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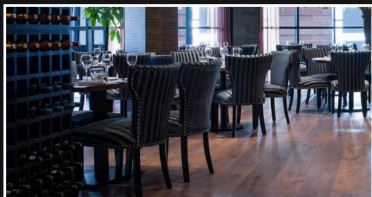
Autumn 2025

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Trusted reviews since 2003

DINE

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SEASONAL MENUS AND RELAXED DINING



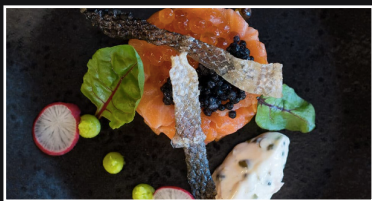
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Cooked up by

Cate Devine
 Rachel Edwards
 Lea Harris
 Colin Hinds
 Anne Pia
 Fiona Richmond
 The Social Bitches
 Diana Thompson
 Diana Turner
 Kirsty Wilkins
 Sharon Wilson

Editor

Sharon Green-Wilson

Design

Charlotte Newman-Casey

Subbing by

Diana Turner

Front Cover

Steak at Dublin Street Social



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**Publisher/Editor**

Sharon Wilson | M 07486 070333
 bitepublishing@gmail.com | www.bite-magazine.com

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Salt 'n' Sauce

A selection of what is happening in the food & drink landscape -

find full stories and reviews at www.bite-magazine.com



Launching this autumn, a fresh concept from the creators of Lannan Bakery is set to open its doors: **Lannan Pantry**. This new space will showcase a curated selection of high-quality, seasonal ingredients—many of which feature in the beloved bakes and pastries next door. Visitors can expect a variety of homemade goods, including fresh pasta, artisanal dips, breads, sausages, pork pies, and terrines. The Pantry will also offer Lannan-branded homeware items and a handpicked collection of natural and biodynamic wines from its cellar. We can't wait!

Nespresso Edinburgh officially opened last month in the vibrant St James Quarter. What you can expect:

- A 'Coffee as an Art' bar with tastings and live masterclasses
 - A customisation area to personalise select products
 - Nespresso's full range of machines, coffees, and accessories
 - A recycling station supporting the brand's sustainability mission
- The St James Quarter Nespresso will be a continuation of the brand's new boutique concept. Located on Level 3, the boutique joins a curated mix of global brands, bringing immersive coffee experiences to the heart of Edinburgh.



Chef Dean Banks relaunched his signature restaurant in the historic Caledonian Hotel on Princes Street, Edinburgh, in **1925 at Pompadour** in July. The new concept offers diners an à la carte menu that showcases the best of local produce, from the land and sea. Banks says, the restaurant is following a change in consumer desires away from multi-course tasting menus to a more accessible dining option that has flavour and creativity at its heart.



The world's most trusted food and drink accreditation scheme, **Great Taste Awards**, announced its annual results at the end of July. Amongst the Scottish entries were Elrick Log from Errington Cheese Limited, Haze Halo from 71 Brewing Ltd, and Garlic & Pear Chilli Jelly from Allans Chilli Products. Every entry is tasted blind with no hint of provenance. Judges consider flavour first and foremost, followed by appearance, aroma, texture, and mouthfeel, before determining whether the product warrants one of the famous black and gold seals of approval. The products awarded a 3-star enter into a further round of

judging to establish nominations for the Golden Fork trophies announced on 9 September. Nominations from Scotland include Hot Smoked Mackerel Fillets from East Neuk Kilnhouse, Dark Chocolate with Black Cherry from Ocelot Craft Chocolate, Single Glen Scottish Heather Honey from Wainwright's Bee Farm.

Paolozzi - posted on Instagram last month, announcing the closure of their restaurant & bar. They noted the impact of the pandemic on their business, which struck shortly after they opened in 2020 and said they are focusing on their core business of Edinburgh Beer Factory and Thistly Cross Cider, selling to outlets in Scotland and further.



Graham's The Family Dairy once again handed its flavour power to the people at this year's Royal Highland Show - and thousands responded. As part of Scotland's number one food brand's 'Our Next Flavour' campaign, attendees at the summer show and voters online were allowed to decide the next cottage cheese

flavour. Following four days of public voting and a flood of discussion across social media, Mango was revealed, edging out strong competition from finalists, with Honey and Chilli a hot second, and Tomato and Basil third.



In celebration of their 40th birthday, **The Sheraton** have created an afternoon tea inspired by the last four decades. From the bold flavours of the 80s to today's favourites, each bite pays homage to the eras that shaped the hotel.





Edinburgh's award-winning **Divino Enoteca** has appointed a new Head Chef. Palermo-born Salvatore Agate brings two decades of experience across Italy and the UK, stepping up to lead the kitchen after serving as Divino's Sous Chef for 18 months. Salvatore's menus champion Southern Italian simplicity and a passion for seasonal Scottish produce, featuring summer menu items such as hand-dived Orkney scallops in agrodolce and caprese salads made with tomatoes at their sun-ripened peak.

The Boston Spud Co. is a new lunchtime baked potato concept that has launched on Hanover Street. Expect big, fluffy baked potatoes loaded with bold toppings – from spice bag chicken with curry sauce to slow-braised Irish beef stew, triple cheese melt, balti curries, whipped beer cheese, and more.



Chimac, the cult Irish brand, famous for its Korean-inspired condiments, has launched three marinades

- Korean Stir Fry Marinade is a punchy, umami-packed blend of gochujang, garlic, ginger and soy that brings instant depth to noodles, veggies, and just about anything else you can toss in a pan.

- Sriracha Caramel Glaze is a sweet-heat revelation that

balances fiery sriracha with sticky caramel for the kind of finish that makes veg or roast hams sing.

- Korean BBQ Wings Marinade is every bit as finger-licking as it sounds: rich, smoky, and sticky with soy, garlic, sesame, and a touch of sweetness.

Chimac products are available to buy directly online at chimac.ie, as well as Selfridges, Amazon and independent butchers and delis across the UK and Ireland. EH10 4NP Wed-Sun 9am - 3pm.



Edinburgh's first Tarot & Tipples night launched at **Mara** this summer. The Shore's stylish wine & cocktail bar, Mara, is hosting a series of tarot reading nights in collaboration with local mystics, Tuesday Moon and The Portal Leith. Events are scheduled for 24th September and 29th October from 6pm. Guests will receive a drink on arrival before enjoying a 10-minute tarot reading. £20 per person.

Review: **Dublin Street Social**

Stylish Plates and Social Sips in Edinburgh's Georgian New Town

The name says it all—Dublin Street Social is a convivial, smart yet casual bar bistro nestled in Edinburgh's elegant Georgian New Town. This welcoming eatery serves small plates, drinks, Sunday brunch, and lunch in a stylish yet relaxed space.

Inside, sea-green banquettes accent sleek wood finishes, and there are elegant black-and-chrome bar stools, and tiny table lamps. The decor is light and modern, punctuated by vibrant prints—including striking portraits of Joaquin Phoenix as The Joker and Frida Kahlo.

I descend the front steps to the basement space and find fellow Bite contributor and food author Anne Pia in conversation with Chris, the owner. He's a gracious host, popping up throughout the evening to ensure everything is running smoothly—and it is. Drinks and sharing plates are executed with finesse.

To start, I opt for a classic Dry Martini (it is hump day, after all), while Anne chooses the Château de l'Escarelle Côteaux Varois en Provence 'Le Pacha' Rosé—an easy-drinking, sun-bleached pink wine. Its versatility makes it a perfect companion to the array of small plates we sample.

First up: Picante Chorizo and Manchego Croquettes, robustly flavoured and oozing with creamy béchamel. They vanish in moments. Next, we try the Handmade Potato Gnocchi with Lemon and Tomato Fondue.



Anne and I agree—we prefer our gnocchi toasted, and the chef delivers beautifully light cubes in a fondue she describes as: “This tomato fondue—light, fresh enough to retain that tomatoey texture and sweet... so sweet and tasty... I was still salivating when the plate was empty.”

We move on to Pan-Seared Orkney Scallops served with a delicately aromatic curry sauce, prompting another thoughtful observation from Anne: “Sauces balance, complement, or enhance—never overwhelm what else is on the plate... but partner with it.”

The Gently Spiced Buttermilk Chicken Tenders are succulent, and though we're nearly full, we make room for dessert—for the reader's sake, of course! White Chocolate and Strawberry Crème Brûlées are delicate and refined.

Chef Stephen Holmes is the talent behind the kitchen, with a pedigree that includes Castle Terrace. Open for just three months, Dublin Street Social is a welcome addition that is just a stone's throw from the city centre. We leave happy in the knowledge that there is plenty of deliciousness to return for. Butterfly King Prawns with Cajun-spiced tempura and buttermilk & blue cheese dipping sauce, we are looking at you. (Sharon Wilson)

**Dublin Street Social – 26 Dublin Street,
Edinburgh EH3 6NN - 0131 563 0403**
Open Tues-Thurs 12pm–1am,
Fri-Sat 10am–1am, Sun 10am–10pm,
Closed Monday.

Review: **The Old Manse of Blair**

Boutique 'Estate to plate' dining

The Old Manse of Blair is a five-star boutique hotel and Michelin-recommended restaurant in a stunning rural setting for complete tranquillity and relaxation. We stay in one of the walled garden rooms, which are a short walk from the main house and provide an option for those wanting to stay closer to nature, with each room offering a distinctive, stylish and modern design, and a private patio. Despite the hotel's lavishness, the owners have successfully created an informal environment that doesn't feel stuffy.

The owner Anne explains that they have an 'estate to plate' ethos, keeping everything as homemade and local as possible, including Wasted Degrees beer, a wide variety of local gins and whiskies, Isle of Skye Scallops, Isle of Skye sea salt, Isle of Skye Smoked Trout, Aberdeen Angus Beef, North Sea Cod, and local meat and eggs for breakfast. The Executive 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.



Chef Scott Davies

And the food really is sensational. We start with a Duck Liver Parfait with beer pickled fennel and puffed barley, Wasted Degrees Amber & Rye Seeded Sourdough, and Heather Smoked & Oak Smoked Skye Sea Salt. We feel like we have already tasted the very best the land has to offer and are salivating for what follows. Which is perfectly-cooked Isle of Skye Scallops with a light and delicious accompaniment of roe parfait, trout caviar, radish, apple and dashi butter sauce.

We have barely finished praising the starter when our mains arrive. Tender North Sea Cod for me with a striking combination of courgette and basil puree, jalapeno fume, dill oil and dressed crab. He chooses the Dry Aged Aberdeen Angus Beef and is effusive in his admiration of the dish, which also includes 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 panna cotta, double milk ice cream and mint jelly for me; followed by after-dinner drinks by the roaring fire.

Following a restful night and a sunny cuppa on the patio, breakfast is in keeping with the high standards of dinner. We relish Seeded Overnight Muesli, a Full Scottish featuring local meats, haggis, black pudding and eggs, and Isle of Skye Alder Cold Smoked Trout with scrambled eggs. Through the window, we watch one of the chefs shucking the evening's scallops in the garden and wish we were staying another night. (Diana Turner)

**The Old Manse of Blair– Blair Atholl,
Highland Perthshire, PH18 5TN
01796 48 33 44 - theoldmanseofblair.com**



North Sea Cod



Dry Aged Aberdeen Angus Beef



Isle of Skye Scallops

Review: **KUBA Café**

Sips in Edinburgh's Georgian New Town

Nestled within the bright, contemporary space of Edinburgh Printmakers in Fountainbridge, KUBA Café is more than just a place to eat—it's a celebration of culture, creativity, and community.

Open since late March, this culinary gem is the brainchild of award-winning chef and Great British Menu contestant Babatunde Abifarin, who brings together the vibrant soul of Pan-African cuisine with the hearty comfort of Scottish fare.

As you step through the gallery shop into the café, you're greeted by a wall of glass that floods the space with natural light and offers a tranquil view of the courtyard and community garden. The setting is serene, spacious, and fully accessible—ideal for wheelchairs, prams, and anyone seeking a peaceful city retreat.

On our visit, despite a brisk summer breeze, the café radiates warmth, both in atmosphere and hospitality.

Our host, Sarah, dressed in a striking zebra-print dress, welcomes us with genuine enthusiasm. The menu is a feast for the senses, with dishes as bold and colourful as the abstract art on the walls.

We sample the Lamb Harissa Chapati and the KUBA Platter, both featuring the standout homemade merguez sausage—spicy, flavourful, and deeply satisfying. The platter is a vibrant mosaic of flavours: burnt orange coloured, smoky muhammara, rich Agoyin beans in caramelized pepper sauce, beetroot hummus, avocado, and feta. The freshly made chapati is golden, flaky, and utterly addictive.

To drink, we try the Supermalt Original and Ikoyi Chapman's Original—a deep red, citrusy soda affectionately dubbed “an African Im-Bru.” It pairs beautifully with the spice-forward dishes.

Dessert is a showstopper: a towering slice of Jaffa Cake with moist sponge, intense orange gel and glossy chocolate ganache, made feather-light thanks to the Polish pastry chef's hack of whipping egg whites separately.

KUBA's all-day menu is as inclusive as it is inventive. From Pistachio Pancakes and Shakshuka to Spicy Merguez Subs and Beetroot Carpaccio, there's something for every palate, including vegan and gluten-free options. The café also plans to host special events and private dining experiences, further cementing its role as a cultural hub.

As chef Abifarin puts it, “Cooking, much like printmaking, is a creative art form.” And at KUBA, that artistry is evident in every plate. Whether you visit for coffee, a full breakfast, or a leisurely lunch, KUBA offers a warm, joyful space where food, art, and community come together. (Sharon Wilson)

**KUBA Café at Edinburgh Printmakers –
Castle Mills, 1 Dundee Street, Edinburgh,
EH3 9FP - 0131 557 2479 (ext. 240)
Open Tues–Sun: 10am–6pm
Closed Monday.**

KUBA

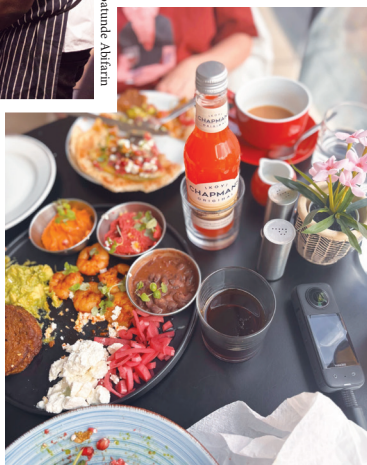
— AT EDINBURGH PRINTMAKERS —



Great British Menu contestant Babunade Abifarin



Lamb Harissa



KUBA platter

The Social Bitches Review:

Artisan Pizza & Cheeky Cocktails @

3 Blind Mice



Moments from the madness of the Royal Mile - where there's so often a very shouty street performer, and thousands of tourists needing you to "bear with" for a quick selfie - these Bitches have discovered an oasis of calm. Its name: 3 Blind Mice, a modern pizzeria boasting fabulous decor, saucy cocktails, and truly exceptional thin-crust pizza.

Even better, go one floor down and there's a gorgeous speakeasy bar where inspired mixology, rare whiskies, and wonderfully ambient lighting will soon put a safe and stylish distance between us and the merest hint of sobriety. But let's start at the beginning ... Namely, a rather lovely Crémant d'Alsace, plus a joyful celebration of carbs: House-made Focaccia with faultless seasoning, garlic and rosemary; along-side triple-cooked Patatas Bravas with cherry tomato & chilli sauce, and lush garlic mayo.

Add to this a super fresh, generously proportioned Avocado Salad, and drumroll please ... the official winner of our first round: Fried Meatballs with pork, parsley and sundried tomato. A pleasing crunch, oh-so-moist, and utterly addictive. DING DONG!

As for the actual pizza, there is MUCH to choose from: Smoked Salmon with mascarpone, dill and lemon zest; Siracaha Chicken; Mushroom Porchetta; and the absolute joy that is Nduja: soft, spicy, spreadable sausage from Calabria. Ooosh!

But our fave has to be the Pepperoni, with oodles of mozzarella, and the epic addition of naga chilli honey - bringing both heat and a wonderful sweetness to the party. We're also seriously loving the dough btw: charred, crispy and thin, but not TOOOOOO thin.

Its perfect companion, at least two bottles of the Te Kano, a Pinot Noir from New Zealand's Central Otago region. Full of dark cherry and fresh acidity, it's a delight to savour, then follow with the knowing words: Marlborough schmarlborough.

Dessert meanwhile is feast of deconstruction. Ganache sans tart, Cream Cheesecake with pancake base, and so forth - all of which you'll find a pairing for on the delightful menu of sherry. Something we VERY much approve of.

Then, finally, it's downstairs to The Burrow ... and wow, what a delight. A quirky mix of jungle wallpaper, animal print, tassels and plush velvet that would have David Attenborough feeling a tad over-excited. There's even a Banksy!

The vibe is both effortlessly cool and totes chilled, making us surer than ever that flamboyant eveningwear was definitely the smart choice. But more importantly, the cocktail menu is just as well put together.

Our favourites thus far: the Vincenzo Gami with rum, pineapple, chestnut, and punt é mes (bittersweet vermouth); a Fresca Mule of tequila, yuzu, strawberry & pink pepper; and the dazzling Pyrus Sour which introduces whisky to pear, honey & timur berry.

Though of course, and as always, these indulgent Bitches are just getting started!

The Social Bitches are Derek and Isaac and you can find them on Instagram

**3 Blind Mice – 19 Blackfriars Street
Edinburgh EH1 1NB - 0131 290 3333
Pizza everyday until 10:30pm
3blindmicepizza.com**

**The Burrow – Open Thurs - Sun til late
theburrowbar.com**



Cocktails at The Burrow



Super refreshing Avocado Salad



Ding Dong! Round one



Moments from the madness

Review: **The Colintraive**

Elegant restaurant & cosy log fired pub on Argyll's Secret Coast

Anyone going "Doon the watter" to the beautiful isle of Bute won't find its food scene jumping out at them - least of all in the historic Victorian main town of Rothesay.

Once off the ferry from Wemyss Bay, you'll see numerous pubs serving bar food, good cafes, chippies and takeaways, plus a Polish bistro and a restaurant within both the Victoria Hotel and the grand 19th-century Glenburn Hotel overlooking the town. Most close early in the evening.

But look closer, and there's Gather Deli on the waterfront, serving a progressive daily menu with local produce and hosting regular supper clubs late into the evening. And up the hill is the much-vaunted and hyper-trendy Bute Yard, founded by the Crichton-Stuart family in memory of the late Johnny Crichton-Stuart, 7th Marquess of Bute, who established the eatBute food festival at Mount Stuart in 2009, in a bid to celebrate and unify the island's many excellent farmers and food producers. To continue his legacy, Bute Yard has a programme of

pop-up food events hosted by various local and off-island chefs and restaurants, a monthly producers' market and a permanent Isle of Bute Smokehouse stall (formerly Ritchie's of Rothesay, which was bought by Johnny Crichton-Stuart and is now co-run by his daughter Cathleen).

Working behind the scenes with all these outlets is Bute Kitchen, a social enterprise which supports local producers by encouraging retailers and hospitality venues to use local produce. So the late Marquess' legacy lives on.

It takes a short crossing on the wee ferry from Rhubodach over to Colintraive on the mainland to find the closest chef-owned, independent restaurant to Bute: The Colintraive, now in the hands of Chef-Patron Joe Burnett and his Greenock-born wife Clare Banner. Chef Joe came here from Angela Hartnett's Merchant's Tavern in London, where he worked with her (Scots-born) husband and head chef, Neil Borthwick, and followed him to the French House in Soho, formerly owned by Fergus Henderson. Before that, Joe was sous-chef to Kenneth Culhane at the Dysart Petersham, which now has a Michelin star.

I don't get to meet Chef Joe at Colintraive after dinner, as ours is a last-minute visit, and early next morning, he's at Portavadie to collect fresh prawns off the boat from Tarbert for that night's dinner menu. Meanwhile, Clare - a former food buyer for Fortnum & Mason in Mayfair - shows me the community-run polytunnel just steps away from the hotel, where they grow veg for the restaurant - most recently, homegrown beetroot done three ways to accompany a high-end dish of venison saddle and ragout from a haunch brought off the hill at nearby Glendaruel.



When we chat later, Chef Joe tells me that what he learned from Hartnett and Borthwick at the “busy, fast-paced” Merchant’s Tavern and French House was their philosophy of keeping it simple and doing justice to the produce. Creating new menus daily and cooking “off the cuff” according to what’s available is what Chef Joe is enjoying doing at The Colintraive - and it shows. My starter is a chargrilled Tarbert-landed Octopus with spicy sobrasada, Charlotte potato, and peas and beans from the polytunnel. It delivered super-tasty, satisfying mouthfuls of flavour and texture and with a modern twist of dots of cool aioli.

Then, for my main, is possibly the best steak and chips ever: Aberdeen Angus Rump from Little Kilchattan farm on Bute, supplied by the famous Macqueen’s Butchers in Rothesay. Medium to slightly well-done as requested. A pot of house chips, crisp and floury, easy to tip onto the plate, and a dinky pot of brandy and peppercorn sauce, in a pleasingly dignified quantity, is really superb but leaves me wanting more. And a salad of peppery watercress with citrusy dressing is a fitting foil; simple presentation, expert cooking, perfect flavour.

The menu on my whistle-stop visit also offers Kyle-caught Mackerel with heritage tomatoes, Ox Cheek and Ale Suet Pie, and Fish and Chips, among three other choices.

It’s restrained and cleverly balanced to suit local residents as well as gastro-savvy visitors. Lamb, when available, is from Ardmaleish farm on Bute - and Chef has previously done a lamb kofte menu with pickled house cabbage and chips, and pork brawn crispy kromeski served with house brown sauce and mooli salad. He also tells me he is delighted by the wild garlic and girolles (yellow chanterelles) that are freely available to him from the grounds of the hotel, while they “cost a fortune” in London.

It’s not fine-dining as such - or maybe that’s exactly what it is. The expertise, flair and culinary technique are all there, tempered to the clientele. It’s not flashy; the vibe here is friendly and warm. As Chef Joe puts it, “It’s kind of cool. I think we’ve found our lane. It’s a lovely position to be in because I can cook freely and create a new menu every day.” Then he adds casually that “Angela and Neil were here recently” and that they remain great friends. He and Clare have had two daughters since they moved to Colintraive in 2019. It looks like they’re here to stay - to the benefit of this beautiful, bountiful part of Argyll. (Cate Devine)

The Colintraive – Argyll PA22 3AS
+441700 841 207 colintraivehotel.com
Tues-Sun: lunch 12-2pm, dinner 5.30-8pm
(Sun: 6-8pm), Restaurant closed Monday.



Starter



Chef Patron Joe Burnett



Main course

Review: **The Crab & Lobster Fish Shack**

From Caviar to Crab Nachos, South Queensferry's New Seafood Star is a Shore Thing.

From Michelin-starred caviar to crab nachos, proper fish 'n' chips, and lobster Thermidor, the newly opened Crab & Lobster Fish Shack in South Queensferry overdelivers.

Set within the former Frankie & Benny's next to the Dakota Hotel, this vibrant new eatery is the latest venture from the Coghill family, the team behind Jack 'O' Bryan's in Dunfermline and, before that, the much-loved Black Pig & Oyster in Leith. With over £350,000 invested and more than 60 new jobs created, this is more than a restaurant — it's a bold statement of intent.

The restaurant officially opened its doors on Thursday, June 12th, but a soft launch on June 5th gave food writers and bloggers a sneak peek. What they found was a Hamptons-inspired haven of seafood excellence, complete with an open kitchen, marine blue decor, rope lights, lobster traps, and a cheeky neon slogan that says it all: "Ye Cannae Beat a Crab & Lobster Fish Shack Fish Supper."

And I can vouch for that fish supper — a generous, golden, crowd-pleasing classic. But, on my next visit, I want to dive deeper into the menu, which is presented on a single oversized card, so you can immediately appreciate the full pescatarian delights on offer.

And who, that is flesh and blood, could resist Tempura Oysters with Buffalo Aioli, Exmoor Caviar served on ice with dinky blinis and Crab Nachos to share. The caviar comes from the foothills of Exmoor National Park and is farmed sustainably from sturgeon raised in fresh Devonshire spring water. It is distinguished by its delicate briny flavour with a splash of

the sea (the result of curing with Hebridean or Cornish salt). Like the crab nachos, it is subtle rather than overpowering, and regarding those nachos, let's just say criminally addictive.

For the main course, Simone chooses the Monkfish, a thick fillet with a golden Parmesan crust, served alongside fluffy chips and a scorched lemon that adds a smoky zing. Across the table, I dig into the Lobster Thermidor — rich, creamy, and utterly indulgent.

In my glass, a Palomino Fino — bone-dry, saline, and mineral — cuts through the richness with precision. Simone sips a pale Provençal rosé, light and floral, perfect for the seafood spread.

We skip the Sticky Toffee Pudding and towering Sundaes this time, opting instead for a simple but stunning finish: Meringue and Cream with sharp summer berries; two spoons, of course.

Beyond the food, the Shack is a labour of love. The Coghill family — Bryan, Michelle, their son and Head Chef Jack, and daughter-in-law Sarah — have poured their hearts into this space. And they're not just serving seafood; they're serving the community. The restaurant proudly supports Cash for Kids.

Over-55s are catered for with the Fish Shack Supper Club — haddock & chips, bread & butter, and a pot of tea for just £15, Monday to Thursday, 11am - 3pm. It's a nod to tradition in a space that feels fresh and forward-thinking.

To say this new restaurant is impressive would be an understatement. From the open kitchen theatre to the Hamptons-style polish, from tasty starters to classic fish and chips, and top-notch,

friendly service, it dazzles. You'd never believe, not in a million years, that you were anywhere near a retail park. (Sharon Wilson)

The Crab & Lobster Fish Shack – 7 Ferryuir, South Queensferry EH30 9QZ - 0131 285 1291
thecrabandlobsterfishshack.com
Open Mon–Sat: lunch 11am – 3.45pm & dinner 5pm – 8.30pm. Sun lunch 11am-3:45pm, & dinner 5pm - 8pm



Pin Pin Lobster



Bryan, Jack & Ivy



South Queensferry meets The Hamptons (Credit Simone Hilliard Photography)

Review: Celestia

A new star in Edinburgh's Indian dining scene

Indian cuisine holds a cherished place in Scotland's culinary landscape, dating back to 1947 when the first Indian restaurant, Khushis, is believed to have opened. As Chitra Ramaswamy for *The Scotsman* reported in 2012, Mohammed Khushi saw an opportunity in the wake of the India-Pakistan partition and the influx of South Asian students. In the following decades in Glasgow, Noor Mohammed would open Green Gates, and his son, Ali Ahmed Aslam, would create the legendary Shish Mahal. The latter is where the now-iconic Chicken Tikka Masala was born, in response to a customer complaint about dry chicken.

From those humble beginnings, Indian food in the UK has evolved. Today, regional specialities are in the spotlight, and 2025 saw eight Indian restaurants across the UK retain Michelin stars. Among them, Birmingham's Opheem leads the charge in redefining Indian fine dining.

Enter Celestia, the latest venture from Mohammed Abbas, the respected restaurateur behind Cilantro. While Cilantro is beloved for its comforting, home-style curry dishes, Celestia is Abbas's bold step into the world of refined Indian cuisine. At Eyre Place, next to Cardinal and occupying the former site of New Chapter, Celestia is a visual and culinary statement.

Interiors are sleek and sophisticated: a palette of sea greens and purples, soft wall lighting, a sculptural chandelier, amber-blown glass, and a glowing light box that casts a warm, elegant hue.

We begin with a tray of Poppadoms and three house-made dips—each a subtle twist on a familiar classic. The standout is a chilli oil infused with whole garlic slices, which we eagerly spoon onto the blistered, rustic crackers.

Starters set the tone. I opt for the Dakshni (southern-style) Paneer—cottage cheese stuffed with dry nuts, ginger, and chilli, grilled with ground spices and ghee. It's rich, aromatic, and deeply satisfying, served with a mango sauce and a diced beetroot salad to the side. Mr Bite chooses the Kerala Chilli Garlic Prawns: plump king prawns marinated in roasted garlic, malt vinegar, and freshly ground spices. They arrive curled up and generously coated—just mind the tails.

For mains, Mr Bite lifts the lid on a Lamb Biryani, the steam releasing a heady mix of spices. The lamb is fork-tender, the rice fluffy. My Prawn Curry is elegantly plated, with a swirl of cream. Pomegranate raita and saffron-infused basmati add to this colourful feast. The sauce—coconut and tamarind-based—is silky, balanced, and layered with flavour. All dishes are artfully presented.



Patron Mohammed Abbas



The dessert menu features plenty of tempting dishes, including lemon cheese mint pie and badam (almond) and dates golden phirni, but we're full, so we request a takeaway. The next day, Old Monk Rum Balls—drenched in maple syrup—vanish in minutes.

Celestia isn't just another Indian restaurant—it's a celebration of heritage with finesse. Abbas has created something special here: a dining experience that honours tradition while confidently stepping into the future. (Sharon Wilson)

Celestia – 8 Eyre Place, Edinburgh EH3 5EP
0131 287 2914 celestiarestaurant.co.uk
Open Mon-Sun 12–2pm lunch & 5–11pm
dinner service.



Prawn Curry



Avocado Hummus with crunchily Beet

Food Whisky Life

By Ghillie Basan

It's no secret that I'm a fan of Ghillie Basan. It's about 14 years since I first discovered her work, having randomly picked up a copy of one of her books at an event. When I noticed that she lived in Scotland, I couldn't believe that I'd never heard of her before or that she wasn't better known. As I came to realise, here was someone with an extraordinary talent, living an extraordinary life, in a Highland glen, but in a very unsung way. There was something quite remarkable about her story, and one that was screaming for greater recognition.

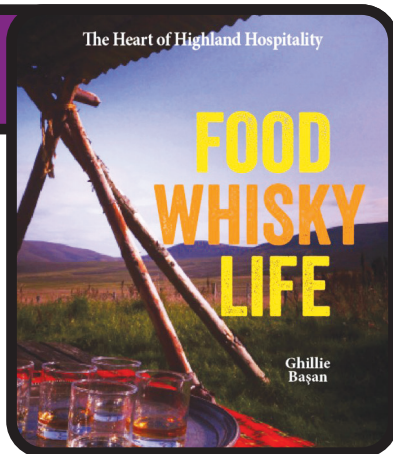
An anthropologist, author, broadcaster, former journalist and tourism provider, she has written more than 50 books, particularly Middle Eastern, but also on Scottish seafood, whisky and the Highland larder.

This book, in what she says will be her last on food, is deeply personal, and represents a culmination of her life experiences gathered over many years of travelling, being immersed in other cultures - learning, cooking, tasting, storytelling, absorbing, respecting, connecting.

At its essence, it's how she translates this to her guests who come from all over the world to her off-the-beaten-track Highland home. It's about genuine hospitality. Something that's hard to put into words but that when you encounter it, it's a feeling like no other. You don't forget it. Perhaps best summed up in Ghillie's own words as she sets the scene:

"When hospitality comes from the heart it is the simplest gift you can give. It costs nothing but it can mean everything, I live in a remote glen in the Scottish Highlands where I open the doors of my humble home

The Heart of Highland Hospitality



to people from all over the world and share my stories, my family, my food and flavours, and I watch my guests relax and unwind. I give people an experience that money can't buy and often they don't want to leave"

The book starts with her story, from formative years growing up in East Africa, which had a lasting impact, to her journalist travels, taking a Cordon Bleu diploma, studying Social Anthropology and then ending up in a remote Highland croft with her Turkish husband who soon left her to raise children single-handedly and to build a business on her own. It's quite the story, that I can't do justice to here, but anyone who knows Ghillie will agree that she's strong, resilient and a survivor.

Moving on to the Spirit & Spice chapter, she explains how the world of Scotch whisky captivated her and somehow perfectly matched the kind of flavours she was cooking, serving and writing about. In a time of necessity, she had a germ of an idea that offering tasting experiences together with her mezze-style food,

in the stunning environment around her, would be something that food tourists might like. And indeed they did, and have ever since, whether that be round her kitchen table, the ancient bothy or in the forests and hills around her. Together with her equally spirited, adventurous and talented son Zeki and daughter Yazi, they collaborate to offer joint experiences in traditional skills, foraging and feasting and wilderness retreats.

What follows is a collection of recipes that encapsulates Ghillie's food philosophy and style, from Pastes, Pickles and Preserves to Wild Drinks & Cocktails to Fire & Smoke.

They marry her global influences but Highland/Scottish roots – caramelised bananas with whisky, cream & toasted oats; smoked haddock bake with chickpeas & rosemary; roasted rhubarb salad with stem ginger, feta, lime zest & roasted pecans; venison bobotie with hogweed; nettle & roasted hazelnut pesto and ember-baked smuggler's salmon with whisky, juniper and bog myrtle.

Photography by Ghillie and her family as well as guest photographers, capture the colours and tastes so evocatively. It's nothing short of stunning.

My hope is that this book brings Ghillie to an even wider audience. That you, the reader, feel as though you are in her Highland home, around her table, tasting, savouring and chatting. That you feel the intimate, genuine hospitality that she dedicates her life to providing.

Gather friends and family around your own table, cook up some of the book's dishes, share your own stories, and be reminded that hospitality is a gift that we can all give.

(Fiona Richmond, Head of Regional Food for Scotland Food & Drink)



***Food Whisky Life* by Ghillie Basan is published by Tin Shack Press, 2025. Copies available from all good bookshops**

Follow Ghillie on Instagram @ghilliebasan for more information about her work and experiences.



Review: Indaba

Spanish, South African and Scottish tapas

Tollcross maybe gets too little attention as an area to eat out...and when I reflect on the streets around The Cameo and the Kings Theatre, many of the places I go to again and again, a late decision, an unplanned Friday night and a quick phone call if you are flexible about time, come to mind. Some of these more low-key local eateries, a few steps away from the mainstream, have been highly praised here already: Harajuku Kitchen for informal Japanese fare is now in full sail again with a new and exciting menu, and worth a visit; up the road, a very worthy and charming Asian competitor, Hoi An, for mainly Vietnamese food in a comforting cocoon of bright, warming colour and soft furnishing; and across from the cinema, one of the best modern-day Chinese restaurants in the city...no fuss, no silver service...Street of Beijing. A bolt hole of uncossmetised authenticity, I like to drop in occasionally for a carton of takeaway dumplings! Another Japanese restaurant nearby, more city-smart rather than family hullabaloo, is Yamato.



Here, more slick and sophisticated, dishes are gracefully laid down, beautiful to behold, and what comes to the table is nothing less than pristine, well-executed deliciousness... Wagyu beef steaks are worth every penny.

Idling quietly around the corner at Lochrin Terrace, easy to miss and maybe too easy to dismiss at first sight, unassuming beside its up-market Japanese neighbour, is Indaba, a tapas restaurant of long standing, well loved by a faithful clientèle of those in the know. Led some years ago by so many glowing reviews, we came and then came again and again. The vibe is chill; come as you are, come alone, come to relax, come to enjoy and feel at home, come as a couple or with hearty, food-loving friends.

Tapas are cooked to order, cooked with love and pride in what is put in front of you.

Making the most of local produce...skuid, mussels, pork belly, as well as such classics as croquetas maison... salchichón and chorizo on a very ample tabla de quesos y embutidos; pickled anchovy fillets with garlic and parsley oil and maybe a soupçon of lemon; homemade meatballs, satisfyingly ample, soft and yielding in a rich, palate-pleasing and aromatic tomato sauce; deep fried battered cod, flaky, chunky and lightly coated in a rice and chickpea flour, earthy pisto, or vegetable stew, and not forgetting the iconic tortilla española. But this is no ordinary tortilla, for it is tender, moist, multi-layered, and cooked in a deep pan. Indaba is a special place which we return to often; special not only for the freshness of its dishes, for the warm and welcoming staff and the creativity of its kitchen, but for its ever-exciting and reimagining of standard classic fare. A South African and Scottish twist is ever-present on the standard menu and the specials board.

On our recent visit, we feast on béchamel-based Croquetas with a manchego and aubergine filling; Ensalada de Garbanzos and Idiazabal (a smoked sheep cheese), fine-chopped red onion and herby greens, adding another layer of flavour; a soft but crusty tostada with sweet tomatoes, collapsed and oozing, and topped with slabs of smoked cheese; tender, crisp and salted strips of Pork Shoulder simply served on a slate; and soft, silky King Scallops in a Malaysian style, light lemongrass and coconut milk sauce with a sprinkling of soya seeds. Sauces and dressings enhance each generous dish, but do not exclude the need for an extra bread basket to mop up.

Two large glasses of a Garnacha Rosé from a well-curated wine list, with a choice of non-alcoholic beers for the virtuous, is an appropriate match and sends us home very happy. (Anne Pia)

Indaba – 3 Lochrin Terrace, Edinburgh
EH3 9QJ - 0131 221 1554 edindaba.co.uk
Open Mon-Thurs 5-9:30pm, Fri-Sat 5-10pm
Closed Sunday.



BOOZY SNOOZY LUNCHES

Enjoy delicious food, great wine, and good company in the opulent surroundings of No.35 at The Bonham, located in the leafy West End.

Boozy Snoozy is available for lunch on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 12.30pm – 2.30pm. Enjoy 3-courses and half a bottle of wine for £40 per person.

THEBONHAM.COM
T: 0131 226 6050

The Frugal Foodie The Cumberland Bar

The Cumberland Bar, a traditional, wood-panelled Victorian pub, is well established as a favourite with both Edinburgh locals and tourists, thanks in part to its beautiful New Town location and the rare feature of a beer garden. As an unequivocal claim to fame, it's even referred to in Alexander McCall Smith's *44 Scotland Street* novels.

The bar is also well-known for its beer. The owners have no tie to any single brewery or buying group, and this is apparent when surveying the line of beer taps available (at least eight), ranging from established ale producers like Stewarts, to newer craft breweries like Leith's Campervan. The spirits selection is also excellent, with a leaning towards local businesses. Indeed, the house gin and rum couldn't be more local as it is made in the basement of the pub, which is also home to Sipantics Gin and Rum School.

Last but not least, the food, which is what we are here to sample on a warm, rainy evening

in July. The venue focuses on sourcing fresh, locally produced, organic ingredients and this shows in the quality of the dishes. The menu has been updated recently to add sharing plates, particularly popular with beer garden patrons. These are just £6.45 each or 3 for £16.95, so we choose two as starters. The Mozzarella Sticks are oozingly satisfying with a flavourful tomato & basil sauce, but it is and the Salt & Pepper Chilli Squid that really impresses, with tender meat and a super light batter.

For mains we choose the Chicken Milanese with Spaghetti Napoli (£14.95) and the Cajun Chicken Burger (£13.95), though all the usual pub classics are available. The quality and texture of the meat is excellent, and my schnitzel style coating is deliciously crisp and crunchy. Somewhat unusually for pub grub, we both felt the dishes were slightly under-seasoned and extra salt was needed, perhaps reflecting a healthier approach than the norm. To counteract this healthiness, we finished with a rich and sweet Sticky Toffee Pudding (£6.45), which required no augmentation.

Whether you're sipping spritzes and sharing small plates in the sunshine, or sheltering from the cold and rain with a pie and a pint of real ale, this great value New Town Institution has you covered. (Diana Turner)

**The Cumberland Bar – 1-3 Cumberland St
Edinburgh, EH3 6RT - 0131 558 3134
enquiries@cumberlandbar.co.uk
Opening Hours-
Bar: Mon-Thurs 12-11pm, Fri-Sun 12-12am
Kitchen: Mon-Sat 12-9pm, Sun 12-7pm**





Chicken Milanese with Spaghetti Napoli



Cajun Chicken Burger



Starters

Try Something New: Edinburgh Experts Guide You Through the Wine List

Diana Thompson of Wine Events Scotland continues her journey into the art of wine selection. Featuring three of Edinburgh's engaging wine and hospitality experts. Each share a pair of offbeat wines they're currently excited about - plus the perfect food pairings to enjoy with them. These are the wines they love, and they'd love for you to try them too.



Troy Sides

Head Sommelier, Divino Italian Restaurant and Wine Bar

Troy describes Divino's wine list as "easy for some, challenging for others - mostly because many guests aren't familiar with Italian regions." That's intentional. "We want to be at the table with guests, talking about wine. Our list is informative, rooted in Italian terroir and history, but relaxed and approachable."

White: 'Adarmando' Umbria Bianco, Tabarrini, 2016 – £69

Made from 100% Trebbiano Spoletino with two days' skin contact, this white offers depth and complexity.

Pair with: Roast chicken with lemon, herbs, and olive oil.
Versatile with white, yellow - even red sauces.

Red: 'Terrine', Castello della Paneretta, 2016 – £89

A 50/50 blend of Sangiovese and Canaiolo, this wine is bold and aromatic.

Pair with: Pork in all forms—Carbonara, ragu, pork loin, or tomato-braised meatballs.



Rachel Bailey Palumbo

Director, Hey Palu

Hey Palu's cocktail-led focus means their wine list is compact, accessible, and fun. "We want to encourage people to try new things," Rachel says. "Our wines are playful and transportive - perfect for imagining yourself in a piazza in Italy."

Sparkling Rosé: Lambrusco

Bright, fruit-forward, and far from its overly sweet '80s reputation. *Pair with:* "Anything," Rachel says. "It instantly transports you to Italy."

White: Dry Riesling

Crisp and clean, perfect for salty or earthy dishes.

Pair with: Truffle Pecorino - its acidity cuts through the richness.



Lisa Wedgwood

Owner, Wedgwood the Restaurant

"At Wedgwood, our list includes tasting notes and profiles for each wine to help guests explore beyond the familiar," Lisa explains. "We want to give diners the confidence to choose something a bit different - something they might not have tried otherwise."

White: Furmint, Tokaji, Hungary

Often mistaken for a dessert wine, this version is dry, fresh, with delicious minerality.

Red: Rioja Reserva, Altanza Winery

A Wedgwood favourite since 2009 - 100% Tempranillo with smooth tannins and balanced fruit.

Pair with: The restaurant's venison main course dish – both are rich, elegant, and perfectly matched.

Expert advice from this trio

"Read the list and ask us questions - we love to join you on the journey to choose the best wine. Be curious and adventurous. Our lesser-known bottles are carefully chosen and exciting." - Troy

"Try our Italian wines which might be unfamiliar grapes. Order as you would in Italy, always with something to nibble." - Rachel

"We're happy to offer samples of wines by the glass - just ask. Check the specials list for new, interesting bottles. A recent favourite: Riesling from Moldova." - Lisa

Final Sip...

Whether you're dining out or browsing a list, don't hesitate to ask, explore, and sip something unexpected. Edinburgh's wine scene is full of hidden gems worth discovering. Cheers!



Review:

The Three Chimneys

A fresh start for renowned island eatery

A long-term feature on the culinary wishlist, on a recent visit to Skye, my partner and I finally made it to The Three Chimneys, keen to see if this destination dining venue can live up to the hype (spoiler alert: it does).

On arrival, the vibes are cosy and welcoming, in keeping with the traditional cottage exterior (this place is nearly as old as I am after all). We are running late due to a combination of island-related factors – slow campervans, confused tourists, livestock in the road – but are assured on arrival that “time runs differently on Skye”. We happily adjust to island time and need little encouragement to indulge in an aperitif. We choose, from the list of locally inspired cocktails, a Rhubarb & Sweet Cicely Fizz with Raasay Gin and a Penicillin featuring Talisker Storm whisky – both are delicious, well-balanced, and warm us up nicely for what is to come.

First up is the ‘Snack’, a staple of the tasting menu and usually the single best mouthful of the entire meal – this one features trout pastrami and Talisker and is bursting with bright flavours – an impactful and promising

start. However, it is the first course of the five that assures us we are in the best of hands. An unassuming list of ingredients – Asparagus, Jersey Royals and Potted Butter – yet it is the touch of cayenne that makes the dish sing, matched perfectly with a Kent Chardonnay. Our server explains that the chef is passionate about using high-quality, seasonal produce that is not overcomplicated, and he has certainly brought out the best in these simple veggies.

The chef in question is Paul Green, who left his life in Edinburgh in January to return to the restaurant where his career started 20 years ago. Since then, his CV has become particularly impressive, having worked across Europe and New York at two and three-Michelin-star restaurants, and we can sense that wealth of knowledge in his menu.

Course two is a combination of two dishes; as interestingly, this is where the bread course comes in; however, once we taste the bisque with the Lobster Ravioli, we can see why the bread is needed. The provenance of each dish is stated on the menu, and this Dunvegan lobster couldn’t be more local. The warm rolls are made with black garlic, onion and oregano and are sweet and indulgent. Thankfully, the wine pairing is a slightly smoky white wine from Santorini that cuts through the rich flavours beautifully.

After a short but welcome break, the third course is a perfectly-cooked Sconser Scallop in a sticky ginger, orange, and Raasay whisky sauce, a zesty combination very different from the previous course, paired with a complex Spanish Chardonnay/Gewurtztraminer blend that enhances the floral notes of the dish. The fourth and main course is Hogget (a sheep between 1 and 2



Paul Green

years old, we learn) served with more wild garlic, potato fondant and haggis, a hearty plate that is brought to new levels with the accompaniment of a rich Georgian red wine.

Not someone with a hugely sweet tooth, even I am excited for the dessert – a Choux Bun filled with local strawberries and vanilla cheesecake – and it is every bit as good as it sounds. Once again, the pairing is bang on, an exquisitely light Italian Moscato that in no way overwhelms the delicate flavours. Our meal has lasted a surprising three hours, so with a taxi to wait for, we are escorted to the lounge in the hotel to enjoy a dram.

This is truly a special dining experience and a taste of the abundance enjoyed on the island that I would come back to this corner of Skye for in

a heartbeat. The food certainly could not be faulted – it is easy to see why the restaurant earned the 'Restaurant of the Year' title at the 'National Hotels of the Year Scotland Awards' 2025 – and our only criticism was some slightly odd pacing between the courses, which was amply made up for by the easy friendliness of the service.

The five-course menu at £120 is well worth treating yourself to, but if you don't fancy splashing out that much, they also serve lunch from their fixed-price a la carte menu at £60 for two courses or £75 for three courses. (Diana Turner)

The Three Chimneys and The House Over-By, Colbost, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye, IV55 8ZT - 01470 511258 threechimneys.co.uk



Review: **Dulse, Leith**

Seafood Boil Spectacle

Dean Banks is never one to shy away from the spotlight. With a larger-than-life personality and a relentless knack for promotion, he's the unmistakable face of his ever-growing culinary empire — from Haar and Dune in St Andrews to Lunan Gin and Mond Vodka, Dean Banks at The Pompadour at the Caledonian Hotel in Edinburgh, along with his Dulse outposts in the West End and Leith. His flair for bold ideas and big character is hard not to admire.

One Sunday evening, we venture to Dulse Leith to experience one of his most theatrical offerings: the Seafood Boil. It's available daily, as are lobster rolls; two casual accompaniments to an otherwise classic a la carte seafood menu. The boil is a Cajun-inspired twist on top Scottish produce.

The restaurant is immediately striking — stylish, pretty and rich in thoughtful details that elevate the space. Graeme and Sydney take care of us with exceptional warmth and hospitality, setting the tone for a memorable evening.

To start, we enjoy a couple of Cumbrae Oysters paired with Dulse's signature chilli sauce. I usually prefer my oysters naked, but the smoky sweetness of the sauce beautifully complements the sweet and briny shellfish. My Dulse Martini is made with seaweed-infused Lunan gin, vermouth and garnished with Gordal olives. It is pitch-perfect: smooth, coastal, and confidently balanced.

Then comes the main event. Sydney arrives with bibs, gloves, and a grin — it is time to "glove up." The Seafood Boil is poured dramatically onto the table, and suddenly, we are immersed in edible theatre. The quality of the seafood shines from podgy ochre-coloured mussels in glistening blue shells, plump pink prawns, sweet corn on the cob, slices of smoky sausage, Charlotte potatoes rich with waxy flavour, and generous clusters of crab.

We overindulge gloriously and still can't finish.

All told, Dulse Leith isn't just a seafood meal — it's an event, a performance, and a showcase of

how casual dining can still thrill with the ingredient of imagination. Dean Banks' brand of boldness might not be for everyone, but it's hard to argue with the results when they're this deliciously executed. (Sharon Wilson)

Dulse Leith—
102 Constitution St,
Leith, Edinburgh, EH6
6AQ - 07402 552598
dulseleith.com
Open Mon & Thurs from
5pm, Fri–Sun from 12pm,
Closed Tues & Wed.

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Off the Trolley: The Golden Spurtle



The tiny Highland village of Carrbridge is home to around 700 people, the oldest stone bridge in the Highlands, and the quest for the Golden Spurtle. That last might sound like the title of a blockbuster movie featuring wizards, big name actors, and Hollywood magic. But in Carrbridge, the magic is in the oats, water and salt. Yes, we're talking about porridge and the annual Golden Spurtle competition.

Since 1994, competitors from around the world have gathered in the local village hall to find the best porridge. Chefs must produce a traditional porridge using only 3 ingredients (oats, salt and water) and a specialty item in which stars and celebrates oats. They have 30 minutes and a gas hob to prepare and present their dishes.

It might sound a bit sedate, but it certainly doesn't lack drama: so much so that the 2023 competition was filmed for an eponymous documentary. The Golden Spurtle had its UK premiere at the Film Festival in August following a hugely successful showing at the Sydney film festival.

One of the stars of the film is Bite's own Tracy Griffen, a three-time competitor and a life-long porridge lover. An Australian-turned-Leith, Tracy is an active member of the local community where she runs a fitness studio alongside her dog, Coco.

When Tracy talks about porridge she sparkles with enthusiasm. "I've always eaten porridge," she told me. "I ate masses of it as a teenager

in Australia - I would make casserole-sized servings. I figure race horses are fueled by oats and they go fast, so it's good fitness fuel. And now I live in the land of porridge - it's amazing!"

With only three ingredients allowed, the results could be a bit same-y. But Tracy says there's quite a variety among the entries, depending on the water used and the type of salt and oats. Malden sea salt usually features in the winner, but Blackthorn Scottish salt also performs well. Winning entries usually use pinhead oats that have been cooked for the maximum time, and often soaked the night before. Tracy insists the judges can taste a difference, and over-salting is a common downfall. "The salt should just be a pinch at the end."

While Tracy isn't competing this year, her appearance in the film means her story is forever part of the Golden Spurtle tradition. "The film really captures what the competition is all about," she tells me. The strong community feel and the quirkiness of the event, which attracts hopeful competitors from around the world, are clear throughout. She adds, "Even though it's a competition and everyone wants to win, it's more about the actual celebration of oats than actually winning the spurtle."

In that spirit of community and celebration, Tracy will be live-streaming this year's competition from her studio in Leith with donations going to Mary's Meals, an organisation that feeds children in some of the world's poorest countries. As she says, "The competition is a bit niche, but the appeal is universal: oats, water and salt make a meal." (Rachel Edwards)

The Golden Spurtle will release 12 September. This year's competition takes place on 4 October and live-streamed at Griffen Fitness, 3 Balfour St, Leith Edinburgh, EH6 5BY

Contestant - Tracy Griffen



What's in Season: Free Palestine!

As I write this, my heart is heavy. The role of food in conflict is deeply symbolic, and in recent times, it has become a poignant issue in the ongoing humanitarian crisis affecting Palestinians. While the events of October 7th, 2023, marked a significant escalation, the roots of this conflict stretch back many decades.

The history of the region is complex and deeply contested, and the situation has evolved into one of the most enduring and painful conflicts in modern history. Many Palestinians have experienced loss of land, homes, and livelihoods, and the expansion of settlements has been a source of deep frustration and resistance.

Palestine has a rich and diverse food culture; it is about family, community and sharing. During the olive season, the whole village would be involved in the harvest. Food would be shared, bread would be broken, and lives would be celebrated along with a good crop.

When Anthony Bourdain visited Gaza, he said, *"All the food I've had so far in Gaza has been very different to anything else I've had in the Arab world – different flavour spectrum."*

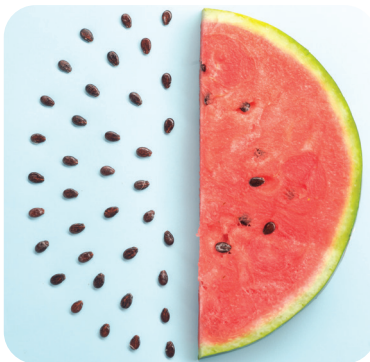
The food has connections with neighbouring regions and cultures, incorporating traditions from Türkiye, Greece, Egypt, and other Levantine influences. Spices and herbs are important; from sumac, a red citrusy spice used to flavour chicken, dips, dressings and of course, za'atar that embodies the essence

of Palestine. It is always on the table along with olive oil and bread. A fragrant mix of oregano, marjoram, sumac, sesame seeds, salt

and sometimes cumin. I've used it mixed with yoghurt to marinade chicken thighs, used it in hummus, falafel, and flatbreads. It is such a versatile spice blend.

I can't imagine how Palestinians must feel not being able to connect to their heritage, their land, their homes, when all around them is devastation and starvation. How do you come back from the brink of annihilation? Have we not learnt anything from history? The most important question, for us as human beings, is, ***"What can we do to help?"*** There are several organisations that are raising funds, including: **Words and Actions for Peace, InSolidarityEdin and Art Workers for Palestine Scotland.**

Keep your eyes peeled for a cakey event, which hopefully will take place towards the end of September. I hope to be collaborating with InSolidarityEdin with this, and if you can contribute any bakes, please feel free to message me on Instagram, @BakersBunny. Thank you! (Lea Harris)



Watermelons are the same colours as the Palestinian flag

Whisky Chat from Topsy Midgie



WHISKY BAR
OF THE YEAR

WHISKY GURU
OF THE YEAR

When Is a Snifter Not a Snifter?

It's a fair question, especially as some questionable habits have crept into whisky tasting etiquette. One concerning trend is bartenders and brand ambassadors encouraging guests to sniff whisky directly from the bottle. This wasn't a thing years ago—and frankly, it needs to stop.

Maybe it's my chef background or just my dislike for unhygienic practices, but I genuinely shudder when I see this at bars and events. Imagine hundreds of people sniffing from the same bottle over time. The germs alone are bad enough—never mind what else could end up inside. I saw this recently at a prestigious whisky bar, and the bartender didn't bat an eye.

Let's be clear: opening a bottle for someone to smell should be banned. Repeated exposure to air alters the whisky's flavour, and alcohol evaporates. Let's preserve our precious liquid. If you see this ungodly practice, call it out. And if you're guilty—don't hang your nose, hang your head.

What's New at Topsy?

We've been enjoying some cracking drams lately. One standout is the Daftmill 2012 Summer Batch Release—great to see the Fife distillery increasing output, with 5,250 bottles compared to just 1,760 in the 2008 release. Elegant Lowland whiskies like this deserve to be enjoyed, not hoarded.

We're also loving the new 18-Year-Old Aberfeldy, matured in refill wood then finished in first-fill Sangiovese casks from Tuscany. Fruity, tannin-led, and retailing around £90, it's the perfect hipflask dram for a crisp autumn hike through Scotland's hills and Munros.



Celebrating Success

A huge shoutout to our Topsy Manager, Lucy, shortlisted for Whisky Guru Rising Star at this year's Dram Awards! With her passion and flair, she's a true contender. By the time you read this, she might be joining me as a fellow Scottish Whisky Guru of the Year. Two Gurus in one bar? We might need a bigger space.

And speaking of accolades, Topsy was Highly Commended at the National Bar Awards in London, making it to the final two for Edinburgh. Well done, Team Topsy!

—Sláinte! (Colin Hinds)

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

Review: **The Captain Darling**

Hello there, Sunday lunch

Since moving to Edinburgh almost nine years ago, I've been for scant few Sunday roasts – something I thought I might have done with more regularity. So, when The Captain Darling opened just up the road from us, offering a roast on its Sunday lunch menu, I was delighted.

Opening in what was Hamilton's, chef Scott Smith of Fhior fame is behind the launch of this new addition to the Stockbridge dining scene, teaming up with the Òir Group – who also own Bodega on Leith Walk and Lucky Yu on Broughton Road.

"I've always wanted to be involved in a pub," Scott says. "I love being able to use the knowledge I've gained over the years and apply that to humble pub food, making sure it retains its comfort and familiarity while paying attention to the quality and details. When I was offered the opportunity to consult on this opening, I jumped at it."



Porchetta

Walking in at lunchtime one sunny Sunday, it immediately felt welcoming. Our table was towards the back, with a candle flickering on it and water served in repurposed Lind and Lime bottles. I'm always pleased to find South African wine on the list – in this case, an Aloe Tree chenin blanc from Simonsvlei Winery in Paarl.

My Dry-aged Sirloin Roast Beef plus all the trimmings, including roast potatoes, was, in a word, delicious. A pleasant surprise was the vivid green Tenderstem broccoli, which was cooked over coals and charred to perfection, and consequently tasty to boot.

Andrew, my fiancé, tried the Porchetta, with two rounds of meat, plus crunchy crackling, and – his addition – baked cauliflower cheese, Connage Gouda, Isle of Mull cheddar and mustard. His succinct summary is "simple and well worth the money", which ties in with Scott's aim to provide "humble, uncomplicated and comforting" food.

We should add that the service was flawless and my Sunday roast outings are certainly going to become more regular now. (Kirsty Wilkins)

Also try:

- Sticky toffee pudding, butterscotch sauce and Mackie's vanilla ice cream
- A dry vodka martini
- And on our list, too, basically anything from the main menu.

The Captain Darling – 16 to 18 Hamilton Place, Edinburgh EH3 5AU
0131 563 0404 thecaptaindarling.com
Open Mon to Sun 10pm to 12am



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, Edinburgh 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 www.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 - www.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 - 2 pm; Dinner - 2 courses £34 - 3 courses £38 with canapé and petit four. Tues -Sat 17.30 - 21.00 **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 Berkmler 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 Garrigue – Regional French cuisine and terroir wines from the Languedoc/Roussillon with spectacular views over Calton Hill. This warm, relaxed bistro brings all the warmth of Provence to you on a plate. Multiple awards include Gordon Ramsay's Best French Restaurant 2010 and a Michelin AA Rosette. Expect the best Scottish produce presented in classic French dishes such as Soupe de Poissons, Canard, Les Coquilles Saint Jacques, Clafoutis, Lavender 37 Listings Crème Brûlée. **0131 557 3032 – 31 Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh – reservations@lagarrigue.co.uk visit www.lagarrigue.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 – www.lapititefolie.co.uk**

Greek

From Kafeneion to STEKI – Traditional Greek taverna specializing in Cretan cuisine, serving small dishes-mezzedakia (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 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, Edinburgh 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, Edinburgh – 0131 281 0526 @Harajukukitchen harajukukitchen.co.uk**



Our Partners

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, Edinburgh, 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**

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 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 – www.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 this is a hidden gem popular with the locals. It is also 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 also around a dozen international & blended whiskies on offer as well as 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 too. 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 – teuchtersbar.co.uk**



Our Partners

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Bite

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 then opens out onto an extensive beer garden & floating pontoon with an outside bar too. This then leads to 'the bothy', another indoor area to escape those odd summer showers. There is an extensive malt whisky selection, around 140, as well as around a dozen international & blended whiskies. The famous 'hoop of destiny' is popular with everyone & was featured on the BBC documentary "Scotch"! The Story of Whisky". There is also a great range of Scottish cask keg & bottled beers as well as a great wine list, gin, rum & soft drinks. Something for all tastes. The eclectic food menu focuses on Scottish produce & is served 7 days a week. Food available everyday til 9pm. Bar open every day 11am-1am. **1a-1c Dock Place, Leith EH6 6LU 0131 554 7427 – www.teuchtersbar.co.uk**

Shopping

TEA TASTINGS

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. **chiyaandchai.com**

MICROGREENS

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**

Upmarket Street Food

Harajuku Street Food Van – Has moved! Now at Edinburgh Street Food at the Omni Centre Award-winning chef Kaori Simpson serves up noodles, poke bowls and sushi burritos. ***Leith St.***

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, Edinburgh 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



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