fruit, and a saline finish in a bottle made from 85% recycled glass. A fresh, sustainable choice for festive starters and seafood. Available at Majestic and leading wine specialists.





After more than 20 years at the helm of Edinburgh's beloved La Garrigue, **Jean-Michel Gauffre** is uncorking a new adventure. With the restaurant now closed, he's turning his attention to the vineyards of Faugères and the stories they hold—bringing the warmth, flavour, and flair of the Languedoc region to wine lovers across Scotland. From intimate tastings to elegant wine dinners, Jean-Michel's events offer more than just a sip—they're a celebration of terroir, tradition, and the joy of sharing good wine. And for those ready to go deeper, his bespoke Languedoc wine tours promise sun-drenched landscapes, passionate winemakers, and unforgettable hospitality. Explore upcoming events at bite-magazine.com and tours at languedocwinetours.co.uk

Looking for a Christmas gift that goes beyond the bottle? Treat the wine lover in your life to an unforgettable tasting event in Edinburgh next spring!

Matthew Jukes Australian Wine

Tasting — 21

March 2026 Explore Australia's finest pours with legendary critic Matthew Jukes. This curated showcase brings top-tier producers to the capital for one night only. Full details at Bite Magazine and Wine Events Scotland.



Brown's of Leith has opened in Edinburgh's historic George Brown & Sons building, blending food, drink, and creative

spaces. The project brings together Civerinos, ShrimpWreck, Woven Whisky, and Haze, under the creative direction of Gunnar Groves-Raines of GRAS. More bite-magazine.com and www.gras.co



MERRY CHRISTMAS



Roberta Hall-McCarron's Christmas Pie is a festive showstopper: a rich, braised beef creation perfected on *Great British Menu* and now a seasonal favourite at her Edinburgh restaurants. The filling features slow-braised beef shin and ox cheek, with caramelised onion chicken mousse, and ox tongue. It feeds 4-6 and is double egg-washed for that perfect finish. Pie, gravy and a bottle of Tempranillo Senda del Oro, Vizcarra, Ribera del Duero, Spain 2023 cost £130. Collection only on Christmas Eve from Ardfern, Edinburgh between 9am and 2pm. Only 50 pies. Order online at Ardfern.

Festive Pick: Old Pulteney Harbour & 12 Years Old

Bring the spirit of Scotland's northern coast to your celebrations with Old Pulteney single malt Scotch whisky. Whether you're gifting a whisky lover or elevating your own festive table, these coastal classics deliver warmth and character in every sip.



Old Pulteney Harbour (£35):
Creamy vanilla, citrus, and mellow sea brine—perfect for cosy evenings.

Old Pulteney 12 Years Old (£40):
Aged in ex-bourbon casks, with notes of honey, spice, and a signature salty finish.

Available via Amazon, Tesco, Sainsbury's, and the Old Pulteney website. A timeless gift with maritime charm.



The Bonnington in Leith is a cosy neighbourhood pub open daily and now serving a new menu. Enjoy comfort classics made with good Scottish produce such as the Wagyu Burger, Bangers and Mash, Korean Fired Chicken Wings, Fish 'n' Chips and Haggis Bon Bons and HP sauce, (haggis from Findlay's of Portobello). As well as beers, wine and spirits there is also the largest Pisco selection in Scotland and a cocktail list curated by Peruvian owner Carlo Carozzi formerly of bars like The Voodoo Rooms and Dragonfly. Champions League and Rugby on the screens. Open: Monday–Sunday: noon to midnight - 0131 554 5824. 284 Bonnington Road, Edinburgh EH6 5BE.



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Review: **Nishiki**

A Japandi-style Japanese Izakaya in Edinburgh

It's a chilly autumn evening in October and, wandering down Morrison Street, the lights of Japanese restaurant Nishiki create a warm glow in the encroaching darkness.

The Nishiki concept is an interesting fusion: Japanese washi paper for the lighting mixed with steel and natural elements such as long wooden tables; a simple Scandinavian aesthetic for the interior design. The style is called japandi— basically, east-meets-west— and works well as “both Japanese and Scandinavian design aesthetics are focused on simplicity, natural elements, comfort and sustainability,” interior designer Shanty Wijaya tells *House & Garden*.

Food-wise, Nishiki styles itself on an izakaya— a Japanese pub— and so is a not-your-typical gastropub (for Edinburgh, anyway), serving Japanese small plates, sake and whisky. In fact, the “i” in izakaya means “to stay”, while “sakaya” is a sake shop— this is one of Scotland's first bars dedicated to sake.

Sitting at one of the communal tables one Monday evening, *Bite* contributor Bron Eley and I were keen to get stuck in. Nishiki, after all, is the new offering from chef Mark Wang, who also owns fine-dining restaurant Yamato.

The lunch and dinner menu (served between 12pm and 2pm, then again between 5pm and 9pm) includes Miso Soup and Edamame, both personal favourites, and Chicken Gyoza. I was pleased to see there's also a sushi menu— chef Wang prides himself on his nigiri and sashimi— noodles and rice

(the eel rice caught my eye), plus beef and seafood options. Both Bron and I agreed the Takiniku Beef Skewers— a type of Japanese barbeque— were particularly appetising.

Even then, the menu isn't limited to tapas and so makes it an interesting concept. Nishiki opens at 9am and also serves breakfast, something I'd be keen to try on another visit. There's Avocado Toast with nori (dried seaweed), Shokupan French Toast (Japanese milk bread) and a Full Breakfast with grilled fish, miso soup, rice and pickles.

And, to mix it up again, Nishiki also serves afternoon tea (think, for example, Japanese teas, matcha soft serve and pastries).

Essentially, this is an unusual but welcome addition to the Edinburgh scene, low on crockery (in a good way) but big on quality and flavour, with a warm welcome from staff thrown in. We'll certainly be back. (Kirsty Wilkins)

Nishiki —

151-155 Morrison Street, Edinburgh EH3 8AG
Opening hours: Friday to Monday: 9am-9pm



Japanese small plates

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Review: **Mandorle**

Treats inspired by Italy, Crafted in Scotland, Loved by All

Mandorle is Italian for almonds. It's also the ingredient that inspired John Fairgrieve to start baking Italian cakes in his Scottish kitchen.

Almonds are virtually synonymous with Sicily—naturally perfumed, sweet, and a staple in 'pasticceria'. In the UK, we've come a long way from pastel sugared almonds tucked into wedding favours.

Today's market craves sophistication, and John Fairgrieve's pasticceria-style cakes deliver just that.

On his website, John celebrates Sicily as the undisputed home of pasta di mandorla, the almond paste that forms the base of his Fior di Mandorla—al limone:

"As you bite into the firm exterior, you can feel the warmth of the South and soft, cake-like texture of the whole egg in the dough. The lemon is not overpowering and gives a light freshness with a real hint of Sicily, which gives way to a rich almond finish."

Crafted with just three ingredients—almonds, sugar, and eggs—plus natural flavourings and no nasties, these handmade bites are gluten- and dairy-free. The result? A delicate, fragrant treat filled with squidgy almond paste. Perfect as a petit four or light treat.

The range includes:

- **Gavi**—orange-scented and inspired by the town of Gavi in the Piemonte region, these pair beautifully with caffè crema or dessert wine.
- **Nuvole**—meaning light clouds in Italian, and describing the light, airy mouth sensations where almond meets luxurious pieces of apricot in these delicate bites.

- **Cuori al Ciliegia**—based on a recipe from the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, at the heart of these cakes lies a piece of ruby-red Marasca cherry; a cherry bakewell with a difference!

- **Ricciarelli**—a thin, crisp exterior gives way to a light, airy texture releasing orange blossom fragrance. This is a world famous delicacy from Siena in Toscana, with centuries old tradition and history.

John's passionate mission is:

"To elevate everyday indulgence through handmade, dairy-free and gluten-free cakes that blend Italian tradition with Scottish creativity—offering something truly unique in both flavour and form."

These sweet specialities are ideal for festive pantries and year-round indulgence. Available online and at select markets, including Linlithgow Artisan Market on the first Saturday of the month. (Sharon Wilson)

Mandorle —
biscotti@mandorle.co.uk | M 07880 780059



Review: **Henrock**

Scottish chef Mark McCabe brings Scandi-Asian Flair to the Lake District

Fascinating as it is to watch Scottish chef Mark McCabe creating his intricate dishes on television, and to imagine them as you read through his various menus as head chef at Henrock by Simon Rogan in the Lake District, it's quite a different kettle of fish to taste them. I recently had this pleasure and am still reeling at the memory of what I savoured.

Chef Mark—who was born in Dundee, grew up in Tannadice and studied English and Music at Aberdeen University—has produced a ten-course menu (including amuse-bouches and petits fours) at his restaurant within the luxury Linthwaite House Hotel with stunning views over Lake Windermere.

Three of the dishes are inspired by influential Scottish figures, as seen on the BBC's *Great British Menu* competition, which got him through to the show's 20th anniversary banquet. His showcase *Study in Scarlet*, presented here with a flourish in a miniature writing desk, is an ode to Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel. Crispy potato layers replicated the pages of the book, covered in a leather-effect beetroot

gel and filled with salt-baked beetroot with a side of smoked blackberry sauce. With its gold-leaf silhouette of Sherlock, it was an exuberant example of how ordinary vegetables can be elevated to something deeply delicious and gorgeous to look at.

But this gifted musician-chef created symphonic unity throughout the meal with his masterful orchestration of the other dishes. Thick slices of Lion's Mane on a set mushroom custard topped with kombu relish and a smoked dashi were unctuous and slightly bitter, a crispy courgette flower adding texture. I loved this dish for its complexity and the sophistication of its humble ingredients. Another assured dish of Cured Cornish Monkfish with a sauce of lovage and turnip katsuobushi delivered a smoky kick. And an amazing three-part creation of Caythorne Hall Farm lop-eared Pork Slices with black garlic sauce, grilled greens with umeboshi—salted Japanese plums—on one plate, a gorgeously aromatic Cotechino Pork Sausage with white garlic cream on another, and a cool green garden salad with a disc of white beetroot gel to complete the trio was an absolute joy to experience. The lip-smacking Spent Broth with autumn vegetables that accompanied a wholemeal milk loaf and house-made marmite and aged beef tart was from a Polish recipe brought by the sous-chef.

Locally grown and foraged plants, and locally sourced ingredients prepared using ancient preservation techniques like fermentation, are clearly Chef Mark's forte. His is a sort of Scandi-Asian fusion cuisine that I found fascinating.

"I like cooking what's around me," he told me. In fact, he co-owned the Michelin Green Star The Ethicurean in Bristol, which focused on sustainability, for several years before closing it in 2023, which is when he was headhunted by Paul Burgalieres, executive chef of Simon Rogan's Three Michelin Star L'Enclume in Cumbria to head up Henrock as his style chimed with chef Rogan's. Although he came to cooking relatively late at age 23, 38-year-old chef Mark's



Head Chef Mark McCabe

Australian mother owned Raffles bistro in Dundee, and he told me food was important when he was growing up. "Mum was making hummus before it became a thing here, and sweet cicely and chanterelles were the first things she taught me to forage." He would also watch Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's *River Cottage*, appreciating his farm-to-fork, cooking-from-scratch ethos.

"Asian cuisine is much more rooted in preservation techniques but we make our own miso using British peas, koji using British barley rather than Japanese rice, and miso using the tomato pulp left over from our tomato water." Most of the vegetables are supplied by Our Farm at Cartmel, close to l'Enclume, though chef Mark has begun growing ingredients to his own specification in a small kitchen garden at the hotel. "It's an experimental space we took on last year," he explained. "We're growing four different types of radish with a range of spice levels, different kales, peas and beans and a lot of other different small-scale plants."

"One of my chefs has got into making koji and miso. He'll come in with a spoonful of something radical - leek tops, onion tops, fermented, dried, barbecued - making delicious flavours from vegetables we've grown up with all our lives. It's just amazing and very exciting."

Having a brigade of eight plus two apprentices means he has more time for R&D. He's currently developing a sweetcorn dish where the plant is stripped down to its parts to "ramp up the sweetcorn-ness and maximise one ingredient before it's gone for the season".

When I asked which Scottish restaurants he admired, I wasn't surprised when he answered

with Glasgow's Fallachan Kitchen. "I love meals that are a bit different— a real snapshot of then and there in that chef. I love Chef Craig Grozier's cooking. Precision and technique are there, but it's also really imaginative and very special."

Would he like a Michelin Star for Henrock?
"Of course I'd like one from a personal point of view and for Simon and for Henrock. But I also want a restaurant that's thriving and busy."

And would he like to return to Scotland at some point in the future? "I'd really like to open my own place in Scotland. I'm here to do a good job for Simon, but I feel the pull back to the land that has more connection to me."



Meantime, it's back to the Pass and his GBM signature Curiously Herbal—a cool, not too sweet herbal meringue, sorrel sorbet and frozen yogurt inspired by the Scots botanical illustrator Elizabeth Blackwell, followed by An Ode to Mould, inspired by Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin. This was a creamy salty-sweet koji-infused rice

pudding with miso caramel served in a mock petri dish, and an amakaze ice-cream with quince and sake compote.

The sheer effort and imagination required to create such a challenging complexity of flavours was apparent in every dish, and certainly ended the meal on a high note. (Cate Devine)

Cate Devine is an award-winning food journalist.

Henrock by Simon Rogan - Lithwaite House Hotel, Crook Ln, Bowness-on-Windermere, Windermere LA23 3JA Open Wednesday-Sunday for dinner and Sunday lunch.

Review: Haute Dolci

Must-visit Edinburgh dessert restaurant

You know what they say: life's too short... to not indulge in a sweet treat or two. Or six, in my case. Don't wait for a special occasion to savour the sweet burst of chocolate-covered strawberries or the crunch of ice-cream drenched honeycomb – just a few of the treats that await at the dessert haven Haute Dolci.

Perched on high at the top of the St James Quarter in Edinburgh, this must-visit eatery gives elegant diner vibes: white-washed fittings with a cosy, fun undertone. Greeted with smiles and given the prime seat by the floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Edinburgh's thoroughfare, my friend Tori and I tuck into the decadent menu. What a shame we aren't here for brunch, since the front half of the menu instantly intrigues me. But what better way to finish the evening than with a smorgasbord of deliciousness.

Having just come from dinner, the S'mores Chocolate Shooters become my version of a palate cleanser. Perfectly smooth liquid chocolate topped with a crispy-roasted marshmallow? These are the only kinds of shots I ever want to do.

Read about Italian almond cakes, crafted in Scotland on page 11.

Some staples are absolutely necessary: Chocolat et Strawberries (strawberries drizzled in chocolate) and one of their signature Belgian Hot Chocolates, for instance. But we're here to experience what makes Haute Dolci's menu unique and alluring. The Honeycomb Pull Me immediately draws my eye—or should that be called a 'stacked tower of happiness'.. I'm

not sure which part is my favourite: the chocolate sponge, the ganache, the gelato, or the honeycomb. Even the action of pulling the wrapping up to reveal the tower of goodness and watching it ooze down onto the plate mesmerizes me.

Tori's appetite draws her to the sundae section of the menu and I can't fault her choice: the Ferrero Special. I never say no to a Ferrero Rocher, but Haute Dolci ups the expectations—gelato, cone pieces, Nutella, and roasted hazelnuts can have that effect.



The mocktail menu feels like the perfect way to round out our indulgence. Sipping on my Mango Tropique, the lovely server brings us some extra chocolate-covered strawberries on the house and you know what they also say... never look a gift horse in the mouth. (Bronwyn Eley)

Haute Dolci —
St James Cres, Edinburgh EH1 3AD
0131 573 7606 | www.hautedolci.co.uk
Open Monday to Sunday 10am-11pm

Seasonal dining in Marchmont

As we come to the end of the year, I've started writing my bucket list of food places to try by 2026.

The first restaurant I tick off is Nàdair (nature in Gaelic), a contemporary neighbourhood spot in the heart of Marchmont. Selected as one of Condé Nast Traveller's UK Top New Restaurants 2024, it offers creative cooking that celebrates local Scottish produce and foraged ingredients.

The interior is warm and minimalist—white tiles line the walls and a few well-spaced tables fill the floor.

We arrive in the evening to try their set dinner menu (£65 for five courses), and since it's Friday night, we can't begin without a cocktail. We opt for their Damson Martini, made with house vermouth and damson gin—just the right balance of booze, herbs and citrus to kickstart the weekend.



We're served warm Focaccia accompanied by a lightly sweet, buttery mousse—the kind of comforting start that instantly creates a sense of cosiness—with Rump Cap Tartare topped with lovage petals and a delicate warm broth on the side.

The first entrée features Crab, baby potatoes and sea truffle weed, all linked together by a Hong Kong-inspired XO sauce, with mini crumpets on the side. Next comes my favourite dish of the evening—Mushrooms and Barley brought together by a roasted yeast sauce. Autumn in a bite.

A rosé Crémant helps us wash down the courses and prepare for the main event. The Venison Tenderloin arrives hidden beneath nasturtium leaves, served with pumpkin—both roasted and puréed—and blaeberrries (European wild blueberries).

Even though we're feeling rather full by now, we can't resist the Cheese course (£6.50 supplement). We then dive into a very Scottish and comforting Cloutie Dumpling, topped with thin slices of Isle of

Mull cheddar and a drizzle of truffle honey. The combination creates a creamy, sweet-salty sensation that delights the palate.

We conclude our experience with a light yet inventive dessert celebrating Blackcurrant Three Ways—compote, granita, and an oil made from the leaves for a subtle herbal note—all finished with baked yoghurt and thin oat biscuits.

Overall, the menu offers good value for money, matched by attentive and friendly service.

Chef couple Alan Keery and Sarah Baldry have created something special at Nàdair—a celebration of local produce, creativity and warmth, all wrapped up in a refined yet relaxed dining experience. (Eleanora Vanello)

Nàdair — 15 Roseneath Street, Marchmont, Edinburgh, EH9 1JH - 0131 6292322
Opening hours: Thursday, 6pm-9.15pm, Friday 5.30pm-9.15pm, Saturday & Sunday noon-2pm & 5.30-9.15pm

Review:

Wahaca Edinburgh

Winter Mexican feast & Tequila Tasting

Thomasina Miers was ahead of the street food curve. After winning *MasterChef* in 2005, she co-founded Wahaca and authored *Mexican Food Made Simple* (2011). A self-described “cook not a chef,” Miers introduced UK diners to the vibrant textures, sounds, and colours of Mexican markets—far beyond the refried beans and tequila slammers of ‘Tex Mex’ lore. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and soon she’d become a culinary leader.

Wahaca has endured perhaps due to its canteen-style dining and deep commitment to sustainability. Mexican cuisine is peasant food at heart and rooted in resourcefulness—nothing wasted, everything celebrated. In 2016, Wahaca became the UK’s first carbon-neutral restaurant, and today its menu is 45% vegetarian.

Mr Bite and I visit in October to explore the newly launched Winter Menu and to try the Tequila Tasting experience.

We opt for tacos—served in twos, perfect for sharing. Chicken & Avocado, Beef Gringo, and Sweet Potato & Feta arrive swiftly, each colourful and satisfying. But the standout is a Butterbean Dip with confit garlic and chorizo sobrasada. The spreadable, soft spicy meat plays beautifully against creamy beans and sweet garlic slices; we scoop the dip hungrily onto Wahaca’s signature bruise-hued, crunchy tortilla chips.

Mr Bite enjoys a flight of three tequilas. ‘Blanco’ is lively and served with a garnish of pink grapefruit, ‘Reposado’ comes with orange and Mr Bite’s favourite ‘Anejo’ is served with a dust of tajin (a dry seasoning of chili peppers, dehydrated lime juice, and sea salt) garnished with pineapple. The flight is fun, theatrical and good value.

An absolute showstopper arrives in the form of Chocolate Mole Cake with blanco-spiked cream. The cake is so rich, smoky and squidgy that one portion is plenty for two. The cream is genius and cuts through the richness beautifully. We should stop there but can’t resist ordering a Roast Ancho Mushroom Burrito to take home for lunch the following day.

Wahaca’s not just for feasting. It’s a great spot for coffee, churros, or a vegetable smoothie—like the Vampiro (carrot, beetroot, ginger). You can eat and drink your fill affordably and ethically, and not a slammer in sight. (Sharon Wilson)

Wahaca Edinburgh —

16 St Andrew Street, EH2 2AU -

0131 202 68500 Open daily: 11:45am–10pm



Blood Orange Margarita

Chocolate Mole Cake



Tequila Experience



Winter Menu - Guajilla Prawns



Review: Social by Matto

Mediterranean small plates in Edinburgh inspired by pintxos and cicchetti

San Sebastián in Spain's Basque Country is famous for its stunning beach, elegant Belle Époque architecture, and perhaps most significantly, its world-class culinary scene. A global food hub, it is renowned for innovative chefs and its distinctive pintxos... mere mouthfuls of artfully crafted deliciousness, so tiny they need nothing more than a toothpick to hold them together. And three or four city centre streets in the Parte Vieja are host to around seventy to eighty traditional pintxos bars, windows crammed with tray upon tray of gastronomic temptation and each distinct eatery, drawing you in as you meander, ready for a glass of something aromatic and a nibble before dinner.

L'ora dell'aperitivo (think madrigals and church bells) especially in Venice, brings that same sense of wanton anticipation... elegant bars and city folk, a fine goblet of maybe Arneis,



white, rare and rich or an amaro, a negroni sbagliato.. whatever.. all matched with the tasty, silky morsels of light-peppered meats, earthy olives, delicate squares of pizzette and so much more...that are traditional cicchetti.

Social by Matto, Matto Pizza's latest venture in Edinburgh's West End evokes these other food worlds...sunshine, abundance, style and wellbeing.

On the occasion of its showcase night, we paused at an alluring window display of good things to eat before warm greetings, and a long counter lined with bubbling flutes of fizz welcomed us in. We soon found our form as chefs busily dipped and flipped, layered and sliced; servers offered drinks from the extensive drinks menu and set out platter after platter of "small plates" on the counters that surrounded an open cooking space. More generous and substantial than the small mouthfuls of those warm, distant climes, these offerings take small plates in a different direction and be wary if you plan another course to follow.

The menu is varied and extensive and from a wider selection than could be managed, we feasted on Padròn Peppers with ricotta, pink peppercorns and olive oil; Beetroot Tartare, basil ricotta and micro greens; Whipped Feta, cherry tomato confit and parsley; Tomatoes, red onion, balsamic glaze and buffalo mozzarella; all on lightly toasted bread.

The mini board of semi-dried tomatoes, goats cheese, pecorino, salami, chorizo and pugliese taralli was a welcome contrast to the soft white cheeses on display, though the salami a little too thinly sliced and the chorizo somewhat a surprise.



Venetian Cicchetti



The stars of the show were undoubtedly the Fried Nduja Meatballs and the Zucchini Fritti and Spicy Squid Bites served in the crispiest and lightest batter I've had outside Rome; the Panuozzo, or sexy sandwich was seductive... a soft and light baked pizza dough folded over mortadella, stracciatella, pistachio crunch with chilli oil; or over salami Napoli, buffalo mozzarella, roasted red peppers, basil and toasted pine nuts. We opted however, for large slices of the Pizza for which Matto is deservedly held in high regard. Our Pizza al Bianco, always a favourite of mine was mushroom, taleggio, garlic and red chili based with the addition of chilli oil... "fiamma" indeed and delicious.

Other temptations included Loaded Crisps paired with prosciutto or pecorino; a White Truffle Shuffle Pizzetta with ham hock, taleggio and garlic mushrooms; and if you are still able, a Pistachio Affogato to finish... espresso and amaretto elevated to another level by a pistachio crumble and sauce. All served by a friendly, helpful team.

The drinks list is extensive with a good choice of cocktails, gins and digestivi as well as well-considered wine classics. My choice was a rich, hearty glass of Salento Syrah and my plus one was delighted to find a Crodino spritz available. (Anne Pia)

Anne Pia is an award-winning author of food and culture books.



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Book Review: **Gloagburn** **Recipes from a Scottish Farm**

By Alison Niven



There are no shortage of recipes out there—our social feeds are full of them on a daily basis, from every cuisine and culture imaginable. New cookery books pop up at what feels like a relentless pace at times. It can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Through this column, we try to spotlight some books closer to home, produced by cooks and writers living and working in Scotland. To show the talent we have right here and to offer support.

This month's book is a perfect example of that and it was genuinely exciting to get my hands on a copy.

If you've been to Gloagburn, you'll know why. Walk in the door and you're greeted with a bright and enticing food hall, packed with the most gorgeous array of food and drink from small suppliers and their own farm and homemade products in the deli and butchery counters. For food lovers, it's an absolute dream (as is the lovely gift shop alongside). And then there's the restaurant. Always bustling, always busy. Something for everyone here, whether that be a tasty breakfast, a light bite for lunch (don't miss the twice-baked Isle of Mull cheddar soufflé—more on that later) or tea and homemade cake in the afternoon. Or, for something different, there are the famous Steak Nights—just six per year—where guests can tuck into Gloagburn-reared steak, a choice of puddings or cheese, rounded off with tea, coffee and fudge (oh, yes please).

You feel at home here and can tell that this is more than just a shop or café. It's a family farming business that goes back generations.

So it's perhaps no surprise that Alison Niven, owner, was motivated to write a book that told the story of the farm and share some of those (now not so secret) popular recipes from the café such as sausage rolls, Orkney Fudge cheesecake, fruit scones and, yes, that soufflé. Many of the recipes have been passed down through the family over decades.

But whether you're already a fan of Gloagburn, or are new to their world, this a book that's bound to take a special place in your kitchen. As Alison explains in her introduction, she's all about homemade, seasonal, traditional food, made from scratch, to be enjoyed with others around the table.

There's so much to enjoy in the pages. We all know that farmers need a good breakfast to set them up for the day, so the book starts with tasty morning fare including Pecan and Cranberry Granola, Smoked Haddock Kedgeree and Herb and Potato Pancakes with Smoked Salmon.

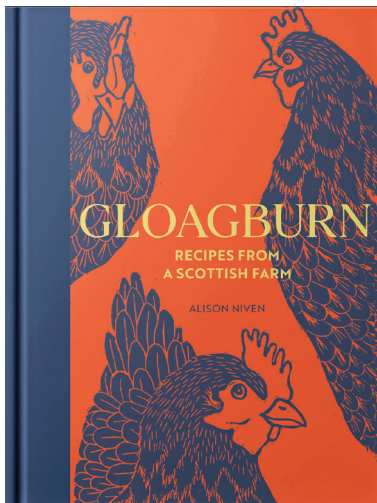
For those of you who grew up with traditional Scottish baking, you'll love the Tea-Time Treats chapter, with everything from empire biscuits and pancakes to tray bakes and girdle scones.

There's also a wonderful section that tells the story of their very own Gloagburn Beef, and the care that goes into producing it, with comforting recipes such as Beef and Stout Stew and Steak Sandwich with Chimichurri Sauce.

Alison has somewhat reluctantly, she tells me, been thrown into the spotlight with the book, in demand at signings and events. But she is rightly very proud of what she's written. It's a tribute to her family farming heritage, to everyone who works to make Gloagburn so special and, of course, all who shop, eat and buy local. (Fiona Richmond)

Fiona Richmond is Head of Regional Food for Scotland Food & Drink

Published by Kitchen Press, available from Gloagburn at www.gloagburn.co.uk and all good bookshops. Follow on IG @gloagburn



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Review: **Eating and Waiting to Eat**

Edinburgh food podcast born in a bakery queue

A lot can happen while you're queuing for cardamom buns at Lannan. In that eternity, one can make a friend and decide to launch an Edinburgh food podcast.

That's exactly how Kevin Rivers and I met. Due to a shared love of food, and a slew of other common circumstances, chief among them our 'Americans living in Edinburgh' status, we quickly became a two man supper club. After that fateful morning at Lannan, we regularly shared espressos, katsu curries, and martinis. When we weren't eating together, we were just waiting to eat.

During one particularly wine-fuelled dinner, we joked about starting a podcast as an excuse to get to know the folks behind the Edinburgh restaurants, bars, and coffee shops we loved. That joke escalated into a brainstorm. What if we actually did it?

A few months, some research (i.e. googling), some market testing (i.e. asking friends), and many espressos later, *Eating and Waiting to Eat* was baked.

The final show is remarkably similar to our original intention: we chat with the

chefs and restaurateurs that make our adoptive home world-class for food and drink. We also highlight the realities of operating a restaurant. We want to salute the hospitality industry, while also acknowledging the headwinds it's currently facing.



Every place spotlighted on the podcast—Mirin, Sabzi, Hey Palu, Mootz, The Palmerston, etc.—are places we geek out about. We wanted listeners to know how a chef like Sharif, from Mirin, learned to cook largely from trial, error, and YouTube and how Chris and Andy from Mootz settled on, and make fresh, the schiacciata bread that is their restaurant's signature. The inherent communal nature of food is important to us and we want the podcast to be a means to enhance the dining experience in Edinburgh, while also building a fellowship of fellow food lovers.

The podcast's reception has been humbling; as is the fact that more people than our wives are tuning in. We have big ambitions for the show, there's a long list of chefs we want to interview, and for an upcoming supper club (naturally at the restaurants the podcast features). The food scene in this city of ours is special and it deserves to be celebrated. Sláinte. (Carlos Miranda)

Available on Apple, Spotify and all podcast platforms. @eatingandwaitingtoeat



Kevin Rivers & Carlos Miranda

Avery is a Michelin-starred restaurant in Stockbridge, Edinburgh, celebrated for its bold, creative tasting menus that fuse Asia-influenced Californian cuisine with the best of Scottish produce. It's a singular dining experience—refined, intimate, and quietly theatrical.

Chef Rodney Wages relocated his acclaimed San Francisco restaurant to Edinburgh after falling hard for the city. "I started in London and worked my way up the country," he tells me. "When I got to Edinburgh, it just felt right." That sense of rightness permeates every detail of Avery, from the moody black-painted walls (formerly The Stockbridge Restaurant) to the precision of each plate.

There's a clear focus on the tasting menu here—and who doesn't love a tasting menu now and then, especially when it's paired with Krug Champagne? On the night I visited, the bubbles flowed and the surprises kept coming.

A week later, what lingers is the memory of a Cumbrae oyster, served with fermented pineapple and chilli. Sweet, hot, briny—an early sign of Wages' gastronomic wizardry. It arrives in a large, ceramic bowl with wavy edges evoking the sea and setting the tone for the sensory theatre ahead. At Avery, even the cutlery plays a role in the performance.

Another standout: Sweet Potato Pancakes with maple and caviar. High-end sweet-and-salty bliss. A dish that shouldn't work but absolutely does.

Wages' cooking is a masterclass in imaginative composition. Think ingredients that include venison, miso, chocolate, grapefruit, wild berries, eel, beetroot, bluefin tuna. Sometimes the pairings are intuitive; other times, they're puzzles you're happy to solve. The only chef I can compare him to is the late, much-missed Paul Kitching—another culinary poet who made Edinburgh his canvas.

When Wages personally delivers a plate of Sika deer to our table, I ask him where his ideas begin. "They're all flavour and produce driven," he says. That ethos shows. No dish repeats. No course feels safe. This is Michelin-starred dining in Edinburgh that's alive with risk and reward.

With neighbours like Eòrna and Skua, Stockbridge is fast becoming a destination for serious food lovers. But Avery brings something different: a kind of quiet audacity. We're lucky to have Rodney Wages in the mix.

And Krug? Like Wages, it celebrates individuality. Each base wine is vinified separately in small oak barrels, its character preserved before being composed—like a symphony—into the final cuvée. Over 120 wines from more than a decade of harvests go into each bottle of Krug Grande Cuvée. It's layered, expressive, and never the same twice. No wonder it felt so at home alongside those Sweet Potato Pancakes. (Sharon Wilson)

Avery — 54 St Stephen Street, Stockbridge, Edinburgh, EH3 5AL • +44 131 563 4470
Opening Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 5–9pm.
Closed Sunday and Monday.



Chef Rodney Wages

Review: Sear's Pizza

From New York to Marchmont

There's nothing I love more than a hole in the wall. A cute, stop-in kind of place where locals converge, even on a Wednesday night. Students claim it their local haunt, it becomes the date-night go-to, and friends find themselves experiencing a 'night out' where the only hangover is a carb or cheese one. The nostalgic throwback tunes cross generations and you find yourself wondering: is the smile on your face because of the song, the place or the pizza? At this new 'slice-spot', it was all three.

We're all familiar with the New York-style pizza slice – and there's something about a slice the size of your face that appeals to pizza-lovers everywhere. And thanks to Sear's Pizza, pizza by the slice has made its way to leafy streets of Marchmont in Edinburgh.



It almost feels like a set, or something ancient that's been there since the dawn of Edinburgh. With its worn and charming façade, its flickering neon sign, and its 'old school' font, Sear's Pizza feels like an Edinburgh institution. And from the energy I witness when I visit, it's definitely become a pillar of Marchmont life.

My friend and I can attest that this makes for the perfect friend date-night. Tucked up in the store-front booth, we settle in for our feast. It's hard to narrow down our choices, which is how we end up with six different slices (£2 each) before us. Munching on a bit of each in turn, sipping our sodas, and enjoying the array of tunes, we quickly decide this is one of our favourite pizza spots in the city.

From a classic Pepperoni to a surprisingly moreish and exquisitely-flavoured aubergine variety, we are spoiled. Truth be told, it's not the pizza that will bring us back—well, not just the pizza. It is the whole package—a slice, a tune, a laugh, a casual Wednesday night turns into one of our favourite friend outings in a long time. (Bronwyn Eley)

**Sear's Pizza — 27A Marchmont Rd,
Edinburgh EH9 1HY 0131 563 9979
Open Wednesday to Sunday 12-9pm.
Closed Monday and Tuesday.**



The Frugal Foodie

New Town Michelin-recommended
dining at a steal at Noto

Vinette is the latest restaurant to be opened by chef Stuart Ralston's Aizle Hospitality Group: a Parisian-style restaurant with a speakeasy cocktail bar in the basement. Following the closure of Aizle, the group also includes Michelin-starred Lyla, Italian restaurant Tipó, and Asian-inspired eatery Noto—each with their own unique charm.

Despite falling into the 'high-end' category in terms of cost, each venue offers a lower-priced lunch menu making them accessible to most budgets, and I would argue the best value is Noto's £30 lunch offering.

We visit the Thistle Street venue on a bright, sunny Sunday lunchtime in summer, and the place is buzzing. The minimalist, Japanese-inspired décor gives a calming ambience but there is also a relaxed, informal vibe. This is perhaps because the place is inspired by Stuart's time living & working in New York. And if you were wondering about the name, it's a tribute to his NYC room-mate Bob Noto, obviously.

The menu is made up of a bread course, 5 small plates designed to be shared, and two desserts. The 'small' plates are substantial. Even the bread course wows – Bing Bread with sour cream butter, whipped tofu and chilli, and this is followed by Beef Tartare on crumpets, Fried Shitake Doughnuts and Sashimi. We add an extra course as we can't resist the Sesame Prawn Toast on the main menu (which is excellent) but it really isn't needed and is far too much food (when will we learn?)

The next round is an unexpectedly delicious Tomato and Apricot Salad with black bean chilli dressing, and Pork Belly Bo Saam, which is served



Korean BBQ style with rice, pickles, sauces and lettuce leaves to wrap it all in. We are rather stuffed by this point, but the desserts are some of the best I've eaten and thankfully fairly light: Chocolate Mouse with miso caramel, hazelnut and meringue; and Scottish Strawberries with yogurt, parfait and sorrel.

Despite the low price, every dish is beautifully prepared and presented, with genuine creativity, and we feel we've had a more substantial meal than some full-priced tasting menus provide. We pushed the budget a bit with two cocktails at £13 each, both of which were exceptional: Mocassin Snake with Doorley's white rum, Port of Leith Manzilla sherry, banana and shiso soda; and El Capitan with El Gorbemador Pisco, Bitter Truth apricot liqueur, Discarded cascara vermouth, maraschino and lemongrass.

For a taste of Edinburgh's trendy fine dining scene without the high price tag, I unreservedly recommend a lunchtime visit to Noto, just make sure you arrive hungry. (Diana Turner)

Noto — 47a Thistle Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1DY
T: 01312418518 I: @notoedinburgh
W: www.notoedinburgh.co.uk

The People Behind the Pour:

Edinburgh's Wine Personalities

From refined tasting menus to relaxed bar service, Edinburgh's wine scene is as diverse as its venues. Wine educator and communicator **Diana Thompson of Wine Events Scotland** speaks to three hospitality professionals inviting them to share their approach to creating the perfect wine list—each with their own philosophy, palate, and personality.

Seoridh Fraser

General Manager & Beverage Director – Heron Restaurant

At Heron, Seoridh Fraser has built a wine list that is “easy to navigate but encourages people to try new things. The selection has evolved organically around Chef Sam Yorke’s cooking, designed to harmonise with the kitchen as much as to please both classicists and modernists alike.”

Seoridh highlights two personal favourites:

The **2017 Silvaner Glebkalk Erste Lage “Sultzfelder-Sonneberg”** by Luckert from Germany is, he says, “a masterclass in generosity and elegance,” offering tropical fruit, vibrant acidity, and a cleansing mineral finish.

His second choice, the **2022 Cannonau di Sardegna by Antonella Corda**, is a refined Sardinian red with bright cherry fruit, refreshing acidity, and gentle tannins.

He pairs the Silvaner with ‘Saint Brides in duck sauce, finished with white currant and lovage alongside beetroots and wild mushrooms,’ while the Cannonau shines with ‘loin of lamb in lamb jus with carrots, tonka bean, and green olives drizzled with fig leaf oil.’



Maria Chierchia

Manageress – Decanter Winery and Dinery

At Decanter Winery and Dinery, Maria Chierchia believes wine should be fun. “We don’t take ourselves too seriously,” she says. “We’re professionals, not pretentious, and we’re known for our humour as much as our wine list.”

Her list is “a playground for your palate - structured, stylish, and never boring,” featuring global classics and unexpected finds. Among her recommendations is **Majella Sparkling Shiraz** from Coonawarra, a bold, bottle-fermented wine full of dark fruits, spice, and complexity, “finished with a touch of vintage port which is what makes it extra special for me, impacts richness depth and complexity—try it and thank me later.”



Maria also champions **Flagstone Pinotage** from South Africa—hand-harvested, naturally fermented, and matured in oak - which she calls “rich, bold, balanced and outstanding,” perfect with venison or steak.

Niall Dewer & Colin Dunlop

Front of House & Bar Managers – Capital Theatres

At Edinburgh's Capital Theatres, the wine list is designed for ease and enjoyment. “Safe and approachable,” says Colin Dunlop, “but full of great options for any show night.”

Colin recommends the **Organic Mureda Tempranillo/Syrah**, “a vibrant red perfect for sharing before a performance,” and the **Château Routas Rosé**, a Provençal classic bursting with peach and watermelon.

His colleague Niall Dewer opts for the **Chilean Viognier**, “floral and aromatic with lychee and peach,” and the **Pinot Noir**, “nice and fruity—a light wine but bursting with flavours of cherries and raspberry with a touch of spice.”

Their pairing philosophy is theatrical: Dunlop recommends the bold Mureda as a preshow drink before a thought-provoking drama such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Meanwhile the Château Routas Rosé is a great pairing for *Scottish Ballet's Starstruck*.



Expert advice

“Drink what you enjoy! And if you're feeling adventurous, have a chat with the sommelier - there's always a hidden gem waiting to be found.”— Seoridh Fraser

For Maria, wine is ultimately about connection:

“to people, to place, to memory— maybe even a little dance.” She invites guests to join her for a tasting or simply drop in for a glass: *“Good wine and great chat are always guaranteed.”* — Maria Chierchia



“Don't be afraid to try something new— and preorder your interval drinks so you can enjoy a chat over a glass of something nice rather than spending the time queueing.”

— Niall Dewer & Colin Dunlop

Final Sip...

From **Heron's** sophistication to **Decanter's** playful spirit and **Capital Theatres'** easy charm, Edinburgh's wine professionals share one common belief: great wine is best enjoyed in good company— preferably with conversation, curiosity, and a touch of adventure.

(Diana Thompson)

Review:

Cairngorms

Savouring the park on a foodie weekend escape

Something is growing deep within the peaks and forests of the Cairngorms National Park. Traditionally famed for outdoor pursuits like skiing and hillwalking, the region is developing a reputation as a foodie destination, attracting visitors looking for exceptional dining and food & drink experiences that showcase the riches of this wild and rugged land.

The first stop on our road trip is Tomatin Whisky Distillery, a proudly Highland whisky, despite its Japanese ownership, though with characteristics similar to Speyside drams. Our 'Warehouse 6' tasting includes a guided tour through the distillery, where we learn about the use of a second fermentation to develop the fruity flavours of the whisky and the unique stills which are designed for maximum copper contact to ensure a lighter spirit. These tours can be a bit dull if you've done one before, but our guide is very entertaining, delivering funny anecdotes along with the facts.

We then move to a corner of one of the main warehouses for a very atmospheric tasting surrounded by the barrels. Our guide takes

us though the historical trends in whisky production, from the original new make spirit, through to whiskies aged in cognac, tawny port and bourbon casks, finishing with the latest trend of red wine aged single malts, sampling cask whiskies not available in the shop.

Despite the experience lasting 3 and a half hours, it doesn't drag and there is lots of engagement among the group, including the opportunity to draw the whisky from the barrel ourselves, and a chance to try other whiskies in the shop/bar afterwards. The drivers are presented with a lovely gift box with the tasters to take away.

That night we stay in Sweeney One, highly convenient and luxurious self-catering accommodation in the heart of Aviemore, with a lavish finish and ingenious design to provide everything needed for a short stay. We particularly appreciate the contact-free check in, so we were not tied to a particular time.

Family-owned restaurant Delaney's is just a short walk away at Sweeney Two. The bustling bistro offers a creative, modern and varied small plates menu, catering to different diets, and the friendly service characteristic of the region. The generous portions of food are beautifully presented and boast high quality and locally sourced ingredients, including Isle of Lewis Mussels, Loch Rannoch Smoked Meats and locally smoked sea trout. We enjoy Hoisin Marinated Bavette Steak with Asian Salad & Daikon, Isle of Lewis Mussels with Tomato & Nduja Sauce, Toasted Sourdough, and the special of Halibut in a Langoustine Bisque with Brown and White Crab Meat.



Scott Davies, Old Manse of Blair

Breakfast the next day is to the same high standard – we order a granola, a Continental Plate with cured meats, smoked sea trout, scottish cheeses, toasted sourdough, butter, jam and a pastry, and an Avocado Toast with crumbled crowdie, toasted sourdough, Pico de Gallo, and poached eggs.

Well fuelled, we head out for a walk around the stunning Loch Morlich (too windy for paddleboarding unfortunately) and then onto Kinrara gin distillery for a friendly and relaxed tour through their Artist Edition gins. The distinctive bottles feature beautiful designs of Cairngorms wildlife by a local artist and the gin itself is highly commemorated, including the World Gin Awards 2025 best signature botanical gin award for Caper, which features ginger leaf, rosemary and lemon verbena. The botanicals are very important here and many are locally foraged, including juniper, rose hips, rowan berries, heather and lemon thyme. As well as an in-depth tasting of the gins, the experience includes an exploration of different pairings to enhance the flavours of each gin.

Our next stay is at the Old Manse of Blair, a five-star boutique hotel and Michelin-recommended restaurant in a stunning rural setting. The owner Anne explains that they have an 'estate to plate' ethos, keeping everything as homemade and local as possible. The head chef is Scott Davies, formerly of The Three Chimneys on Skye, who has developed quite a following throughout his career and made the Old Manse of Blair a foodie destination in its own right.

And the food really is sensational. We start with a Duck Liver Parfait, Wasted Degrees Amber & Rye

Seeded Sourdough, and Heather Smoked & Oak Smoked Skye Sea Salt. Perfectly-cooked Isle of Skye Scallops next, with roe parfait, trout caviar, radish, apple and dashi butter sauce.

For main, tender North Sea Cod for me with a striking combination of courgette and basil puree, jalapeno fume, dill oil and dressed crab. He raves about the Dry Aged Aberdeen Angus Beef with confit short rib, wilted lettuce, aubergine & miso, and elderberry sauce. The desserts are light and seasonal: Heather Honey Cream with yogurt mousse, brambles and bee pollen for him, and Scottish Strawberries with elderflower panacotta, double milk ice cream and mint jelly for me; followed by after-dinner drinks by the roaring fire.

With a unique larder of its own, alongside excellent access to food from other Scottish regions and great places to stay, the Cairngorms really is a foodie heaven—and the scenery isn't half bad either. (Diana Turner)

To find out more about food and drink experiences in the Cairngorms, and discover all it has to offer please visit www.visitcairngorms.com





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Bite Christmas Quiz

1. In early 2025, McSweens announced plans to modify their haggis recipe so it could be exported to the US. What common haggis ingredient means it has been banned in the US since 1971?
● Suet ● Sheep lung ● Oats ● A spice mix containing nutmeg
2. Sticking with Scottish delicacies, the first black pudding championship was held this year in London. The winner came from which town, better known for its fish?
3. Gordal olives are a popular restaurant snack. What does 'gordal' mean in Spanish?
4. Concord, conference, and Bartlett are all varieties of what?
5. Dubai chocolate is everywhere, from truffles to chocolate bars to donuts. Name 3 ingredients that make something 'Dubai chocolate'.
6. One is a Bake Off favourite, the other divides opinion sharply: but what is the actual difference between frangipane and marzipan?
7. Lannan Bakery in Stockbridge is as famous for its queues as its baked goods, but what was it forced to deny earlier this year?
8. Following the success of its pop-up champagne bar last year, in 2025 Gregg's opened its first pub. Located in Newcastle and serving dishes like the steak bake mixed grill, what is the pub called?
9. Saffron is one of the most expensive ingredients in the world. What flower does it come from?
10. In possibly the greatest Christmas tradition of all, where in Europe would you eat 13 desserts on Christmas Eve?

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good Bite!

QUIZ By Rachel Edwards

1. Sheep lung. Traditionally making up 15% of a haggis, plans are to substitute lung with sheep heart. 2. Arbroath. Butcher DH Robertson won with a closely-guarded secret recipe dating to before the Second World War. 3. Fat one. Gordal olives are known for their size and plumpness, and considered the largest Spanish olive. 4. Pear, although it's unclear which variety the partridge nested in. 5. Chocolate - (usually milk), pistachio with tahini, and kadaiji (chopped filio paste). 6. Frangipane is a pasty cream which uses almond paste as a base. Marzipan is a confectionary made from almond paste. The main differences are in texture and how they are used: marzipan can be eaten as it is, while frangipane is used as an ingredient in pastries and tarts. 7. That it hired a bounce. The bakery said it had hired a 'queue warden' to manage the lines, not to act as security. 8. The Golden Flake. The menu also features yym-yum bread and butter pudding and sausage roll and mash. 9. The crocus. 10. Provence.

ANSWERS

What's in Season:

'Tis the Season of Elves, Angels, and Saints!

And once again the year has flown past in a blink of an eye and we're crashing into the festive season, New Year and Valentine's all in one issue. WiS is going to wander through the different food traditions from around the globe that cover the three winter months. So, strap in things may get bumpy!

DECEMBER –

We all have our own traditions for Christmas but sometimes it's interesting to ring in the changes. Last year I didn't do turkey, instead it was a venison Wellington on the day itself. In Japan it seems to be a modern tradition to have KFC thanks to a very successful marketing campaign!

As you'd expect from the Danes, herring is bound to make an appearance. Julesild is a herring pickled then spiced with cinnamon, cloves and, interestingly, sandalwood. It is best served with a wodge of rugbrød rye bread and a healthy dollop of remoulade.



Malva pudding from South Africa is a cake containing apricot jam. Normally reserved for special occasion but at Christmas it becomes more decadent with the addition of booze and while still hot, smothered in a sweetened buttercream, a different twist to our sticky toffee pudding.

JANUARY –

New Year, Epiphany, and Burns' Night, so much is going on in this month. For the Scots, it's Hogmanay with steak pie and black bun (fruit cake wrapped and baked in pastry), haggis and a wee dram for Rabbits' birthday.

Epiphany across the globe seems to involve all things sweet. France, as we all know, has the rich *galette des rois*; Spain and Mexico celebrate with a wreath-shaped *roscón de reyes*—a sweet bread filled with cream and decorated with candid fruits. What they all have in common is a hidden trinket, the finder is blessed with good luck in the coming year.

In Ukraine, the 7th January is the Orthodox Christmas eve. *Sviata Vecheria* is the traditional meal that consists of various dishes including, a sweet porridge, *Kutia*, that's made from wheat, borsch, and *Varenyky* boiled dumplings. These plump beauties can be savoury topped with sour cream, bacon bits and fried onions or sweet, filled with fruit, in particular cherry, and doused in butter, sour cream or fruit sauce. Who doesn't like a good dumpling!?

FEBRUARY –

The month of love. Chocolate features heavily for Valentine's Day, but I do like the idea the Australians have. They've combined Easter with their own style to their loved one's heart—hot cross buns and Biscoff spread, who knew this was a thing? *shrug*. In Switzerland they are more into their pisco sours than chocolate hearts. If savoury is the way to true love then Mexico serves up *Pollo Pibil*, which is roast chicken made with achiote paste, citrus, and spices. So however you celebrate this winter, I'm sure it will be filled with love, laughter, and good food!

— Lea Harris

aka @BakersBunny on Instagram



What Else is in my Basket



Goose, pheasant, rabbit, turkey, wild duck, venison, clams, cockle, hake, langoustines, lobster, mussels, oysters, razor clams, sea bass, sprats, wild salmon, winkles, beetroot, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celeriac, horseradish, Jerusalem artichoke, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, parsnips, salsify, swede, truffles, winter squash, apples, blood oranges, chestnuts, clementines, cranberries, dates, figs, forced rhubarb, pomegranates, satsumas, Seville oranges, tangerines, walnuts, *Bûche de Noël*, Christmas cake, Cumberland sauce, gingerbread, mincemeat, panforte, panettone, rum butter, Stollen, trifle.

Whisky Chat from Topsy Midgie



WHISKY BAR
OF THE YEAR

WHISKY GURU
OF THE YEAR

With Xmas around the corner, we are pleased to announce that our Christmas wish has come true. We have bought another bar in Campbeltown! Once known as the whisky capital of the world.

Campbeltown single malts are distilled in the Burgh of Campbeltown, on the Kintyre peninsula in Scotland. The town once had as many as 30 distilleries, perhaps the most famous being Springbank, and even now, the queue to buy this sought after nectar sometimes starts at 6am at the distillery doors with purchases limited and rigorously enforced.

Other notable distilleries in the area are Glen Scotia and Glengyle and with the "wee toon" set to have another two possibly three distilleries being built this once famous Whisky region looks set for a resurgence. Hence, Topsy Midgie Wee Toon should be a fabby addition to our Edinburgh Bar with our overall goal still standing at a Tippy in each Whisky region, then one in London.



As for Christmas and the colder months a wee dram is a comfort and a joy and those whiskies with rich sherry cask, oloroso finishes, like Pedro Ximenez are always to the fore this season.

In particular we recommend GlenAllachie PX finish, one of 367 bottles, this single cask GlenAllachie was selected by the distillery's famed Master Blender, Billy Walker. Fully matured in a PX sherry cask for over 12 years, GlenAllachie was bottled at a hefty cask strength of 62.6% and with sweet salted caramel, roasted nuts and heaps of spice from the higher abv, this a titan!



Campbeltown - Visit Scotland

If however, you fancy something a little more peaty, the latest edition from Ardnahoe will hit the spot; at cask strength, it's a fully ex-bourbon matured addition to Ardnahoe's core range. Ardnahoe might be one of the newest distilleries on Islay but their craft sings for such a young one; and at around the £50 an absolute bargain for a cask strength Islay dram.

Whatever whisky is in your glass this festive period, drink responsibly and Sláinte!

(Colin Hinds)

Topsy Midgie — Whisky & Gin Drinkery
67 St Leonards Hill, Edinburgh, EH8 9SB
www.tipsymidgie.com

Pre-chuckle plates above The Gilded Balloon

We dropped into The Gilded Saloon—a new-ish venture just a couple of months into its stride.

It's the brainchild of three creative forces, with Tomas Gormley (Cardinal and Skua) also bringing finesse to the kitchen. One co-owner also runs Paradise Palms next door—a dive bar in the best possible sense. Kelburn Parties made their name with the West Coast festival, and The Gilded Balloon downstairs needs no introduction. The famous comedy venue is celebrating its 40 year anniversary.

As for the Saloon itself? Still finding its footing. Is it a pub? A cocktail bar? A restaurant? Right now, it's a bit of all three. But its real draw is the location: perched above a comedy venue, tailor-made for a pre-show pint and a bite.

And honestly, I could see myself doing just that.

We visited for a pre-theatre girly lunch, which may not have been the best fit for the format—small plates, big flavours, but not quite a cohesive meal.

I started with the Oyster topped with blueberry and Scotch bonnet. A bold idea, but it didn't



land—the heat and fruit overwhelmed the oyster entirely. The Heritage Beets from Phantassie were much more successful: beautifully earthy, with fresh dill and a swipe of labneh.

The sourdough with Whipped Chicken Liver Pâté and a tangle of cornichons was spot on—rich, sharp, and perfectly judged.

Across the table, Eleonora went for the Mushroom and Guinness Pie with gravy—comfort food with a wink, and ideal pre-chuckle sustenance. Kerry, meanwhile, demolished a generous slice of Basque Cheesecake with a glossy, bountiful berry compote. I could tell just by looking—it slayed.

While a 10% service charge is added to your bill at The Gilded Saloon, drinks must be ordered and collected at the bar. Only food is delivered to your table by staff. This means the venue does not offer full table service—despite the charge—so expectations should be set accordingly. It's a late-night pub with a kitchen, not a restaurant, and the service model reflects that split.

Initial feelings about The Gilded Saloon were mixed but the food was good and I think I'll return. Top marks for using local producers. (Sharon Wilson)



Heritage Beets, Oyster, Pie

The Gilded Saloon — 45-47 Lothian Street Edinburgh EH1 1HB - Overlooking Bristo Square, next to Paradise Palms
Open Monday-Wednesday 4pm-1am.
Thursday 4pm-3am, Friday-Saturday noon-3am, Sunday noon-1am.
Kitchen hours and event times may vary—check their What's On page for updates.

Our Partners

Restaurants

Brasseries & Bistros

Bistro Du Vin — Inside Hotel Du Vin. French-inspired classics such as Moules marinière, Chateaubriand, Crème Brûlée, Scallops Lyonnaise, and much more; all served in a cosy, laidback bistro setting. Open for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner & Sunday brunch. Expert sommeliers have chosen the most quaffable wines from around the world to complement the great food. Enjoy an excellent range of whisky too in the 'whisky snug'. Outdoor terrace area. Simply kick back, relax, and enjoy! **11 Bristo Pl, EH1 1EZ - 0131 285 1479**

Dine — (above the Traverse Theatre), is a relaxed multi award brasserie-style dining and drinking venue in the heart of the city centre. The venue also features a smart cocktail and champagne lounge with classic and innovative drinks served with style. Executive Chef Stuart Muir, (formerly of Harvey Nichols, The Old Course Hotel, St.Andrews, and Michelin-starred), presents dining at its very best and is a passionate advocate of Scottish produce. There are à la carte and market menus every day. **Saltire Court (1st floor), 10 Cambridge St, Edinburgh EH1 2ED – 0131 218 1818 email restaurant@dine.scot - dineedinburgh.co.uk**

Dine Craiglockhart — nestled on the bank of the Union Canal, you will find this chic and polished fourth member of the Dine family of restaurants. Open daily from 8.30 am serving breakfasts, coffees, brunch and lunches, and evening meals. Be sure to check out the lunchtime and fixed menus serving Mon-Sat 12pm / 6pm; Sun 1pm – 6pm (roast included). **101B Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1AL 0131 229 2929 craiglockhart.scot**

Dine Murrayfield — is a neighbourhood sibling of Dine in the city centre. This restaurant is nestled by the Water of Leith within the vicinity of Murrayfield Stadium and is open every day for breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner. Menus are designed by Executive Chef and Award-Winning Chef Stuart

Muir and put Scottish produce firmly centre stage. Winner of 'Best Neighbourhood Restaurant 2021', the venue is smart, light and airy with a leafy outlook. **Dine Murrayfield Limited, 8 Murrayfield Place, Edinburgh, EH12 6AA - 0131 374 4800 - murrayfield.scot | restaurant@murrayfield.scot**

The Tollhouse — This restaurant boasts a spectacular setting and perched above the Water of Leith in the Canonmills neighbourhood. Relax and watch the river flow from the upper-level dining room or sip a sundowner of your choice and the heated outdoor terrace. Bookings are required. **50 Brandon Terrace, Edinburgh EH3 5BX - 0131 224 2424 - www.tollhouse.scot / restaurant@tollhouse.scot**

The Walnut — Located halfway down Leith Walk this bijou Bistro has a top-notch reputation for seasonal dishes cooked with flair and local produce. The restaurant is tastefully decorated with a warm, welcoming ambience. The menu changes regularly but the signature dessert 'The Walnut Whip' is a must-have permanent feature. The tram stop is MacDonald Road. Lunch 2 courses £30, 3 courses £34, Wed-Sat 12:30-2pm; Dinner 2 courses £34, 3 courses £38 with canapé and petit four. Tues -Sat 5:30-9pm. **9 Croall Pl, Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH7 4LT - 0131 281 1236**

French

L'escargot bleu — provenance, sourcing, and sustainability define the menu and cooking style at 'bleu', namely French classics with a Scottish twist. Patron Fred Berkmillier sources ingredients from small-scale traditional producers and suppliers from the length and breadth of Scotland and grows his own vegetables and herbs at Monkton Garden on the outskirts of Edinburgh. With wife Betty and daughter Mathilde, this family-run bistro offers a warm and friendly welcome and a regularly changing produce-driven menu. Fred has a clutch of awards, and his restaurant is certified by Pasture for Life, an organisation that promotes the restorative power and benefits of grazing animals on pasture. **56 Broughton Street – 0131 557 1600 – www.lescargotbleu.co.uk**

La P'tite Folie — Informal, bustling bistro with mixed clientele. Favourites include moules frites, steak frites, beef bourguignon, duck etc. Extensive wine list. Two course lunch £19.50 noon-3pm. Dinner à la carte 6-10pm. Closed Sundays & Mondays. Large groups catered for, set dinner available. **9 Randolph Place, Edinburgh — 0131 225 8678 — laptitefolie.co.uk**

Greek

From Kafeneion to STEKI — Traditional Greek taverna specializing in Cretan cuisine, serving small dishes-mezedakia (everything goes 'in the middle'). What makes Cretan cuisine different? Olive oil, legumes, cheeses, herbs, vegetables, homemade bread (not pitta bread), limited use of meat. That is the reason Cretan cuisine is one of the healthiest in the world. The location is in a leafy corner of Leith next to the water of Leith. Neighborhood vibe. Open Tues to Fri 10am-3pm lunch, 5-10pm dinner, Sat 12-3pm lunch, 5-10pm dinner, Sun 12-3pm lunch, 5-8pm dinner. Closed Monday. **52 Coburg Street, Leith, EH6 6HJ, 0.5 miles from Royal Yacht Britannia, 3 miles from Edinburgh city centre. 01313482919 - kafeneion.tosteki@gmail.com**

Indian

Celestia — A luxury Indian dining spot in Edinburgh's New Town, ideal for occasions, romantic evenings, or business meals. Chef's specials like Kerala CjHilli Garlic Prawns, Butter Chicken and Baby Lamb Vindalooshowcase refined Indian cuisine in an elegant setting. The central location adds to its appeal for upscale yet flexible dining. Celestia promises a sensory journey through India's rich gastronomic landscape. With a perfect rating on TripAdvisor (5*), it's a must-visit for lovers of fine Indian cuisine. Open daily 1-10pm (Fri-Sat till 10:30pm). **18 Eyre Place, EH3 5EP www.celestiarestaurant.co.uk**

Cilantro — Tucked away in Leith, Cilantro is a warm, family-run Indian restaurant perfect for casual dinners, relaxed date nights, affordable group gatherings or a spontaneous curry craving. Signature dishes offer comforting, authentic flavours. The welcoming atmosphere and BYOB policy with just £1.95 corkage

per person make it a great choice for Indian dining with plenty of vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. 4.9* rating on TripAdvisor and a loyal following. Open daily 4-10:30pm (Fri-Sat till 11pm).

4 Albert Place, www.cilantrorestaurant.co.uk

Japanese

Harajuku Kitchen — Edinburgh's most authentic Japanese restaurant. Awarded one AA Rosette for its outstanding cuisine and sushi which is always prepared with care, understanding and skill, using good quality ingredients. This light, bright and relaxed bistro specializes in small dishes, ideal for sharing, from classics such as Beef Tataki and Chicken Karaage to more unusual delicacies such as Salmon Nanban, Gomadare Salad and Takoyaki. They also offer a range of noodle and Japanese curry dishes and a wide variety of freshly made sushi, sashimi and maki – guaranteed to have you coming for more.

Open Mon-Fri 12-3pm, 5-10pm; Sat-Sun 12-11pm. Closed Tuesday. **10 Gillespie Place – 0131 281 0526 @Harajukukitchen harajukukitchen.co.uk**

Pizza

3 Blind Mice — Crispy, Romana-style pizzas, just off the Royal Mile. With creative side dishes, and a standout wine and cocktail list - all in a stylish, cosy, and welcoming setting. Open Mon-Wed 4-10pm, Thurs-Sun 12-10pm. **19 Blackfriars St, EH1 1NB**

Scottish

No. 35 at The Bonham Hotel — The restaurant is located inside an elegant townhouse hotel tucked away in a leafy, oasis close to the city's bustling west end. There is a European-inspired menu with a distinctively Scottish twist, and it uses the finest local seasonal ingredients. Dishes such as pork tenderloin and poached Scottish salmon are cooked with skill and care. A La Carte Dinner is available on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 6:30pm-9:30pm. The famous Boozy Snoozy lunch is not to be missed! Enjoy 3-courses from the Market Menu and half a bottle of wine for just £40 per person. Served Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 12:30pm-2:30pm. **35 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh, EH3 7RN - 0131 226 6050 or [email restaurant@thebonham.com](mailto:restaurant@thebonham.com)**

Bars

The Abbotsford — The city's finest 'island bar'. Est. 1902 specialising in Scottish real ales (8) and malt whiskies (100). Food served all day. Lunch & dinner in the restaurant 'Above'. **3-5 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PR — 0131 225 5276**
www.theabbotsford.com, or email enquiries@theabbotsford.com

The Bonnington in Leith — a cosy local neighbourhood pub open daily with food served throughout the day. Enjoy comfort classics made with good Scottish produce. Dive into dishes such as the Wagyu Burger, Bangers and Mash, Korean Fried Chicken Wings, Fish 'n' Chips and Haggis Bon Bons and HP sauce, (haggis from Findlay's of Portobello). As well as beers, wine and spirits there is also the largest Pisco selection in Scotland and a cocktail list curated by Peruvian owner Carlo Carozzi formerly of bars like The Voodoo Rooms and Dragonfly. Champions League and Rugby on the screens. **Open every day noon to midnight - 0131 554 5824.**

The Burrow — Tucked beneath 3 Blind Mice, is the trendy hideaway with inventive cocktails, an extensive whisky list, and an original Banksy. Perfect for date nights or after-work drinks. Open Thurs 4-11pm, Fri & Sat 4pm-midnight, Sunday 3-10pm. **19 Blackfriars Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1NB**

The Cumberland Bar — Spacious New Town local, lots of rooms and large beer garden. Eight real ales on tap. Plus a good wine list. Food all day Sat & Sun, Mon-Fri from 4pm. **1 Cumberland Street, Edinburgh EH3 6RT — 0131 558 3134 —**
www.cumberlandbar.co.uk or email enquiries@cumberlandbar.co.uk

The Guildford Arms — Edinburgh's finest real ale bar. Est. 1898 (10) real ale taps mainly Scottish, 13 keg beers/ciders, good wine and whisky lists. Food served all day in the Victorian bar or boutique 'Gallery' restaurant above. **1-5 West Register Street, Edinburgh 0131 556 4312**
guildfordarms.com, or email enquiries@guildfordarms.com

Ryrie's Bar — Lovingly restored iconic bar next to Haymarket Station Est.1868. Eight real ales on tap, upstairs lounge / dining and cocktails. Food served all day; pub classics, sharing bowls & plates. **Edinburgh EH12 5EY - 0131 337 0550 —**
www.ryriesbar.com

Teuchters Bar & Bunker — Tucked away on cobbled William Street is a hidden gem popular with locals. One of the most well-known rugby venues in the city with all international & Scottish Pro team games shown live on TV. The pub is centred around its extensive malt whisky selection with around 140 on display. There are around a dozen international & blended whiskies on offer and the famous 'hoop of destiny' for those who cannot decide or just want a bit of fun. Teuchters also has an impressive draught beer selection which is predominantly Scottish. There are 5 cask ales of which 2 are rotating guests whilst the keg selection of 18 includes 4 rotational taps. Bottled beers, a cracking wine list, gin, rum & soft drinks make up an eclectic mix of options for one & all. Bar open Sunday - Thursday 12pm-12am, Fri & Sat 12pm-1am. Food available Monday-Sunday 12-9.30pm.
26 William Street Edinburgh EH3 7NH — 0131 225 2973 —
www.teuchtersbar.co.uk

Teuchters Landing — bar, bothy & beer garden — Much-loved Scottish bar with an emphasis on Scottish food & drink. A traditional style freehouse in the shore area of Leith. The main bar is the former waiting room for the Leith to Aberdeen steamboat ferry which opens out onto an extensive beer garden & floating pontoon with an outside bar. This leads to 'the bothy', an indoor area to escape those odd summer showers. An extensive malt whisky selection, around 140, around a dozen international & blended whiskies. The famous 'hoop of destiny' is popular and was featured on the BBC documentary 'Scotch! The Story of Whisky'. A great range of Scottish cask keg & bottled beers plus a great wine list, gin, rum & soft drinks. The eclectic food menu focuses on Scottish produce. Food available everyday til 9pm. Bar open every day 11am-1am. **1a-1c Dock Place, Leith EH6 6LU - 0131 554 7427 —**
teuchtersbar.co.uk

Shopping

Chiya and Chai — In-person events for up to six people in your own home. e.g. anniversaries, pals get-togethers, baby showers, xen-do, alcohol-free events, birthday celebrations, Mother's Day gifts. Larger groups by arrangement. Also, complement activities in health and well-being events. Premium loose-leaf teas are for sale online.

www.chiyaandchai.com

Leafy Scot — Get fresh, locally grown microgreens with intense flavour and colour all year round. Leafy's grow-to-order service offers pea shoots, radishes, broccoli, sunflower shoots and special salad mixes to your door. They stay fresh for 7 days. Also available: are winter subscriptions, living tubs and gift vouchers for the chef in your life. www.leafy.scot

Mandorle — Exquisite Italian cakes: Inspired by Italy; Crafted in Scotland; Loved everywhere. Mandorle is Italian for almonds and these handmade, gluten and dairy free cakes are created from just three ingredients, almonds, eggs and sugar with flavours of Italy such as lemon, orange and apricot added. Choose from sixteen different products including Nuvole, Jaffa Bites (as close as you can get to an Italian version of that other jaffa product), Gavi, Ricciarelli, Cuori and many more. **Buy them online and find out more at Mandorle.co.uk or at Linthgow market, first Saturday of the month.**

Street Food

Harajuku Street Food — Now at Edinburgh Street Food at the Omni Centre Award-winning chef Kaori Simpson serves up noodles, poke bowls and sushi burritos. **Leith St. @streetfoodbyharajuku**

The Peruvian — Launched by Carlo Carozzi in 2017, this outlet serves bold Latin American street food at Edinburgh Street Food. Inspired by his grandmother's recipes, dishes include award-winning tequeños and lomo saltado—sirloin steak stir-fried with potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and ají amarillo. Carlo's stall has won Best Snack at the British Street Food Awards multiple times. **Open daily at Omni Centre.**

Wine Bars

Le Di-Vin — Edinburgh's most sophisticated wine bar beside French restaurant La P'tite Folie restaurant on Randolph Place. Charcuterie, Cheese and Fish platters and light plates. Wines by the glass from around the world. Open Mon-Sat noon 'til late. Closed Sundays. **9 Randolph Place, EH3 7TE – 0131 538 1815 – www.ledivin.co.uk**

L'escargot bleu wine bar — L'escargot Bleu wine bar – this cosy wine bar is situated beneath L'escargot Bleu restaurant on Broughton Street. You will find a convivial and welcoming bar where you can enjoy an aperitif before dining, a digestif after dining upstairs or just pop in for a drink and a nibble. The bar serves cheese, charcuterie, olives, bread, and other carefully sourced produce that perfectly complement a glass of wine or two! There are also two secluded little rooms with music systems where you can relax with friends. Open during restaurant opening times. Dogs are welcome. **56 Broughton Street, EH1 3SA – 0131 557 1600 – www.lescargotbleu.co.uk**

About Bite Mag

Food enthusiast and critic Sharon Wilson (aka Mrs Bite) founded Bite Mag in 2003, offering reviews of the dining and drink scene in Edinburgh.

Bite Mag has blossomed into a local staple featuring trusted, community based and independent content written by locals.

Happy dining!
Find on us Socials @bite_mag



CELESTIA

DELIGHT IN A CELESTIAL CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, step into a world where the warmth of Indian hospitality meets the magic of the festive season. Located in the heart of Edinburgh, our restaurant invites you to celebrate with a luxurious twist on tradition, where every dish is a celebration in itself.

We'll be serving a special tasting style menu for only £59.95 per person. Available on Christmas day and New Years Eve. We're also offering our festive menu for only £49.95 per person. Available from 15th of November until 31st of December.

18 Eyre Place, Edinburgh, EH3 5EP www.celestiarestaurant.co.uk
T:0131 287 2914 IG:celestia_edinburgh