

# Bite

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Spring 2026

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# In this issue

- 4 Salt 'n' Sauce
- 7 **Review** The Martini Experience
- 8 **Review** The Spence
- 10 **Review** Solti
- 12 **Review** Kochchi
- 15 **Review** Brown's of Leith
- 16 **Review** Jazz Sunday Market Lunch at Bistro Du Vin
- 18 **Review** Down the Hatch
- 19 **Review** Wahaca Edinburgh
- 20 Book Review: *Land, Sea, Hills*
- 22 **Review** Gios
- 24 The Frugal Foodie: Harajuku Kitchen
- 26 Edinburgh Experts on Wine
- 29 **Review** Celestia
- 30 **Review** Station Road Restaurant at The Lovat Hotel
- 31 **Review** Jackton Distillery
- 32 **Review** The Pierhouse Hotel
- 34 What's in Season
- 35 Tippy Midgie Whisky Chat
- 36 **Our Partners**



Mrs Brite

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# Newsy Nibbles

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

find full stories and reviews at [www.bite-magazine.com](http://www.bite-magazine.com)



Scotland's only World Cheese Awards judge, Tanny Gill, has launched **The Scottish Cheese Academy**. The first of its kind in Scotland, the Academy will deliver certified cheese education, as Tanny aims to give Scottish Cheese the global status of Scottish Whisky. The Scottish Cheese Academy will deliver a number of services designed for luxury hotels, fine dining restaurants, retailers, international visitors and cheese lovers. With delivery of the globally recognised Academy of Cheese certified programs — [Scottishcheeseacademy.com](http://Scottishcheeseacademy.com)

## Leith Walk Police

**Box** reopened

February

2026 with new

food pop-ups.

and returning

favourites

including Smoked

Tamago, Selkie

Bakery, Veez

Vegan and The Wee Baker.

The box will also host a

monthly free community meal with Cyrenians Kitchen,

offering hot food made from surplus produce. Food traders

can find pop-up info at [leithwalkpolicebox.com](http://leithwalkpolicebox.com).



A new wine bar is quietly forming in Leith, with **Leith Wine Kitchen** emerging but not yet officially on the books — no filings, no press, no confirmed details. Early signs point to a relaxed, wine-first neighbourhood spot. More as it surfaces.

## Fife Food & Drink Week

is back 7–15 March 2026,

turning the Kingdom into a

nine-day graze of tastings,

tours, pop-ups and market

energy. From chef demos to

farm walks, street-food pairings

to one-off menus, it's a full-tilt

celebration of the makers who

give Fife its flavour. Expect

Bowhouse bustle, Cupar

bites, St Andrews treats and

Dunfermline discoveries —

a proper roam-and-nibble

across the region.

**Jam Bothy** has scored a major win, with its Chilli Jam set to land in 153 Scotmid stores from late March after topping this year's 'Scottish Favourites' competition. It's a huge leap for the Angus producer, which has spent 11 years championing small-batch, seasonal, Scottish-grown preserves. Strawberry Jam follows in May, marking Jam Bothy's move from Bothy-kitchen craft to national-shelf favourite.



**The Beehive Inn** in Edinburgh's Grassmarket reopened in February following a top-to-bottom refurbishment. The 400-year-old pub gained a refreshed ground-floor bar, an open-plan restaurant and a new whisky bar with 100+ drams. The top floor has been revamped for comedy and private events.



Venetian vibes have landed on St Stephen Street with **Bacaro 42**, a cosy new spot pouring natural wines and serving proper Cichetti. Run by Sam and Camilla, it's all about small glasses, salty snacks, and an easy buzz — the kind of place you "just stop in" and somehow stay all night.

Buzzworks has bought **The Nether Abbey Hotel in North Berwick**, marking its first move into accommodation. The long-running family hotel closed mid-January to undergo a seven-figure revamp. A planned return is set for late 2026 with a modern pub, restaurant and 12 redesigned bedrooms. All staff will be retained during the works, with up to 45 new jobs expected once the venue reopens.



**Tea Scotland** has won the **2025 Pioneer Award**, recognising a decade of work establishing tea as a viable Scottish crop. Scottish Tea House also earned a Highly Commended honour for its black tea *The Angels' Share*, with both gardens praised for quality, craft and environmental commitment.





We love this classic **Filt bag** in stock now at **Chez Roger** and perfect for food shopping in Spring! It's classic blue and ecru weave is a French icon. Originally knitted for fishermen in 1860, it eventually became the "it-bag" of French markets because it's practically indestructible and effortlessly cool. It's the definition of Authenticité! Sustainable, chic practical.



## Eat Out Edinburgh

returns to the capital in March, with more than 50 venues expected to take part in the month-long promotion. Following a standout 2025 campaign that delivered a 31% increase in bookings, this year's line-up includes major names like Dishoom, Hawksmoor, Contini and SUSHISAMBA, alongside new additions including Brasserie Prince at The Balmoral and The Caley Bar.



January got very jammy indeed as Scotland's bakers descended on Fife College to see who could supersize an **Empire Biscuit** without structural collapse or existential dread. **Harry Gow** swaggered off with the win thanks to a frankly outrageous **78-inch**

**biscuit**, leaving McGhee's, Company Bakery and John Gillespie & Sons to lick their wounds (and the icing). The whole delicious circus officially fired the starting gun for the Scottish Baker of the Year Awards 2026.

## Papple Steading

near Haddington in East Lothian has unveiled **Eve's Court**, a stylish new restaurant, wine bar, and café that completes the Mackintosh family's multi-year restoration of this historic farm site. Named after Soil Association founder Lady Eve Balfour, who grew up on the estate, the venue features a menu crafted with input from chef Scott Smith and led by head chef Chris O'Connor, spotlighting local gems like Phantassie organic produce and Musselburgh langoustines.

## Review: **The Martini Experience at Dine**

*A masterclass in history and dirty libations*

There's something inherently theatrical about watching a great bartender at work, and at Dine's Martini Experience that role belongs to Will — part-mixologist, part-historian, part-future-lawyer, and entirely captivating.

We'd booked a girls' treat for the 4pm cocktail hour at Dine, perched above The Traverse in Edinburgh's theatre district — a fitting setting for an evening built on performance. Once settled into our comfortable bar stools, perfectly positioned at the polished counter, our spirited seminar begins.

Will guides us through five martinis, each one a chapter in the drink's evolution. We open with the Martinez, the ancestor of the modern martini. Legend tells of a weary traveller passing through the port town of Martinez, California, asking a bartender for "something special" to help him forget his day. What he receives is a silky, aromatic blend of Old Tom gin, sweet vermouth, and bitters — a drink balancing sweetness, spice, and botanical depth.

Another origin story credits Jerry Thomas, the godfather of American bartending, whose

1887 *Bartender's Guide* offered a drier version that nudged the cocktail toward what would eventually become the razor-clean Gin Martini — which we taste next. Crisp, elegant, and uncompromising, it is a reminder of why the classic endures.



From there, we move into cinematic territory with the Vesper, first appearing in *Casino Royale* (1953) and named after Bond's enigmatic heroine, Vesper Lynd. Will explains the famous "shaken, not stirred" instruction: shaking introduces more dilution, chills rapidly, and creates a cloudier texture — a deliberate choice for a high-proof drink like the Vesper.

Then comes the showstopper: the Dukes Martini. Made with No.3 London Dry — its key emblem a nod to the historic Berry Bros. & Rudd parlour at No.3 St James's Street — this gin has been crowned 'World's Best' four times at the International Spirits Challenge. Will follows the iconic Dukes method: spirit poured straight from the freezer into a frosted glass, vermouth merely wafted like perfume, and a long lemon peel cut fresh so its oils fall directly onto the surface. Speed is essential; the result is an arctic-cold martini with zero dilution. We all agree it's a triumph.

For our finale, we choose a satisfyingly filthy Dirty Martini, complete with plump Gordal olives — briny, bold, and the perfect playful ending after the precision of the earlier pours. By the close of the experience, we are equal parts educated and entertained. Will has taken us from 19th-century California to Bond's world of espionage, from the icy austerity of Dukes Bar to the indulgent swagger of a Dirty Martini — all without leaving our seats. His blend of knowledge, humour, and effortless storytelling made the evening sing. (Sharon Wilson)

**Dine —**  
**10 (1F) Cambridge Street, Saltire Court,**  
**Edinburgh, EH1 2ED — 0131 218 1818**  
**[dineedinburgh.co.uk](http://dineedinburgh.co.uk)**

# Review: **The Spence**

*Seasonally-inspired modern classic cuisine at Gleneagles Townhouse*

From the opening pages of Jeremy King's *Without Reservation*, I'm struck by how precisely he captures the overlooked pleasures of eating out — the way restaurants create space for real conversation in a life increasingly dominated by screens, and the visceral thrill of stepping into a room that hums with promise.

The observations resonate sharply as I begin the book fresh from a visit to The Spence, the brasserie inside Gleneagles Townhouse, set within a former Victorian banking hall on St Andrew Square in the heart of Edinburgh.

For once, the lavishly decorated entrance feels perfectly in tune with what lies beyond. The grand corning, the cupola and the island bar honour the building's 200-year history as a bank, while soft table lamps and comfortable fabric seating bring a warmth that suits the polished brasserie setting. It's an inviting backdrop for classic cooking executed with confidence.



Elliott Hill

That sense of promise feels particularly well-timed, as Gleneagles Townhouse has just welcomed a new Executive Chef, Elliott Hill, previously of The Chester Grosvenor, where he elevated Arke to three AA Rosettes within six months and earned recognition from the Michelin Guide. His produce-led approach now shapes the menus across the hotel and private members' club, including The Spence.

We settle into a corner banquette and begin with "nibbles": exquisite mutton croquettes, meat bursting from their crisp shells, and a zesty whipped artichoke dip I instantly want to recreate at home. Seeded flatbreads allow the vegetable to shine. Drawn by Hill's respect for vegetables, I choose the Heritage Beetroot with linseed crispbread, horseradish and Katy Rodger's yogurt — fruity, earthy and beautifully balances for a starter, while Kate opts for the Haggis Fritter, a puck of offal in a moat of parsley sauce, topped with quail egg and pickled mushrooms. She loves the flavour and execution.

By now we're fully immersed in the rhythm of the room — the food, the chat, the friendly service. For mains, Kate has Pork Tenderloin with Stornoway black pudding, cheek, apple, cabbage and mustard; I choose Halibut Cullen Skink, a refined take on the Scottish classic, with wonderfully shredded cabbage as a side. Top marks for heated plates too.

We are too full for the Heather Honey Baked Alaska to share, but I rise to the occasion, and finish with a new addition to the menu: a light, fiery Ginger Cake with caramelised apples, Calvados cream and cookie-dough ice cream — and I am glad I have that extra tummy reserved exclusively for puddings.

Hill is fully attuned to Scotland's natural abundance, which he cooks with a brasserie boldness that makes eating out feel exciting and special. In a city surrounded by exceptional producers, The Spence feels like a fitting showcase — a place where Scottish ingredients, lively cooking and the pleasure of being out in the world come together. (Sharon Wilson)

**The Spence at Gleneagles Townhouse —**  
39 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2AD —  
0131 322 3780 [gleneagles.com](http://gleneagles.com)  
Open Mon-Wed: 7am–9:30pm, Thu-Fri: 7am–10pm, Sat: 8am–10pm, Sun: 8am–9:30pm



Opulent dining room



Afternoon tea



Ginger Cake



Dinner and cocktails

Review: **Solti***The holy grail of Chilli Garlic Chicken found in Edinburgh*

Whenever I venture into a curry restaurant, my go-to dish is Chilli Garlic Chicken. I have had some delightful ones over the years, and some that left a lot to be desired. But, having found the holy grail of the perfect Chilli Garlic Chicken, I feel moved to share my experience.

In the past I've been served up scraggy bits of poultry that were clearly not cooked in the sauce; thin, flavourless gravies and substandard meat, but, when my friends and I recently visited Solti we were treated to an unparalleled delight.

One friend, who is not fond of spice, orders the Butter Chicken, whilst the other opts for the Fish Curry. We all start with Vegetable Pakoras which are light, moist and fluffy — superb with the dipping sauce that accompanies them. Ms Butter Chicken, who has a small appetite, shares some of the Truffle Naan and Mushroom Pilau Rice that the other two of us order. The naan is interesting, though not to my taste, however, Ms Fish Curry seems to enjoy it.

There is only one cardamom pod in the rice which is easy to spot and pick out before its

perfumy flavour spoils what is an otherwise delicious meal. The rice is flavoursome and packed with pieces of mushroom. Admittedly, it is a feat only achieved by the most woeful of establishments to get rice wrong, but this dish is perfect. It also complements my main dish, the Chilli Garlic Chicken I have been so looking forward to.

When the dish arrives in its little copper pot the aroma is heady, only heightening my sense of anticipation. Spooning it onto my plate, I am keenly aware that I am about to taste something special, as is proved with the first mouthful. The smooth, succulent sauce is redolent with the aromas of garlic and spices, and chock-full of tender chunks of perfectly marinated chicken breast. It is a joy for the nose and the tongue. So what if I'd be garlicky for the next three days — it would be worth it for the existential elation of finally finding the perfect Chilli Garlic Chicken!

There are whole chillies in the sauce — easy to pick out for a milder strength of dish. Arguably, they are unnecessary, as the flavour of the sauce without them is exquisite. It is delicate yet full of exotic charm and I leave not a drop.

I previously tried other Nepalese restaurants locally, but none can be compared to the marvellous experience of Solti. Since the initial visit with my friends, I have returned every couple of months, enjoying the same meal each time. It has not once dipped in quality and I intend to go again. (Eileen Taylor)

**Solti — 10 Drummond Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH8 9TU — 0131 374 2515**  
[www.soltiedinburgh.co.uk](http://www.soltiedinburgh.co.uk)  
**Open Mon-Thur noon-10.30pm,**  
**Fri-Sun noon-11pm**



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# Review: **Kochchi**

12

*The rhythm and theatre of Sri Lankan food in Glasgow*

**Bits**

It took 2500 bookings before it even opened, and as a result the owners felt compelled to close their new restaurant to walk-ins for the first few days. What, you might wonder, was the attraction? An expertly-curated social media campaign? That obviously helped, but the location of Kochchi, Glasgow's new Sri Lankan restaurant, must surely have played a part.

It's situated down a very cute mews lane off Byres Road in the city's bustling West End, is close to the University of Glasgow and its numerous students of various ethnicities, and has taken over the space previously occupied by the popular Hanoi Bike Shop - and Stravaigin before that. (Incidentally, Stravaigin's strapline, painted onto the red brick exterior, was "Think global, eat local" to chime with the ethos of its original owner, Ronnie Clydesdale, who opened the Ubiquitous Chip here in 1971 before moving it across the road to its current location. Stravaigin was its wee sister, run by Clydesdale's son Colin). That "global-local" ethos will be continued at Kochchi.

I only mention this last comment in my rather convoluted intro because immediately



on entering Kochchi and meeting co-owners and best pals Suki Jayaratne and Shehan Fernando, I feel their love and affection for the little building and for what

they have to offer. It's their first stand-alone restaurant, following on from their popular small kitchen at Edinburgh's Bonnie & Wild food market where they showcase Sri Lanka's rich culinary heritage through flame-cooked street food. Kochchi adds to this with new dishes including regional curries, grilled seafood, street-style snacks, and flame-fired plates that celebrate the island of Sri Lanka's coastal and urban flavours.

"As soon as we saw this building, we knew it was for us as it reminded us of home," Suki told me. A £500,000 investment has transformed its rather tired previous iteration. Whitewashed internal walls, a large wall-to-wall state of the art bar on the ground floor, wooden beams and a swooping wooden ceiling fan on the first floor, and French doors leading out to a small heated balcony with lush greenery, all add to the sense of tropical heat, space and light. The red brick early 20th century exterior exudes a new warmth.

This warmth is reflected in the menu — whose meat and seafood, I'm happy to report, is supplied by Campbells of Linlithgow. Actually, warmth morphs into heat, sometimes fiery heat, in the likes of a Kochchi starter of Mutton Roll. This South Sri Lankan street food snack is deceptively wrapped in a crisp pastry, deep fried breadcrumbs, and generously filled with minced mutton and potato. I get the full flavour of the meat before my tastebuds are whacked by its spicy hit. I love it. This is followed by a pungent, smoky Black Pork Kotthu, which Shehan says was a dish he lived on as a teenager. "You hear it before you see it," he said, referring to its preparation: the pork belly is bashed by metal plates against a hot plate to ease its shredding. I think that in flavour



Curry



Kohlu



Sri Lankan Scottish tarts



Soury Hopper

and texture it is a bit like a cross between Nasi Goreng and Biryani, though with a stronger kick of dark roasted curry powder, tamarind, vinegar, ginger and a range of flavours wok-cooked with chopped vegetables and flatbreads.

A Colombo Chicken Curry is simply magnificent for its depth of new-to-me flavours, and a serving of hot devilled prawns comes with the added relief of a topping of cool, fresh sliced veggies.

Overall, the heat feels somehow sharper and fresher than in some more familiar Indian dishes, which intrigues me. The reason perhaps is because all the single-origin tropical spices used here at Kochchi are sourced from artisan growers back home. These flavours can be sourced from all over Sri Lanka, whose climate in the north differs from that in the south. Shehan grew up

in the Nuwara Eliva tea country hills, while Suki grew up around Kandy in the central highlands. The friends worked together in Colombo, the island's capital on the West Coast, where the various influences merged in a culinary culture they describe as "rhythm and theatre".

With that rhythm and theatre now centred in the sprawling energy of Glasgow's cosmopolitan West End, the world is surely Sri Lanka's oyster. (Cate Devine)

***Cate Devine is an award-winning food journalist.***

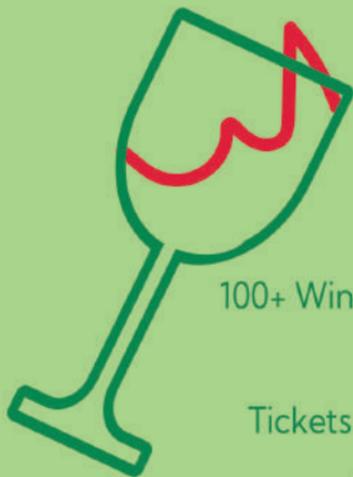
***Kochchi — Glasgow, Ruthven Lane, Glasgow G12 9BG [www.kochchi.co.uk](http://www.kochchi.co.uk) Open daily 12noon-10pm***



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# Review: **Brown's of Leith**

*The Shore is Alive with the Buzz of Brown's*

15

**Bite**

Wow! It's not a reaction I have often to new spaces, but the revitalisation of George Brown and Son Engineering works is really something. Leith is a hotbed of culinary, architectural and creative talent. Always has been, always will be. What better transformation of this recently vacated warehouse than to a new town square?

Wander through the iconic double doors from The Shore into a zone of foodie zen. There are comfortable chairs and easy access counter tops to order scrum and refreshments. I visit on the windiest Friday of the year with my trusty companion, pug Coco by my side. The staff have time to chat, everything is so fresh and there's sun streaming through the windows highlighting steam rising from the pizza ovens. I'm in!

Civerinos Margherita Pizza is deliciously crisp and cut into small sharing size pieces; very thoughtful as I certainly don't get the pizza to myself. Tomato sauce umami-rich in flavour contrasts beautifully with a slightly charred super-thin crust. It's obvious why they are included in the Top Pizza restaurants in the world by Time Out (ranked 13th on a list of the 19 best pizzas globally in March last year).

Timberyard and Montrose can do no wrong and continue their winning streak with inhouse drinks counter Haze. "Blurring lines between morning coffee & evening wine" is a fabulous approach and makes a lot of sense given Brown's is open for a full twelve hours, four days a week. It's a good choice of blurred lines and the coffee is very decent too. Nibbles will appear on the menu as the venue develops. For the meantime, you'll need to go down there yourself to find out.

Shrimpwreck is in there too, offering dishes fresh from the sea. It's on the list for next time.

Brown's is a work in progress, and soon will also be home to a community of artists and architects. I'm looking forward to their events too, both over winter and when summer eventually returns. The Shore has always been a rewarding weekend wander, and this opening from Gunnar Groves-Raines of Custom House (just across the water) has added another jewel to Leith's highly decorated culinary crown. (Tracy Griffen)

***Brown's of Leith — 4-6 Shore, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6QS Open Thu-Sun: 8am-8pm [customlane.co/brownsfleith](http://customlane.co/brownsfleith)***



# Review: **Jazz Sunday Market Lunch**

*Continental decadence at Bistro du Vin*

Typically hungover, and feeling UTTERLY wretched, these Social Bitches have risen from the dead.

Despite the pain, odd dizzy spell, and inability to focus, we somehow find ourselves impeccably dressed, and seeking solace at Bistro Du Vin's Jazz Sunday Market Lunch. Ding Dong!

The soundtrack to our arrival: La Vie En Rose, a beautiful live performance, pitched at the perfect volume for both atmosphere and conversation – should we actually be up to the task.

Come the chorus, we're enjoying the best table, a bottle of fizz we didn't even have to ask for, and the welcome company of our host Alexi. So very french, and just the right amount of flirty, he warmly encourages us to self-medicate while he explains the workings of a Roast Du Vin.

It begins with a visit to the French Market Table. An enticing buffet of saucy entrees that includes the creamiest chicken liver pâté —

so, double helping thanks — freshly baked bread, seafood, salad, charcuterie, and even a choice of soups.

In our rush to sample EVERYTHING, it seems one of us [ who shall remain nameless ] has inadvertently tucked the tablecloth into his trousers. Fortunately, Isaac's gym-honed reaction times — and accompanying judgy scowl — save us from an almighty crash of cutlery and champagne flutes.

Table tidied, trousers adjusted, we're now taking our typical fatty-boom approach. Soon discovering the pâté is totes to die for, as is the salmon — both smoked and au naturel — along with a refreshing salad of feta, fennel & pomegranate, plus a large serve of Jamón and tangy cornichons.

Shamelessly, we're also thinking why not a piping hot bowl of French Onion Soup, and yes, alright then, a restorative Cullen Skink as well. Both a delight. Then, finally, we can dive into a roast lunch with ALL the trimmings, plus a cheeky bottle of Albariño.

Trying both the Sirloin of Beef and the Chicken, we're thrilled to say they're cooked to perfection, generous in both flavour and proportion. Best of all — for those of us who love a good stuffing — it's chestnut! Rich, buttery and wonderfully sweet, demanding an immediate encore.

Then, after a small respite and “just one more” bottle of Albariño, we're on to dessert. While Isaac wisely opts for the Pot de Chocolat — with pistachio & cranberries — lovely Alexi encourages yours truly to go off-menu for a home baked Tarte au Citron with raspberry gelato.



Derek & Isaac are The Social Bitches

Such intensity of flavour, such joy! Especially when paired with a naughty glass or three of Tokaji Late Harvest...

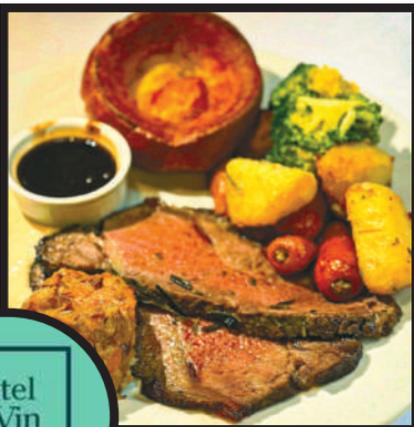
Even better, now into our fourth hour of this fabulous lunch, all traces of that crippling hangover have vanished, and we're wondering if lovely Alexi would care to join us for cocktails, maybe dancing??  
(The Social Bitches)

**Bistro Du Vin —**  
**11 Bristo Place, Edinburgh EH1 1EZ**  
**Jazz Sunday Market Lunch is the last Sunday of every month. 2 courses £29.95 / 3 courses £34.95**  
[/www.hotelduvin.com/food-drink/sunday-lunch/](http://www.hotelduvin.com/food-drink/sunday-lunch/)

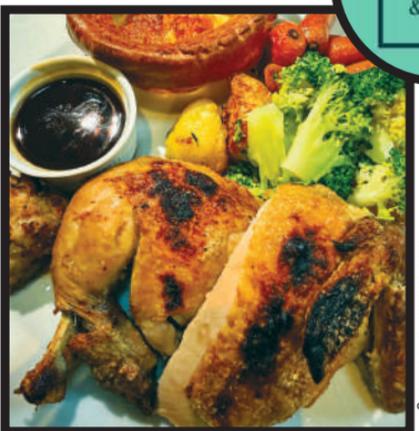
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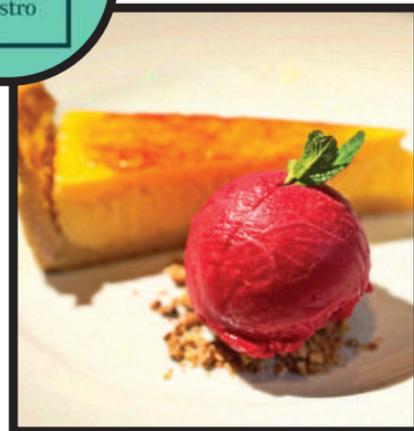
French Market Table



Sirloin of Beef



Roast Chicken and Stuffing



Tarte au Citron and Raspberry

Hotel  
du Vin  
& Bistro

# Review: Down the Hatch

*A taste of Canada without the flight*

*Usually found steering our Off the Trolley column, Rachel Edwards has been temporarily released from the Bite kitchen and dispatched on a mission only a Canadian could truly judge: reviewing Edinburgh's own slice of home, Down the Hatch.*

I moved to Scotland from Canada so long ago that homesickness is a bit of a dull ache I rarely notice: until I walk into Down the Hatch. It's hard to define what makes a burger place Canadian, but I know it when I find it.

Walls are decorated with hockey jerseys, Canadian stickers, flags and ice skates. The big screen is showing Hockey Night in Canada. An older couple at the adjacent table are visiting from the south of England. She hasn't been "home" in 10 years and is emotional because she says it feels so Canadian. I'm suddenly a bit overcome.

A friendly waiter from Tor-ono (we don't pronounce the second T) delivers the menu and calls my son "buddy". I'm about to start singing Bryan Adams to anyone who will listen. But instead I order a rootbeer: a caramel-flavoured cola that smells of bubblegum, probably the closest North America gets to Irn Bru. Canadian beer, spirits and cocktails are also on offer.



Rachel with her beloved rootbeer

Then into the food: a Hail Caesar burger for me. The classic Canadian combo of chicken strips and Caesar salad is here served in a bun with a topping of crispy bacon. Delicious. But if you want to try all the hits on the menu, bring an 18-year old with you. What they lack in verbosity they make up for in stomach capacity. My son had the G.O.A.T. — a bacon cheeseburger with onion rings. "Very good," he says. He washes this down with the Mac 'n' Cheese of the day (Korean BBQ Chicken) and a basket of assorted Chicken Wings. The mac could have been cheesier but is still enjoyable. Crispy Buffalo Wings are his star of the night.

We share a side of Poutine: perhaps Canada's best known culinary export. I don't usually stray beyond the classic (chips, cheese curds and gravy), but we both really enjoy the maple bacon option. As my son says, "no notes."

If we have one disappointment it is the desserts. The otherwise meticulously Canadian menu falls short here, with only milkshakes on offer. Some Canadian desserts (yes, we do have them) or flavours would round out the evening.

Down the Hatch isn't just for the expat. This is great burger and fries fare that anyone in need of a big feed (topped with cheese and bacon) will appreciate. A taste of the true North, without the transatlantic flight. (Rachel Edwards)

**Down the Hatch —**  
**13 Antigua Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3NH —**  
**0131 374 5566 [downthehatchdiner.com](http://downthehatchdiner.com)**  
**Open Sun-Thurs 12 noon-11pm,**  
**Fri & Sat 12 noon to midnight**

Review:

# Wahaca Edinburgh

*For plant-based and zero-alcohol dining*

19

**Bite**

Wahaca brings big flavour and easygoing charm to plant-based dining, with vibrant small plates, standout tacos, and a zero-proof drinks list to boot if that's your bag.

Sometimes you just have to treat yourself, not in the Michelin-starred, white-tablecloth sense, but in the way that warms your stomach and sparks something in you at the same time. That's Wahaca.

Stepping into the Edinburgh restaurant — all high ceilings, colour-splashed walls and playful cave energy — you're met with smiles and spicy aromas that wrap around you instantly. The bar glistens like a jewel waiting to be claimed, and the chefs bustle in the open kitchen, ready for action.

The menu is extensive, but tonight my friend Matilda is sticking to her vegetarian lane, and I'm staying firmly in my non-drinker one. I'm a carnivore at heart, yet the veggie options have me salivating.

The real challenge is choosing. There are several I-Have-Amazing-Food shoulder wiggles throughout the meal — always a reliable metric — but Matilda and I still debate the top spot. Is it the creamy, jalapeño-laced Butter Bean & Confit Garlic Dip? The divine Halloumi Al Pastor Tacos crowned with pineapple salsa (from someone who doesn't even like halloumi)? Actually, no. It has to be the Crispy Cauliflower Bites with roasted jalapeño allioli. One bite and I know this platito will haunt me for days.

And then, the drinks. As a non-drinker, I rarely indulge the way others do — maybe a Coca-Cola if I'm feeling reckless — but Wahaca's mocktails demand attention. I start with the Mini Non-Alc Trio flight: a Cucumber, Jalapeño & Basil Smash; a tropical Pineapple & Passion Fruit Picante; and a Blackberry Sour. Genius. After tasting their divine flavours, Matilda and I immediately order two full-sizers. We're indulging, after all.

Speaking of indulgence, no Mexican meal is complete without cinnamon-dusted churros taking a slow-motion dive into rich chocolate sauce. And because we've long abandoned any pretence of restraint, we add two scoops of gelato on the side. Why not? Life's too short for half-measures. (Bronwyn Eley)



Non-alcoholic Mini Margarita Trio

**Wahaca Edinburgh** —  
16 South St Andrew St, Edinburgh EH2 2AU  
0131 564 3850 — [wahaca.co.uk](http://wahaca.co.uk)  
Open Mon–Tues 12–9pm; Wed–Sun 12pm–10pm



**WAHACA**

# Land, Sea & Hills

Interview with Emma Bouget,  
Manager of  
East Lothian Food and Drink

## **What makes East Lothian such a special county for food and drink?**

East Lothian has an extraordinary geographic, fertile farmland, a stunning coastline and rolling heather-clad hills, all within a compact area. This diversity shapes what we grow, make, catch, brew, and bake. Add this to a strong sense of community and collaboration and you have a food and drink scene that is high quality but also deeply rooted in place.

## **What can readers expect to find in the book?**

What started out as a recipe book soon developed into storytelling about the people of East Lothian and why they do what they do, tied to the landscape and traditions of the area.

## **Were there any stories you uncovered that particularly resonated with you?**

The common theme is the quiet determination shared by so many producers. People who have chosen a harder more thoughtful route. Whether this is farming regeneratively, building a business from scratch slowly or reviving traditional skills, there's a clear sense of purpose and pride that runs through the county.

## **Any surprising facts about the area's food and drink that others might not know of?**

What has surprised many is just how much is produced here and to such a high standard. East Lothian is also known as 'Scotland's bread basket' or 'Scotland's food and drink county'.

Scotland, East Lothian

# Land, Sea & Hills



*Celebrating the recipes, flavours and people who capture the spirit of the county*

*Includes recipes by  
MARTIN WISHART, SHIRLEY SPEAR,  
TUM KITCHEN & MARK CONTINI*

## **Are there any dishes/products unique to the region?**

Yes, but it is the interpretation that is unique. East Lothian lamb, pork, potatoes, barley, and seafood are exceptional in their own right, but what makes them special is how the local producers and cooks work with them. Keeping things simple and letting the ingredients speak for themselves.

## **The photography is beautiful – what was it like working with Amanda Farnese-Heath and why were the visuals so important?**

Working with Amanda was such a joy. I have known her for many years and always admired her ability to create magic in her photoshoots. In my mind, the visuals are vital as the book needed to bring in the essence of the people we were photographing. We did not want anything over styled or curated as we wanted the essence of the people to shine through and tell their own unique story. Amanda's photography helps tell that story instantly, and emotionally.

### **Anything else you'd like to share?**

The book is a collaboration. From the openness and generosity of East Lothian businesses that helped build the book, the editor and photography, designer and illustrator to the East Lothian producers, makers, and supporters. We hope it encourages people to shop locally, eat seasonally and feel so proud of what is on their doorstep, and those further afield to plan a holiday to East Lothian to discover it, too.

\*\*\*

**Fiona Richmond, Head of Regional Food for Scotland Food & Drink**

**Emma Bouget is Business Manager for Land, Sea and Hills.**

**Books can be purchased directly from [www.landseahills.co.uk](http://www.landseahills.co.uk) and various local stockists. If you would like to stock this book please go to the website or follow @landseahills on Instagram**



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# Review: **Gio's**

*One year on — A slice of modern Italy*

When the glitz and razzle of a Friday and Saturday night are over and you want a quiet meal out, no drama; to wear something low key... chill but ever on trend and a space with some cachet, comfort and good fare — where do you choose?

Neighbourhood restaurants vary and Sunday nights in Edinburgh can be dismal, especially if you are the only diners... never the case in London of course with its plethora of cool, budget Asian restaurants, empanada corners and discreet eateries; think Shoreditch or Hoxton... food flame-cooked and pasta homemade, cut or rolled; or Peckham with its white-walled candlelit wine bars; intimate and warm cave-like dwellings offering sumptuous small plates and its bottle shops, high stool and smooth wooden bench chic.

However, one year on, Gio's in the up and coming Shandon area seemed to fit the bill.

Giorgio Pia, the moving spirit behind the venture, is somewhat of a celebrity. Having

built his reputation through his lockdown cook-at-home pasta kits, live cookery demos at the Lamborghini Dealership and having twice won the award of the UK's Best Pasta Chef from the Pasta and Italian Food Association (2016 and 2021), he is a well experienced chef, building his skills, both culinary and commercial, in restaurants across Scotland's Central belt.

Gio's choice of location in Edinburgh was an interesting one, since the restaurant/food space has been owned and has failed time after time. But on entering, having threaded your way past a counter where there is serious pasta making before your very eyes and by not one but several sfoglino (artisan pasta makers)... you find yourself in what feels like downtown Manhattan. This is Don-like sophistication and glitz and I feel Frank Sinatra, maybe even the entire Rat Pack, might appear at any moment.

The Sunday night feeling well behind us we survey a tempting, creative and well considered list of food offerings.

Although neither cream with pasta or pineapple on pizza are traditional in Italy, and may cause some shock even to a Fiorentino, maybe a Milanese too, both cream and pineapple on pizza are nonetheless sought after in these parts as Gio wisely recognises. However alongside that, mozza frita, burrata with a focaccia crisp, Pici (hand-rolled thick spaghetti) in a pesto of kale and walnut with sun-dried tomatoes and a pea risotto with guanciale and parmigiano, not forgetting the nduja pesto and garlic dip allay any fears about authenticity.

The list of pizzas available alla romana (thin, crisp and flat... like Grandma made it!) or alla napoletana, a thick and charred commicione surround, thin in the middle, is extensive.



Giorgia Pia

Olive all'ascolana (deep fried stuffed olives) are hard to find outside Italy, indeed outside Le Marche in central Italy and even then, not always well done.. the days of women expert in the art of stuffing and twice frying these tiny fruits are well gone. Gio's are absolutely delicious... fat, full and crisp. The Zucchini Fritti although a little small, also crisp, crunchy and plentiful. My Pasta Aglio e Olio, rarely seen on a menu, is a memorable experience: it is moistened by a scant, light sauce, made I think from the pasta water; in addition to the garlic, olive oil and anchovy sauce, the chilli adds a touch of heat to lift the dish and the occasional surprise pop of tiny whole tomatoes give delightful sweetness in contrast.

My partner chooses a romana style pizza adapted from the Pizza Napoli list with the addition of artichokes... a little sparse... but the dough and fruity sugo among the best in the city.

Espresso is always on point in a serious Italian restaurant, and the Sangiovese Rosé merits at the very least, a second glass. The cocktails list has many of the usual favourites including an on-trend Hugo spritz; zero alcohol beer is available and also grappa.

Tempting... but that will be for another visit on a Saturday night!! (Anne Pia)

**Anne Pia is a food writer and author of *Magnaccioni My Food My Italy* amongst many other things.**

**Gio's —  
41 Slateford Rd, Edinburgh. EH11 1PR 0131  
3221800 — [giosedinburgh.co.uk](http://giosedinburgh.co.uk)**

**Open Mon-Thur 4-10pm, Fri-Sun 12-10pm**



Tiramisu



Olive all'ascolana with Ndulia Mayo



# The Frugal Foodie

## Bargain Bento at Harajuku Kitchen

For those of us who work full time and not in the centre of town, a weekday lunch out is a rare treat, and this is often where the best deals can be found.

Though a well-known name to me, my only previous experience of Harajuku Kitchen was the excellent gyoza stall at Stockbridge Market, and I learn that this is where the company started out originally, before opening their award-winning restaurant in Bruntsfield in 2013.



Authenticity is very important in the growing world of sushi restaurants, and Harajuku has it in spades. Owner Kaori Simpson's father was an international tuna trader and she grew up helping in her mother's Japanese restaurants in Hong Kong. And if those credentials weren't enough, the restaurant is official caterer for the Consulate General of Japan, Scottish Japan society and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Scotland.

The space is small and cosy yet somehow also manages to resonate calm — a feeling reinforced by the friendly and relaxed service. We are here to sample the Weekday Lunch Teishoku Set, priced at a very reasonable £18.00. Diners can choose two dishes from a range of options, which

are served along with rice, pickle, miso soup and unlimited Genmai cha tea.

We choose the Kaiso Seaweed Salad, always a favourite; the Fluffy Potato Salad, which is cold mashed potato with Kewpie mayo, cucumber, carrots and sliced onion, surprisingly delicious; the Kara-age Chicken, crispy and super succulent fried chicken with daikon dare sauce; and Tonkatsu, Panko breaded pork cutlet with mustard and katsu-miso sesame sauce.

Greedy as ever, and remembering happy days at Stockbridge Market, we can't resist adding the Devil Dumplings from the specials — with Naga chilli seasoned pork, Chinese leaf, lemongrass and garlic — which are a very tasty addition at £8.90. I am delighted to see that all the pork is free range and sourced from the Borders, which no doubt adds to its great flavour and juicy texture.

As the food is such good value, we feel justified in indulging in a cocktail. I choose the Spicy Yuzu & Sea Buckthorn Margarita special which, like the food, is flavourful and well balanced — a real winter restorer that is also available as a mocktail. The Harajuku Kitchen lunch menu is a bargain not to be missed, but I will definitely be back to try the full menu — Apple Gyoza with Matcha Ice Cream being first on my list! (Diana Turner)

**Harajuku Kitchen Japanese Bistro —**  
**10 Gillespie Place, Edinburgh EH10 4HS**  
**0131 285 8182 [harajukukitchen.co.uk](http://harajukukitchen.co.uk)**  
**Open Mon-Fri: 12-2:15pm, 5-9:15pm,**  
**Sat: 12-9:45pm; Sun: 12-3:15pm, 5-9:15pm**



Ice Cream filled Mochi



Tonkatsu and Spicy Yuzu &amp; Buckthorn Cocktail



Twishoku Sei Bento



# WINE

## Three Edinburgh Wine Lists Built on Passion

Each issue, Diana Thompson of Wine Events Scotland sits down with three wine personalities who are shaping and writing their lists. Their shared mission is to make wine feel approachable while curating selections that are both engaging and easy to navigate.

From restaurants to pop-ups, this month's conversations explore how they build their lists, the bottles they hope you'll discover, and their advice for finding your way through their selections.

This edition brings together Eve from Spry Wines, Ghislaine from The Green Room, and Miguel from Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion — revealing a collective passion for curiosity, discovery, and wines that tell a story.

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WINE LIST?

**Spry Wines:** Our list is designed to encourage people to try something new while challenging preconceptions around grapes and styles they think they already know. We want guests to feel curious, not overwhelmed.

**The Green Room:** It's intentionally mixed up. You start on page one and finish on page fourteen. The idea is to encourage people to enjoy reading the list, explore it, and not get stuck choosing wine by price.

**Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion:** Our lists are highly rotational. Each Nomadic Wine Bar runs under a different theme — a region, a grape, or a small group of producers. Wines are organised by style, so people know what to expect, even if they don't recognise the names.

### WHICH WINES WOULD YOU MOST LIKE GUESTS TO TRY?

**Spry Wines:** *Dzik* by Dom Bliskowice, an orange Chardonnay blend from Poland, is a great example of the quality coming from independent Polish producers. For red, *Espartal BP* by Mendall — a Catalan Grenache with deep berry fruit and farmyard funk — is challenging but incredibly rewarding.

**The Green Room:** If we're talking reds, *Domaine Rimauresq* from Provence or *Erffenis* from Wellington, South Africa. Both are expressive wines which work beautifully with food.

**Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion:** *Boas Vides* by Antonio Miguez, made from co-planted indigenous varieties in Ribeiro, revives the style of medieval wines once more prized than Bordeaux. *Socaire* by Primitivo Collantes is an unfortified Palomino aged in Fino cask — saline, textured and completely unique.

### HOW DO YOU APPROACH FOOD PAIRING?

**Spry Wines:** *Dzik* works wonderfully with crab and Jerusalem artichoke on a sourdough crumpet — seafood and orange wine is a great match, and the artichoke's earthiness complements the wine's tannins. *Espartal BP* is bold but shines with game, like our half partridge with medlar jus and dukkah-coated carrots.

**The Green Room:** Both of my choices are perfect with roast lamb and herbs or a Daube de Bœuf Provençale. They're classic, comforting pairings that allow the wines to show their true character.

**Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion:** *Boas Vides* pairs beautifully with venison, roasted beets and gremolata — the wine's iron-like, earthy notes mirror the meat. Socaire is stunning with roasted celeriac and pan-fried cod, brought together with beurre blanc.

### WHAT ADVICE DO YOU GIVE DINERS CHOOSING A WINE?

**Spry Wines:** Be open-minded. Natural wines don't always behave as expected, so it helps to approach them without assumptions. Also, try a region you haven't had before — some of our most exciting wines come from unexpected places.

**The Green Room:** Please talk to us — after a few questions, I usually suggest a few wines — including one that's completely different from what the guest normally drinks. Trying something new is always worthwhile.

**Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion:** Engage with us. Wine is food, not something to be intimidated by. Tell us what you like or how adventurous you're feeling, and we'll guide you.

### WHAT ELSE DEFINES YOUR WINE LIST?

**Spry Wines:** Sustainability is a major focus. We work closely especially with British growers to reduce our carbon footprint and also to create stronger connections between producers and guests.

**The Green Room:** The list is always evolving. I attend as many tastings as possible, but the wines have to speak to me — if there's no connection, I move on.

**Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion:** We avoid technical jargon and focus on people and provenance. Low-intervention wines, when done well, can be both expressive and precise.

Together, these three wine lists show that curiosity, conversation and confidence are at the heart of Edinburgh's most exciting wine experiences. Enjoy! (Diana Thompson)



**Eve Murphy**  
Supervisor at  
Spry Wines & Wine Bar



**Ghislain 'Gigi' Aubertel**  
Co-owner & Director of  
The Green Room



**Miguel Crunia**  
Sommelier and Owner of  
Nomadic Wine Bars by Fion



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Celestia, the contemporary Indian restaurant on Eyre Place, has introduced a new lunch menu built around bold flavour, refined technique, and strong value — and early visits suggest it delivers on all three.

Priced at £15.95 for vegetarian and £19.95 for non-vegetarian, the menu offers an appetiser, main, and accompaniment, giving diners a flexible, flavour-forward midday option that feels polished without drifting into formality.

Opened in April 2025, Celestia pairs modern Indian cooking with sleek, atmospheric interiors: emerald banquettes, purple and amber lighting, a sculptural chandelier, and spicy-brown marbled tables that glow warmly even on a grey Edinburgh afternoon. The restaurant is the latest project from Mohammed Abbas of Cilantro, whose reputation for elevating Indian cuisine continues to grow, bolstered by Celestia's recent Best Newcomer win at the Asian Curry Awards.

Lunch begins with crisp poppadoms and a thoughtful trio of accompaniments: crunchy half-cloves of garlic tempered with mustard seeds; a coral-pink roasted-tomato dip with gentle smoky sweetness; and a pale green cooling sauce that goes beyond a standard raita, blending mint, cilantro yogurt, and citrus.

Starters show similar care. Crispy Onion Fritters, lighter than a traditional pakora, let strands of onion and veg fry to a delicate crisp,

finished with pomegranate, beetroot, and a fine mirepoix of red pepper. Bhatti Murgh offers tender, well-textured chicken with a hot sauce on the side, while Paneer Tikka Kebab brings buttery, moreish cheese with glossy peppers and more of that excellent mint-green dip. The tandoor's subtle smoke threads through many dishes.

Mains continue the theme of confident, balanced cooking. A Scottish Lamb Curry arrives with tender meat in a warmly spiced sauce, while the Goan Fish Curry impresses by keeping the fillet firm and structured — avoiding the willlet that often comes from strong marinades.

For a quicker option, the separate Celestia Lunch Plate menu offers standalone dishes such as Mince Meat Seek (£13.95), Masala Fish & Chips (£12.95), Jashila Chicken Tikka (£12.95), and Paneer Tikki (£11.95).

Dessert negotiations end in a shared pistachio-mint Kulfi with bright, clean flavour and syrup-soaked Gulab Jamun streaked with saffron. Mint tea closes a meal that feels generous yet sensibly portioned.



Lunch is served daily from 1pm–3pm, offering Edinburgh diners a vibrant, modern alternative to the standard midday meal. (Sharon Wilson)

**Celestia —**  
**18 Eyre Pl, Edinburgh**  
**EH3 5EP**  
**[celestiarestaurant.co.uk](http://celestiarestaurant.co.uk)**  
**Open every day 1-10pm,**  
**Lunch 1-3pm.**

# Review: Station Road Restaurant

The Lovat Hotel, Fort Augustus

30

Bites

Sean Kelly's cooking confirms what we all already know: Scotland has the finest larder in the world.

Nestled above the Caledonian Canal in The Lovat Hotel, this Highland retreat is where Sean forages, crafts and experiments with a deep respect for Scotland's culinary past. His avant-garde tasting menu recalls volumes such as *A Caledonian Feast* by Annette Hope, yet also, feels utterly of the moment.

He tells me he would like to "not cook with lemons at all," responding to my praise of a Chicken Liver Parfait encased in citrusy sea buckthorn. "We can get fruit flavours from foraging and fermentation," he explains. "We don't have to fly lemons to Scotland."

I notice the chef's tweezers in his pocket — tools used to carefully place vibrant lemon verbena leaves atop a dish of Shetland Brown Crab and Garden Apple. It is the freshest, most mouth-watering plate I've eaten, made even better by an accompanying earthenware pot of velvety Partan Bree, Scotland's answer to bouillabaisse.



Hazelnut Ice Cream



Atlantic Halibut



The Lovat, Inverness

Cod Roe in herb moss, heaped on Beremeal and Treacle Bannock, is beautifully complemented by a glass of English Pinot Gris. Foraged Mushrooms with pumpkin seeds and pumpkin espuma prove that simple ingredients, elevated with thought and skill, can reach three-rossette standard. Sean trained with Roux at one stage.

When asked if he wants a star, Sean replies that what he would really like is a full restaurant in the off-season. I think it's the perfect time to visit, offering exclusivity, peace and crisp Highland sunshine.

Atlantic Halibut and Highland Lamb courses maintain the high standard, while desserts astonish again. "Auld Man's Milk" is a Scottish eggnog, in this instance cradling an intense purple sorbet made from local blackcurrants — equal to any continental brûlée or caramel.

A Tart made with flour milled from inner silver birch bark yields crisp pastry, a vessel for chocolate soil. Petit fours include mead pâte de fruit, a sea buckthorn chocolate, and a showstopping Hazelnut Ice Cream tasting like the very essence of nut — encased in a chocolate cigar, dusted with 'green moss', and served on a bowl of real woodland sticks.

Breakfast continues the respect for Scottish foodways. Foraged mushrooms, with haggis, black pudding and sourdough all homemade and not a baked bean in sight! (Sharon Wilson)

**Station Road Restaurant —**  
**At The Lovat Hotel in Loch Ness,**  
**Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire, PH32 4DU,**  
**Scotland — 01320 351 207**  
**[thelovat.com/dining/station-road-restaurant](http://thelovat.com/dining/station-road-restaurant)**  
**Open Tue-Sat 6:30-10pm. Closed Sun-Mon.**

# Review: **Jackton Distillery**

*Previews their first Single Malt*

31

**Bite**

Six years after filling their very first cask, the (mostly female) family team at Jackton Distillery are ready to lift the lid on their inaugural RAER Single Malt this year.

The distillery sits on the Kean family's former farm in South Lanarkshire. Their blended Scotch, RAER, has already earned awards and a loyal following for its easy-drinking, inclusive style. But the single malt has always been the family's quiet north star.

On a trip to the distillery sisters Claragh and Jaynie tell stories of growing up on a farm and how it has influence their business. They have a deep respect for the natural world, be it livestock, landscape or sustainability.

This spark runs through everything at Jackton. The draff feeds their cattle. Water is reused. Heat from distillation warms the buildings. "Nothing is wasted and everything comes full circle," adds Jacob Kean, who oversees farm operations. "Embracing the circular economy isn't just eco-friendly — it makes our whisky more authentic."

The general release of the single malt is slated for Q3 2026.

RAER Whisky positions itself around connection — whisky as a shared moment. At the press preview, Jaynie shares her dad's artistic epiphany: a stylish Scottish couple standing before a stunning mountain vista, lifting their kilts to flash their rears in a "rare view." This playful vision inspired RAER Whisky and its "RAER moments," with "Make every moment RAER" etched on the distillery wall beside a chair facing the barrels, where visitors record their own stories or 'raer' moments.

For a young Lowland distillery to reach this point in just six years is no small feat. But for the Kean family, it's simply the next step in a story defined by belief, graft and a refusal to rush a good thing. (Sharon Wilson)

**Jackton Distillery —**  
**Hayhill Road Jackton, Glasgow G74 5AN,**  
**Scotland — [raer.co.uk](http://raer.co.uk) Offering tours, stays,**  
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# Review: **The Pierhouse Hotel**

*Seafood heaven on the west coast*

33

**Bits**

If you had told me that mid-November would see me enjoying an al fresco glass of chilled white wine on the shores on Loch Linnhe, I wouldn't have believed you – but 2025 has been anything but an ordinary year.

Our drive from east to west, while misty and atmospheric, had not been promising, yet the clouds part as we arrive at our destination and the sun beams down on our little slice of heaven, The Pierhouse Hotel in Port Appin.

The hotel first came to my attention when it was named 'National Restaurant of the Year' at the Hotels of the Year Scotland Awards 2023-24. It is a stone's throw from the iconic Castle Stalker, but feels remote and romantic. The 'pier' is the port for the ferry to the Isle of Lismore, and the hotel's bar is often busy with ferry users, both tourists and Lismore residents.

The Pierhouse received Scotland's 'Romantic Restaurant of the Year' award and head chef Michael Leathley was crowned 'Chef of the Year'. The hotel restaurant also has three AA silver stars, two AA rosettes and is one of only three Argyll restaurants featured in the Michelin Guide 2025.

Leathley describes his cooking style as "unpretentious", adding "I like to let the produce speak for itself with nice clean flavours. I do like to honour classic dishes but add a playful and comforting twist".

These qualities really come through in the local seafood-dominated menu. To start, we can't see past two of the restaurant's signature dishes. The first, Hand Dived Scallops in puff pastry with the rose Jacqueline jus adds an extra level of decadence. The second starter

is the Arbroath Smokie Souffle with an Isle of Mull Cheddar sauce, which needs no further description, it is perfectly executed.

The kitchen maintains this very high standard throughout and every dish hits the mark. The Lemon Sole Veronique is a classic French dish, light and delicate after the heavier starters, but equally indulgent. The generously sized Roast Monkfish Tail is matched with sweet and earthy caramelised celeriac, pickled kohlrabi adding a burst of freshness. It pairs particularly well with the Hispi Cabbage with fried capers and pickled shallots. We add the Hand Cut Chips, thrice fried and so satisfying.

Dessert is a shared Caramelised Apple Tart, but I approve of keeping it British with 'proper custard'. Food devoured and wine finished, we move to a cosy spot by the fire to savour a dram from the exceptionally well-stocked bar until it's time for bed.

The rooms feel luxurious, yet cosy and homely, with sustainability credentials on full display and the welcoming addition of a fruit bowl. Our room looks out over the loch and to the shores of Lismore.

After a restful night, our breakfast 'mains', a full complement Scottish Breakfast and the fluffiest French Toast, are thoroughly enjoyed and set us up for a nearby woodland walk.

Sometimes just a night away is all you need for a full re-set. This break was exactly that – incredible food, a stunning location and a warm welcome make The Pierhouse the perfect get-away, whatever the weather. (Diana Turner)



**The Pierhouse Hotel —  
Port Appin, Appin, Argyll,  
PA38 4DE, Scotland  
+44 (0)1631 730302**

# What's in Season: Waste Not, Want Not!

34

Bits



There is this bloke I follow on Instagram who is challenging supermarkets on the amount of food they throw out. I am horrified by what @food\_waste\_inspector\_ (FWI) is finding in their bins. We're not just talking about perishable stuff but tins, jars, bottles and packets with dates into late 2026 and 2027. Why are these not put into food bank donation containers? The Olio app works with Tesco, Iceland, Co-op, Morrisons Daily, Nisa, Spar, Budgens, Asda, Sainsbury's, Waitrose and Boots. They use a 'Food Waste Heroes' programme to redistribute surplus food, but according to FWI's videos, this isn't happening.

An app I use regularly is 'Too Good To Go'; many independent cafes and shops use it with a small smattering of supermarkets, but the problem of food waste still isn't being addressed by the big boys. It is a serious problem, and in my mind, criminal, when so many families are struggling.



According to The Food Foundation, 11 million people in the UK are struggling to eat — nearly 1 in 6 — and these numbers are increasing as food prices soar.

Over 4 MILLION TONNES of food is wasted across the food industry each year and is still good to eat when discarded, enough for an estimated 10 BILLION meals.

France, in 2016, banned supermarkets from discarding or destroying unsold edible food, bringing in mandatory donations whereby they must sign a contract with charities or food banks to avoid hefty fines and even two years in prison for severe violations. Because of a potato glut, Berlin is giving away 4,000 tons of potatoes after the biggest crop in 25 years.

This food waste problem is not new; the 1990s saw the rise of 'freegans' who would dumpster dive to glean thrown-away food. (Lea Harris) **Get in touch with Lea on IG @BakersBunny**

## **WHAT ACTUALLY WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

- Mandatory donation laws (like France)
- Clear national standards on date-label redistribution
- Stronger tax incentives
- Transparency requirements (publish waste figures)
- Legal consequences for destruction of edible food

## **What Else is in my Basket**

Grey squirrel, guinea fowl, lamb, rabbit, roe deer, wood pigeon; clams, cockles, coley, crab, hake, oysters, sardines, sea bass, spoons, wild salmon, trout, winkles; asparagus, beetroot, blood oranges, carrots, chard, chives, dandelion leaves, forced rhubarb, garlic mustard, gorse flowers, horseradish, juniper berries, kale, leeks, mint, morels, purple sprouting broccoli, salsify, sorrel, spinach, spring greens, spring onions, sweet cicely, watercress, wild garlic.



# Whisky Chat from Topsy Midgie

WHISKY BAR  
OF THE YEAR

WHISKY GURU  
OF THE YEAR

## A New Era for Whisky — or Just a Correction?

Is the whisky world entering a new era of contraction, consolidation, and recalibration? It's a question being asked across the industry as several high-profile closures and strategic shifts land at once. The imminent closure of the Clynelish Visitor Centre — especially after Diageo's £185m investment in its Johnnie Walker "Four Corners" distilleries — feels like a bold, cost-cutting move. But they're not alone. Ardnahoe on Islay has already scaled back its visitor operations. Spey has halted production, and the pattern is beginning to look less like coincidence and more like a market correction.

BrewDog's announcement adds further weight. The company is closing its Aberdeenshire distillery and discontinuing all spirits brands after posting £37m losses in 2024 and cutting jobs across the business. With founders James Watt and Martin Dickie stepping away from leadership roles, the pivot back to beer and the Wonderland cocktail range marks a return to their original ethos — but it also signals turbulence behind the scenes. Rumours of further closures, plus new-make spirit being offered at historically low prices, suggest the pressure is industry-wide.

And then there's the cask question. Thousands of private-cask owners who bought into the whisky boom of recent years will soon see their spirit reach bottling age. If even a fraction of those casks hit the market at once, we could see a short-term flood of releases and downward pressure on prices — unless, of course, duty rises again, as it so often does.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Far from it. There are still bright spots worth celebrating.



Raasay's new Bere Barley Bordeaux Barrique release is a beauty: the distillery's first whisky made from 100% Bere Barley, grown in Berwickshire and matured in a single Bordeaux barrique since 2022. It's unpeated, complex, fruity, and scarce — the kind of dram worth hunting down at your favourite whisky bar.

Closer to home, Speyburn is becoming a quiet favourite at Topsy. This under-the-radar Speyside distillery consistently over-delivers and is well worth seeking out on your next Highland or Speyside trip.

And spring promises more excitement: Ardbeg's 10-year-old Cask Strength, Lagavulin's new Sweet Peat 11-year-old — their first permanent addition in nearly a decade — and, for deep pockets, The Macallan "Diamonds Are Forever," destined to thrill collectors and flippers alike. Plenty to look forward to. Not all doom and gloom. Stay Topsy.

—Sláinte! (Colin Hinds)

**Topsy Midgie — Whisky & Gin Drinkery**  
67 St Leonards Hill, Edinburgh, EH8 9SB  
tipsymidgie.com — IG @tipsymidgie  
Open Thur-Mon from 5pm til late.

## 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](http://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](mailto: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 Vindaloo showcase 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.theabbotsford.com), or email [enquiries@theabbotsford.com](mailto: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](http://www.cumberlandbar.co.uk) or email [enquiries@cumberlandbar.co.uk](mailto: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](http://guildfordarms.com), or email [enquiries@guildfordarms.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://teuchtersbar.co.uk)

## Shopping

**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](http://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**

## Wine Bars

**Le Di-Vin** — Edinburgh's most sophisticated wine bar beside French restaurant La P'tite Folie 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](http://www.ledivin.co.uk)**

**L'escargot bleu wine bar** — Cosy wine bar situated beneath L'escargot Bleu restaurant on Broughton Street. A convivial and welcoming bar where you can enjoy an aperitif/digestif or just pop in for a drink and a nibble. The bar serves cheese, charcuterie, olives, bread, and other carefully sourced produce. 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](http://www.lescargotbleu.co.uk)**





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