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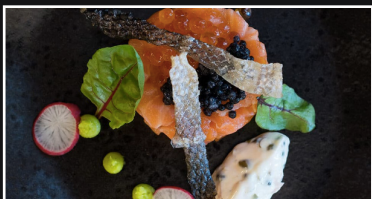
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Sushi —  
Thanks to Harajuku Kitchen Bistro



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Mrs Bite

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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)



**The Keelson** is quietly establishing itself on The Shore, transforming the former Mara site into a self-described “*Scottish Boozer on the Shore*”. From the team behind Nauticus and Dogstar, it’s shaping up to be their most relaxed venture yet — unfussy, maritime-coded and very Leith. Expect classic cocktails with the Nauticus DNA, proper pints and rotisserie chicken spinning away as the Shore’s newest signature scent.

**Edinburgh Food and Drink Academy** — formerly Edinburgh New Town Cookery School — has relaunched with a fresh mission to elevate Scotland’s food and drink scene through chef-led courses for every ability. Housed across five Georgian storeys on Queen Street and led by Director of Culinary Education Caroline Lamont, EFDA blends creativity, culture and cuisine in a relaxed, friendly setting. Evening classes start from £70; more information at [efda.co.uk](http://efda.co.uk).



## English Vineyard Tour, 16–20 June 2026 —

Master of Wine Rose Murray Brown leads a five-day escorted tour of 11+ top English wineries this June, spanning Essex, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire. Highlights include Danbury Ridge, Domaine Evremond, Nyetimber, Wiston Estate, Sugrue South Downs and Hambledon, with tastings, estate lunches and winemaker sessions throughout. The tour begins and ends in London; full details are available at [rosemurraybrown.com](http://rosemurraybrown.com)



**Sea Change** has refreshed its Organic White swapping Chardonnay for a Valencia-grown blend of Merseguera, Macabeo, and Malvasia. Expect a crisp, lightly floral, stone-fruit profile at 12% ABV. The launch lands as the brand passes €750,000 raised for marine conservation, with its signature plastic-free packaging and labels made from sustainable paper and grape waste. Also in the line-up: Sea Change Free (£11.99), Organic Red (£15.49), and Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc (£16.99).

**Cold Town Beer** returns to Stockbridge's Neighbourgood Market from 1 May–2 August with an expanded summer programme of beer tastings, live World Cup screenings, ceilidh sessions and its alpine-themed gondolas. Alongside Cold Town's award-winning brews, expect Thistly Cross Cider and a rotating line-up of local street-food traders. More information at [theneighbourgoodmarket.com](http://theneighbourgoodmarket.com) and [coldtownbeer.com](http://coldtownbeer.com).



**Bowhouse Market Weekends** in the East Neuk have earned Farmers Market Certification from the Farm Retail Association, confirming what locals already know — it's the real deal. Part of Balcaskie Estate, Bowhouse has grown since 2017 into a monthly market drawing more than 4,000 visitors, championing genuine producers and East Neuk ingredients with rigorous provenance and quality standards.



**Pizza Geeks** marked their tenth anniversary with a new artisan menu and a major community push. Alongside a revamped dough recipe and five new pizzas, the team is expanding its 'Pizza for the People' initiative — aiming to feed 1,000 people across Edinburgh on 4 May via street-food units at the Western General, the Royal Infirmary and a new truck at St James Quarter.





**Harajuku Kitchen Bistro** has unveiled a new matcha menu inspired by Tokyo's trendiest tea bars. Think high-grade matcha lattes (hot or iced), cold-foam creations in vanilla, strawberry and ube, plus a nutty roasted hojicha latte. It taps into the global matcha wave — all colour, craft and comfort. 10 Gillespie Place — 0131 285 8182

**Eidyn** has opened on Princes Street, unveiling a polished new Scottish restaurant and cocktail bar inside the Mount Royal Hotel. The bright, view-driven dining room overlooks the Gardens and the Castle, with a menu built around seasonal Scottish produce, relaxed lunches and a neatly executed afternoon tea. A slick new bar leans into local spirits, bringing welcome hospitality investment — and serious photogenic appeal — to Princes Street.



**Bunta Beer** has launched in the UK as the country's first non-alcoholic Indian craft beer, brewed to pair with bold, spice-driven dishes. Created by 27-year-old founder Gunikka Ahuja, the 0.5% citrus lager is light, crisp and designed to cut through heat. Ahuja is also developing Buntatex™ — a biodegradable textile made from brewing

waste that will be used for packaging and merch.



**Flür** joined the line-up at Bonnie & Wild in April, bringing the bold attitude of New York slice culture to Edinburgh. Expect generous street-style slices, 18-inch pies and a rotating selection of fresh, house-made pastas. Co-founded by Ivan Stein and developed with world-renowned pizza consultant Anthony Falco, it's big, bright and built for appetite.



**Hebridean Cruises** has launched *Hebridean Taste Tales*, a new food-tourism initiative spotlighting west-coast producers. Guests now receive a curated box featuring island-made products including Orsay Sea Salt, Nc'nean whisky, Islay Cocoa, Isle of Mull Coffee, Island Bakery biscuits and Slàinte Sauces. Returning guests will also receive the *Café Cùil* cookbook by Skye chef Clare Coghill — a nod to the growing appetite for authentic Scottish food experiences.

**Wood-fired coffee** is having a moment, reviving a slow, caramel-rich roasting method rooted in Australia's café culture. Using sustainably sourced hardwoods creates gentler, more even heat — resulting in lower acidity, sweeter depth and a cup that feels crafted rather than manufactured. Naturally, it pairs with KeepCups, the Melbourne-born refill icons that helped spark the global reuse movement.



**Gorse Café**, a tiny Northern Irish bakery on the Pleasance, is turning out some of the Southside's most interesting pastries. Inventive bakes, excellent coffee and a weekend queue that rarely lets up — with the Guinness & Gorse cake already making waves. @gorseedinburgh



**Ottolenghi** is landing on George Street this autumn, bringing his first-ever Scottish restaurant to Edinburgh with Skye-born chef Neil John Campbell at the helm. Expect bold, veg-led plates rooted in Scotland's own larder, with full details still firmly under wraps. [ottolenghi.co.uk](http://ottolenghi.co.uk)



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Review: **Ciccetta's**

Scoops of Sunshine in Bruntsfield

Ciccetta's pops out on Bruntsfield Avenue like a burst of colour against Edinburgh stone. Butter-yellow walls, curling pink lettering, and a softly glowing interior promise something cheerful before you've even stepped inside. And inside, the promise is kept: peach-toned light warms the space, Italian posters line the walls, and stacks of branded takeaway cups sit ready behind the counter. It's the kind of place that makes you pause and smile, even on a dull day.

Opened in January 2026 by 22-year-old Becca Fuller, Ciccetta's is the culmination of a young founder's bold vision. Fuller, originally from Australia, first fell for gelato while working at a local gelateria before refining her craft at *Gelato University* in Bologna. Returning to the UK, she set out to create a shop where everything is churned fresh daily, flavours are carefully curated, and even the smallest details from the colour scheme to the social media presence reflect thoughtfulness and personality. Fuller works with a talented team, many of whom are women, giving the shop a vibrant, collaborative energy.



The flavour menu is intentionally compact, rotating to balance classics with inventive combinations. Dark chocolate and *fior di latte* sit alongside creations like brown butter

and wattleseed, a nod to Fuller's Australian roots, and playful options such as passionfruit pavlova and tiramisu. My partner chose dark chocolate paired with salted pistachio. I ended up with a scoop of pistachio myself, plus the passionfruit pavlova. The first bite made me grin not just because it was bright and tangy, but because it felt impossible to eat without savouring every spoonful. The gelato is thick and creamy yet silky smooth, bold in flavour without ever feeling gimmicky. Staff are happy to offer samples so you can explore before committing.

Drinks are given equal attention. Espresso and coffee are taken seriously, making the affogato an instant highlight. Hot chocolates arrive topped with homemade toasted marshmallows. Everything is gluten free, a thoughtful touch that removes the usual cross-contamination worries for those with coeliac disease.

Ciccetta's isn't just a gelateria; it's a community project in miniature. Fuller documented the shop's creation on TikTok, sharing everything from decorating to equipment arrivals, building a following even before opening making locals already invested. Queues often stretch out the door on weekends, and flavours sell out quickly.

After just a few visits, Ciccetta's has become a regular post-work stop for me. The space, the gelato, and the people are careful, inventive, welcoming, make it a place that quickly feels like part of the neighbourhood. Walking through that butter-yellow doorway, it's easy to see why so many locals keep coming back. (Rosie Higgins)

**Ciccetta's** — 26 Bruntsfield Ave, Bruntsfield  
EH10 4EW Socials: @ciccettas

# Review: **The Cottage**

*Quiet brilliance at Royal Terrace Gardens*

Stepping into the kitchen-garden at The Cottage at Royal Terrace, the city seems to loosen its grip. The noise of modern life falls away as the path leads toward the 1836 Playfair cottage, part of the architect's elegant Royal Terrace scheme. It's a fairytale setting, and once inside, the chalky white-walled dining room catches the last of the golden hour before settling into the soft glow of table lamps. It is a tranquil setting for what will transpire; precise cooking where local, seasonal produce is thoughtfully placed centre stage.

Jamie Stapleton's menu leans into what's growing in the kitchen garden and what local producers bring to the door, offered as five or seven courses (£55/£85) or a shorter lunch menu. There is a rhythm here — asparagus with black garlic, halibut with red grapes and barbecued leeks, hogget with ewes' curd — plates that have a quiet self-assurance that comes from classic execution, but also, understated flashes of brilliance.

Jamie cleverly balances robust flavours with a light touch. The three opening snacks — Trout Tartlet, Cheese Gougère and a Mini Croquette — may be delicate, but each lands with a delicious impact on the palate.



A dish of Roasted Carrot with orange, macadamia and coriander sparks table chat about how one achieves such vegetable wizardry. Wye Valley Asparagus arrives with pickled white asparagus and dots of black garlic, all served in a voluptuous, velvety herb sauce.

Then comes what is likely my favourite dish of the evening. Halibut, cooked beautifully so its snow-white, glossy flesh flakes at the touch, sits in a classic *beurre blanc* with a gentle soffritto. So far, so classic — but those flashes of brilliance manifest with the addition of halved red grapes, sweet and acidic, and surprise ribbons of smoky barbecued leek. It's a combination that lifts the whole dish into something quietly extraordinary.

An aside about herbs feels essential here. The Cottage is a masterclass in how herbs can quietly transform a menu. There's plenty of dill threaded through that *beurre blanc*, a lush lovage butter arrives with The Free Company sourdough, and patron Peter Adshead talks us through the thyme, fennel and rosemary growing just outside the kitchen door. It's a reminder that herbs can be integral to a dish as well as garnishing a composition or dusting a plate.

The Hogget with ewe's curd has farmyard-y depth you only get from well-reared meat, the curd adding a cool, lactic lift. Then comes a dish of unspoilt, tangy Rhubarb with yoghurt whipped to the lightness of Italian meringue — a palate-cleansing interlude that resets the senses. Dessert continues the theme of balance: Chocolate paired with a miso caramel sauce, *crème fraîche* and candied walnuts, a combination that swings between sweet, salty and nutty.

A wine pairing is available for £55, mixing a few classics with bottles you're unlikely to have tasted before. Eight wines available by the glass are chalked up on the board. The wine list and our great sommelier both deserve more attention but that will need to wait for another day. For now, let's just say you are in safe hands.

At a time when foodie chat circles around the supposed end of tasting menus, it's worth remembering why some should remain. We don't want to lose the rhythm of a well-paced, well-executed special meal and The Cottage proves what can be achieved with care and imagination.

We are lucky to have such a magical restaurant in our city and as we trail back down the garden path, brushing past the giant rhubarb fronds, the evening settles around a truly special experience. (Sharon Wilson)

**The Cottage — 1 Royal Terrace Gardens,  
Edinburgh, EH7 5DX Open Thursday-Sunday  
[thecottageedinburgh.com](http://thecottageedinburgh.com)**



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# Review: **The Skillet**

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*Hyper-local and heading for gastronomic glory in Glasgow*

I've heard it said that sometimes it's the people closest to you that you know the least. I reckon the same adage can apply to local restaurants and, especially, their fantastic if undersung chefs.

A case in point is The Skillet, a neighbourhood spot in Glasgow's West End that's been around for three years, is just steps away from home, minutes from some of the area's more high-profile establishments and which — speaking for myself — can be sadly overlooked as a result.

Not any more. Head chef Aamana McGivern can be spotted immediately on entering this plate glass-fronted, beautifully designed space (think large frondy plants, dark walls and stunning mood lighting) whose relaxed ambience is set by some very cool background music: the kitchen is half open and adjacent to the ground-floor bar. Front of house staff, headed by the delightful owner Luke Tracey, whose hospitality career includes stints at The Buttery and Mar Hall, immediately welcome me and show me to my mezzanine-level table overlooking the action. From here I can also admire the original Victorian brickwork and corncing and the 1960s city-scape bas-relief ceiling, a throwback to the period building's mysterious past.

Chef Aamana began her culinary career at Martin Wishart's The Honours in Edinburgh, working in pastry then hot sections, moving to Michelin star restaurants in London and most recently working as senior sous-chef at the Ubiquitous Chip.

The absolute precision, elegant presentation and boldness of complex flavours in her cooking, which showcases Scottish produce, is outstanding in her recent pivot from fine-dining to a highly accomplished sharing and small-plate sharing menu. A Beef Tartare Snack on beef fat hash brown with smoked duck egg cream is blow-away delicious, sharp-edged — and shout-out pretty to behold. A brilliant start to the meal, where everything is made to order in-house.

An oval plate of chilled Cornish White Crab and Kohlrabi Mousse with green apple dice topped with pickled crab apple is artfully plated with a profoundly herby emerald dill oil. Just lovely in its delicate balance of sweet crustacean and citrus acidity — though I could have done with a wee something to mop it up.

Generosity of portions is repeated in a thick slice of Ham Hock Terrine which is firm yet soft and highly textured, mustardy, caper-y and savoury, topped with quail egg, fresh herb greens, potato crisp and set on a parsley emulsion. What's not to love?



Ham Hock Terrine



Beef Tartare



Shepherd Mussels



Rhubarb Vanilla Parfait

My next choice delivers the bread I hanker after — and then some. You might think Shetland Mussels with Nduja and Fennel would arrive as a soupy broth in a bowl but no: this was something altogether different. A mighty slice of what I later learn is chef Aamana's signature toasted potato bread — crispy on the edge, soft and light-as-a-feather in the middle — is piled high with a generous tumble of sweet plump shelled mussels, spicy sausage sauce and shaved caramelised fennel so that it is almost an open sandwich. Easier to eat than it might sound, this is a stunning, complex, punchy and original dish that, at £14.50, is simply knockout.

My partner's choice of Braised Beef Brisket in Bourguignon Sauce with smoked pancetta is a masterclass in how to achieve the softest texture while intensifying depth of flavour and making it look amazing. It is easy to try polishing off the entire bowl of the crispiest smashed potatoes with rosemary salt we order as a side, as they are so soft, crunchy and more-ish, but reluctantly we can't manage.

Neither can I contemplate any of the desserts, despite being sorely tempted by an in-season on-trend Yorkshire Rhubarb Vanilla Parfait with Rhubarb Sorbet and Meringue, or a Tiramisu Ice-Cream with espresso caramel and shaved dark chocolate.

Next time for sure. Now that I know The Skillet, I can't not know it and certainly won't be a stranger.

And I'm willing to place a cast-iron bet that it's destined for wider attention and even a Michelin Bib Gourmand. Watch this space. (Cate Devine)

***The Skillet — 70-72 Hyndland Street, Partick, Glasgow G11 5PT***  
***Open Wed 5pm-11pm, Thurs-Sat 12noon-11pm, Sunday 12noon-10pm.***

\*\*\*

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



Head chef Aamana MacIvern & owner Luke Tracey

## Review: Harajuku Kitchen Bistro

*The Ottolenghi of Japanese Food*

"I want to be the Ottolenghi of Japanese food."

So declares Chef Kaori Simpson, the creative force behind Harajuku Kitchen Bistro, together with her childhood friend Nobuo Sasaki, now the Head Chef for 7 years. Ottolenghi took Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavours and made them vibrant, vegetable-forward, globally curious, and irresistibly accessible. Kaori wants to do the same for Japanese cuisine — to show Scotland that Japanese cooking is a whole world of colour, texture, and joy.

That ethos has shaped Harajuku Kitchen since it opened 13 years ago on the Tollcross/Bruntisfield border. What began as a neighbourhood restaurant has grown into a multi-platform celebration of Japanese food: a beloved Stockbridge Market stall, a bustling Edinburgh Street Food concession, and a thriving private catering operation. Everywhere the team goes, the goal is the same — to make Japanese food feel welcoming, exciting and delicious.



Keith & Kaori Simpson feed the Scotland squad

One of Harajuku Kitchen Bistro's most unexpected partnerships began with a chance encounter: a meeting with the manager of the Scottish Rugby Team. The squad had fallen in love with Japanese cuisine during the 2019 World Cup, and Kaori and her husband Keith have now been feeding them for six years. On selected training days, the players refuel on sushi, chicken karaage, udon noodles, pork katsu, and gyoza. Dishes that balance comfort with clean, powerful flavour.

Harajuku Kitchen Bistro's catering calendar reads like a tour of Scotland's cultural life. They cook annually for the Japanese Consulate to celebrate the Emperor's birthday. At last year's St Andrews Open, none other than Rory McIlroy stopped by their stall for noodles. They're fixtures at The Meadows Festival, Hidden Door, and The Fringe (at The Pleasance) and are also catering at the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival this year.

Kaori's commitment to accessibility isn't just philosophical — it's built into the menu. The weekday Teishoku Set mirrors a staple of everyday Japanese dining: choose two dishes, and they arrive with steamed rice, miso soup, and unlimited genmaicha tea. For something more playful, the Kikkaju Bento Box offers a two-tiered lunch that feels like a miniature celebration.

And then there's the Matcha Menu, a modern, colourful lineup that captures Kaori's Ottolenghi-esque ambition: warm matcha lattes, iced versions, hojicha, and cold-foam creations flavoured with vanilla, strawberry, or vivid purple ube (a yam from the Philippines). It's a Japanese tradition meeting contemporary café culture — exactly the kind of culinary bridge Kaori loves to build.

Harajuku Kitchen Bistro isn't just a restaurant. It's a journey — one that Kaori is determined to make deliciously, joyfully accessible to everyone. (Sharon Wilson)

**Harajuku Kitchen Bistro —  
10 Gillespie Place, Edinburgh EH10 4HS  
0131 285 8182 [harajukukitchen.co.uk](http://harajukukitchen.co.uk)**



Kikkaju Bomb Box



Ube & Strawberry Matcha



Sushi Selections



The Scotland Rugby team fell in love with Japanese food at the 2019 World Cup

Review: **The Botanics Garden View Deck & Bar***Sun, Bubbles & Blissful Grazing with The Social Bitches*

On a day that could genuinely pass for Spring, these sun-starved Bitches are happily soaking up the rays — and of course, an absolute shedload of champagne — while attending the launch of the fabulous, and newly refurbished, Garden View Deck & Bar at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

A select soirée made all the more divine by its gloriously green outlook, exceptional food, and inspired collaboration with Maison Pommery & Associés — a family-owned champagne house renowned for sustainability and biodiversity. Its joyful mantra: healthy soil, happy grapes, endless fizz. Ding Dong!

To the agreement of all present, not only are we Best Dressed [ Seriously, again?? Stop it! There's also a consensus this has the potential to be one of the city's best alfresco experiences. Sun, bubbles and blissful grazing. Then in time — we hope — late closing plus saucy DJ who leans towards shirtlessness.

For now at least, a playful soundtrack of French pop is definitely hitting the spot.

As is the mountain of artisan cheese, seasonal pickle, and of course what can only be called one's third bottle of "Pommers."

All of which prompts Isaac to remark just how lovely it is to get out of the city. In reality, we've travelled a mere seven minutes to get here. But spiritually? We're somewhere between the Amalfi Coast and breaking our lifetime vow NEVER to wear boat shoes. Suffice to say, the vibe is utterly delicious.

Which brings us — via eighteen slices of lush stone baked pizza — to the Garden View's catering partner, the legendary Heritage Portfolio. Who, for close on three decades, has been at all the best parties, and created our favourite afternoon tea — at the beautiful Signet Library.

Unsurprisingly, their work here is equally top notch. Even better, it makes full use of ingredients grown and foraged at The Botanics. Lush case in the point: the Beetroot Hummus with lemon rapeseed oil and freshly baked focaccia. Silky smooth, sweet, and wonderfully earthy — we highly recommend!

They've also whipped up a gorgeous series of spritzes, bringing the likes of Aperol, Limoncello, and Glenmorangie Single Malt to the party. Though while we fully plan to indulge — and soon — right now we're thinking there's at least two more magnums of fizz vying for our attention.

Fortunately, the friendly, brilliantly attentive staff can spot an empty champagne flute at fifty paces. Which alongside the scenery, food and libations, gives this venue a definite five stars.



The Social Bitches: Best dressed, yet again.

Though, if management could just consider our thoughts on late closing and shirtless DJ, we'll gladly make it six! (The Social Bitches)

**The Botanics Garden View Deck & Bar —  
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh  
John Hope Gateway, West Gate Entrance  
Arboretum Place, EH3 5NZ**

**Open Friday & Saturday 12pm - 8pm,  
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Beetroot Hummus with focaccia



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Garden View Deck & Bar



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# Review: **Afternoon Cheese**

*The Bonham Hotel's savoury take on a classic*

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**Bite**

Tucked away in Edinburgh's leafy West End, The Bonham Hotel has a quietly genteel air at the best of times. But in the soft spring light of the afternoon — when the sun falls in dapples across the dining room and the only sound is the gentle pour of tea — it feels especially serene.

The idea of Afternoon Cheese, rather than the more familiar sweet-and-savoury spread, had me immediately. I adore cheese, but it so often arrives at the end of a meal — cue the eternal quandary of dessert or cheese first — and by then I'm usually too full to do it justice. An afternoon devoted entirely to cheese feels like the most civilised solution imaginable.

I recruited Simone for the day and we settled in.

Knowing full well we'd be talking as much as eating, we shared one Afternoon Cheese between two — the perfect pace for a leisurely catch-up and for the avoidance of food waste. You can add a glass of fizz, of course, but we opted for Earl Grey, deciding



it was possibly the most versatile tea to complement all cheeses.

Our white-clothed table was set with a floral plate, a teacup, and neatly wrapped cutlery, all centred around a two-tiered stand laden with cheeses and their accompaniments.

The top tier featured five curated cheeses themed around the Six Nations: a soft Somerset Brie, a hard Welsh Cheddar, a bloomy Irish Coleeney, Scotland's own Blue Murder, and a washed-rind French Livarot — with Italy absent. Alongside came dinky scones, biscuits, quince, oatcakes, sweet red grapes and slices of red apple, plus a small dish of butter ready for spreading.

We thoroughly enjoyed tasting, talking, and simply taking an afternoon to ourselves. Afternoon Cheese in this beautiful hotel — with its friendly staff and peaceful ambience — rivals a spa afternoon for a gourmet, and this savoury twist on the tradition feels like a quietly genius idea. I'd love to see what themes follow the Six Nations. (Sharon Wilson)

**The Bonham Hotel —  
35 Drumsheugh Gardens EH3 7RN**

**Afternoon Tea is £38 per person, with  
Champagne available for an additional £15.  
Served daily from 1pm–5pm**



# Review: **Bistro Eleven Fifty Five**

*A fresh take on neighbourhood dining in Glasgow*

For an established fine-dining restaurant to address the challenges currently facing the hospitality sector by almost completely reinventing itself into a neighbourhood bistro-snug surely takes a hefty dollop of courage served with the steady hand of self-belief.

Such a daunting task seems to have worked well for chef-patron Peter McKenna and restaurant manager Kevin Dow of the former The Gannet in Glasgow's Finnieston.

The rather rarefied atmosphere of The Gannet, which closed on New Year's Eve after 12 years of trading to re-open as Bistro Eleven Fifty Five, has morphed — at least on the Friday evening we are there — into a busy, relaxed, haunt, with all 52 covers taken across the bistro's various and beautiful new spaces. The main dining area is already lively when we arrive at 6.15pm and by the time we leave around 8.30pm the upstairs private dining room, whisky snug, back room and bar counter are fully booked. An upbeat if subtle soundtrack helps create a gentle buzz, and from where I am sitting I can see bar manager Adam creating non-stop house cocktails, with staff carefully carrying them aloft on trays. Maitre d' Kevin Dow's reception desk has gone, giving him room to circulate and network, which he does with characteristic aplomb.

More surprises are apparent in the menu. I order the Braised Lamb main, only to discover that it is in fact an Irish stew in the most delicious contemporary iteration: a bowl of potato, carrot, turnip and the softest, tastiest cuts of lamb all braised in a swooningly unctuous 'lamby' sauce (maybe gravy is a more accurate description) topped with a couple of crispy breaded sweetbreads. This is a welcome celebration of indigenous flavours expertly presented by chef-director Peter McKenna, who was born and raised in the border town of Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland, and it is the star of the show for me.

The Irish-French accent here is further emphasised by a Himalayan Salt-aged Ribeye from Hannan Meats in County Down, given the most tender treatment — seared and crispy on the outside, meltingly pink inside — and simply presented with a deeply flavoursome winey Bordelaise sauce. A side of confit Pink Fir potatoes is a sturdy complement. I also liked the quiet re-introduction of classic French cuisine into chef Peter McKenna's new menu — Roast Sardines on the bone come with a Café de Paris butter, there is a Beef Cheek Bourguignon main, a Leek Vinaigrette starter, a house cocktail called French 1155 — maybe because it's sadly becoming quite rare.

Other interesting new dishes included a chilled Celeriac Carpaccio starter of crunchy layered celery root in an aniseed-infused miso cream, topped with crisp and raw shallots. And a pretty-on-the-plate tartare of Beef Barrel Fillet, served with a caramelised bone marrow complete with dinky spoon for scooping onto sourdough crisps, is elegantly accomplished.



Peter McKenna & Kevin Dow

I can't not mention the glazed house Japanese milk bread rolls, served hot from the oven with house butter on a wooden platter with rustic wooden knife — fluffy, light, sweet and with a salty soy crust — or the chilled glass of zesty Gusbourne Brut Reserve that together make for stimulating pre-starters. The fish of the day, served whole on the bone, is a John Dory served with wild garlic, green peppercorns and caper sauce, and a Mòr Atlantic Sea Trout from Loch Melfort with crab butter orzo, were some of the dishes I'd go back for.

I may have written this review out of chronological order menu-wise but, in the spirit of this new neighbourhood bistro, I reckon you could walk in and order like this.

An exercise in change and transformation that's surely worthy of a James Joyce novel has taken place on the funky Finnieston strip. (Cate Devine)

**Bistro Eleven Fifty Five —**  
**1155 Argyle Street, Glasgow G3 8TB**  
**0141 204 2081 [bistroelevenfiftyfive.com](http://bistroelevenfiftyfive.com)**  
**Open Monday-Saturday from 5pm,**  
**Thursday-Saturday 12noon-2.30pm.**

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



Steak Tartare with Salted Bone Marrow and Sourdough



Roasted Sardines with Cate de Paris Butter



John Dory with Miso Sauce and Green Peppercorn



Braised Lamb with Sweetbreads

Review: **Sabzi***Home-Style Punjabi Cooking on Ferry Road*

Sabzi is a genuinely unique Indian restaurant. Sitting on Ferry Road in a former Blockbuster video store, the family-run spot began life as a COVID pop-up —and the rest, as they say, is history.

Acid-bright rainbow colours and a bold, chubby font define the branding, which frontman Stevie Singh tells me was the result of a bit of bootstrap creativity in 2021.

The family were twiddling their thumbs during lockdown, but Stevie's dad had once owned The Far Pavilions restaurant and later a café at 162 Ferry Road. At the restaurant, he served Indian cuisine on linen tablecloths, but in the kitchen the staff were eating home-cooked Punjabi curries — so that's what the family decided to cook for the pop-up.

It worked. There were queues down the road for their mum's home-cooked food.



Giorgia Pia

The entrance — a seventies-leaning shade of purple — opens into a bustling café-style space with a Bollywood poster wall, a rack of colourful branded sweatshirts, and a small counter stacked with bottles of masala ketchup and jars of golden turmeric latte mix.

We take our seats and look up at the wall where a cinema-style lightbox lists the dishes. Four starters, three sides, five mains. The simplicity belies the difficulty of choosing; we want everything. Sabzi has recently shifted from a weekly to a monthly menu, which means with repeat visits you can eventually try it all.

We start with Pineapple Puchka, their take on Pani Puri. We spoon chickpeas with pineapple and mint into the crisp shells, add chutney and tamarind water, and eat these flavour bombs whole.

Next comes Mutton Malai, Crisp Chilli Paneer, and House Black Dahl — all arriving quickly and all at once. The mutton (from MacDuff in Wishaw) has melded harmoniously with its sauce, each tasting of the other.

Stevie explains that while many restaurants rely on base gravies and add protein to order, Sabzi cooks everything homestyle, one pot at a time, ready to serve. The food is as fresh and colourful as the branding. The paneer is generous and deeply satisfying — curd-tight, cheesy, and coated in a fruity sauce with gentle heat. Mr Bite and I agree that Sabzi's cooking is defined by warm, fresh flavours rather than fire. A garlic naan on the side helps mop up the creamy, simmered dahl, and I ask for a doggy bag to take the rest home; it's just as good the next day.

We've forgotten about dessert, but Stevie appears with complimentary Pani Puri filled with strawberry syrup, Nutella, and condensed milk. It's a Neapolitan ice-cream flavour of explosion — playful, nostalgic, and unexpectedly delightful. A final touch of Mukhwaas — sugar-coated fennel seeds — sweetens and freshens after the meal.

Sabzi isn't licensed, but we enjoy seasoned lemonade and turmeric lattes from an extensive 'softies' menu including zero-alcohol beers. I also clock the breakfast offering, which looks phenomenal.

And that name: Sabzi simply means vegetables — or a vegetable dish — in Hindi and Punjabi, a homely word that speaks to everyday cooking and the food families make for themselves. We're lucky to have a restaurant sharing that culture with such generosity — their strapline says it best: good food with good people. (Sharon Wilson)

**Sabzi —**  
**162 Ferry Road, Edinburgh EH6 4NX -**  
**0131 378 8361 Open Wed-Sund 5pm-9pm**



Pineapple Puchka



Crisp Chilli Paneer



Muton Malai



Keema Medu Vada



In all the turbulence of the Edinburgh hospitality scene, as we welcome exciting new ventures and bid farewell to old favourites, one restaurant has been quietly, and consistently, producing thoughtful, creative food at exceptional prices since it opened a decade ago.

As I write, the latest round of actions by men with small minds and large armies has once again thrown the economy into turmoil. With less money for 'luxuries' like eating out, those restaurants that survive this latest crisis will be the ones with a loyal following and the ability to tempt diners with deals that are too good to miss.

Taisteal's a la carte (£38 for three courses) and tasting menu (£50 for five courses) have always been exceptionally good value, but their new Midweek Early Dinner menu has made a little indulgence even more affordable. It offers two courses for £20 or three courses for £25, with three options for each.

Taisteal is a Scottish Gaelic word that means 'journey' and owners Gordon and Lucy Craig's extensive travels can be felt in the varied influences on their dishes, often inspired by Asian cuisine.

We are welcomed with an 'amuse-bouche' from the chef of Venison Lasagne coated in a pork scratching crumb and things are immediately off to a good start. After just

one course, my 'plus one' is convinced the restaurant can read minds after enjoying his ideal starter: a Gochujang Ham Hock Croquette with apricot and miso hollandaise. My Moroccan Mussels Fregola with pistachio and pomegranate is a warmly spiced and comforting dish.

For mains, the Coley is beautifully executed, with a crispy, golden top and flaky, succulent fish beneath, and is well paired with sticky coconut rice and ginger-soy sauce. Even then, I am slightly jealous of the veggie option: Wild Garlic & Scamorza Cannelloni with wild leek emulsion, asparagus, and veggie haggis.

All the desserts sound excellent, but I choose the Tiramichoux Buns — both a great pun and a brilliant combination of two favourite desserts. We also try the Banana Tarte Tatin with dulce de leche ice cream, which is very good but we feel would benefit from a toffee sauce to fully satisfy a sweet tooth.

The description of 'casual fine dining' perfectly hits the mark here — interesting and delicious food that never steps too close to pretentious, an atmosphere that immediately creates ease, and a price point that makes good food accessible to all. (Diana Turner)

**Taisteal — 1 Forth St, Edinburgh. EH1 3JX  
Open Tuesday-Thursday 5pm-9:30pm,  
Friday & Saturday 5pm-10pm**

Gochujang Ham Hook Croquette with apricot and miso



Wild Garlic and Saffron Cannellini

# WINE

## Three Sommeliers, Three Wine Philosophies

Choosing a bottle in a restaurant can feel daunting — but it doesn't have to be. Diana Thompson from Wine Events Scotland speaks to three leading figures from Scotland's restaurant scene to explore how they approach their wine lists, what they love to pour, and the shared philosophy that helps diners choose with confidence.

### **Three Sommeliers, One Shared Philosophy**

Across three very different lists, one message comes through clearly: wine should never feel intimidating. Whether rooted in heritage, classic regions or personal discovery, each approach is designed to guide rather than overwhelm. The common thread? Conversation. Talk to the team, share what you enjoy, and trust their expertise. Do that, and choosing wine becomes what it should always be — an enjoyable part of the experience. Cheers! (Diana Thompson)



**Jason Davidson**  
Restaurateur,  
Champany Inn

How would you describe your wine list?

"My parents founded Champany over 40 years ago to serve the best charcoal grilled steaks in the country," Jason explains.

"Our wine list has evolved to pair with our two specialties: beef and salmon." It's a list shaped by heritage, purpose and long-standing relationships.

Name two wines you'd love people to try. Which dishes pair well with them, and why?

A standout is the Newton Johnson Falkirk Mourvèdre 2022. "It's a must-try," says Jason. "Paired with our charcoal grilled ribeye of Aberdeen Angus, it's one of the best examples of Mourvèdre in the Cape — rich, yet fresh." Equally iconic is Trimbach Gewürztraminer with Champany's home-smoked salmon. "We've served this for 40 years. The wine's rich texture and delicate acidity cut through the oiliness beautifully." South Africa features strongly, reflecting family ties. "My father built great friendships there — relationships I'm proud to continue."

What advice would you give diners?

"Talk to us. Don't be afraid to ask — we love sharing our stories." And keep it simple: "Match the weight of the wine with the weight of the dish." Above all: "It's just a glass of wine — it's meant to be fun."

Anything else?

Champany's own-label wines, made with Simonsig and Newton Johnson, are central to the list: "Food-friendly, approachable, but with a serious side."



**Mark Kerr**  
 Owner &  
 Certified  
 Sommelier,  
 The Canny Man's

How would you describe your wine list?

"It's safe and easy to navigate," Mark says, "with a strong focus

on classic regions and varietals — Burgundy, Bordeaux, Rioja." It's a reassuring list that leans into familiarity.

Name two wines you'd love people to try.

One highlight is a Chablis Premier Cru Fourchaume from Domaine Fèvre. "Chablis often finds its feet at Premier Cru level — this one has lovely texture and roundness." Another is a Cabernet Sauvignon from Stella Bella in Margaret River. "It's a region that consistently delivers quality. This producer takes a low-intervention, organic approach."

Which dishes would you pair with these wines, and why?

"Chablis with oysters is a classic for a reason," Mark explains. "The high acidity and salinity of the wine work perfectly with the oysters." For the Cabernet, it's all about beef. "The bold tannins and structure need that powerful flavour — it's a classic pairing."

What two pieces of advice would you give diners when choosing a wine from your list?

Anything else about your wine list?

"Our list is focused on classics, but there's still plenty to explore beyond those regions." His advice? Trust the team. "Most of our staff have completed WSET Level 2, with some at Level 3. They know the list well — lean on that knowledge."



**Glen Montgomery**  
 Sommelier &  
 Co-owner, eòrna

How would you describe your wine list?

"I'd call it a 'greatest hits' of my nearly 20 years in the industry,"

Glen says. "There are producers I've worked with for years, alongside lesser-known regions I love." It's a thoughtful mix of familiar and quietly intriguing.

Name two wines you'd love people to try. Which dishes would you pair with them, and why?

Château Simone Blanc 2022 stands out. "I first came across it years ago and had no idea what it was," he admits. "It's from a tiny Provençal appellation with centuries of history — completely unique and incredibly age-worthy." Glen pairs it with red mullet, asparagus and saffron butter. "It has the weight for the sauce but stays elegant." He also champions a Loire Valley Cabernet Franc from Frédéric Mabileau. "An underrated grape from an underrated region offering fantastic value." He suggests duck breast: "Bright bramble fruit, a savoury edge and fine tannins — perfect for duck, but too delicate for heavier meats."

What advice would you give diners?

"When I ask what you like, don't tell me what you don't like!" he laughs. More practically: "Tell your sommelier the style you enjoy and give a budget. That's the dream."

Anything else?

"I'm rooted in Old World classics," Glen says, "but ultimately I want to serve wines that are proven, elegant and — most importantly — delicious."

# Whiskies Galore:

## A Tour of Scotland's Island Distilleries

By Ian Buxton

Reviewed by Fiona Richmond



According to the Scotch Whisky Association, there are over 150 malt and grain distilleries in Scotland. Their website maps them, providing an impressive visual representation of these precious havens for Scotland's most famous drink.

Ian Buxton, a man who knows a thing or two about the industry, with more than 40 years of experience under his belt, is perhaps best known for his '100 Whiskies to Try Before You Die' book.

But *Whiskies Galore*, first published in 2017, but updated and reprinted in 2026, came to my attention, it was one to pick up. I confess to not being much of a whisky drinker myself, but what I do enjoy, and take a keen interest in, is the experience around it. The stories, the sense of place. What it brings to communities and our tourism and food and drink industries. Our global reputation.

And as someone who's always been captivated by the magic and uniqueness of islands, the book was even more of a draw.

Buxton sounds like quite a character. The kind of person you'd like to sit and enjoy a dram with and listen to his tales. A natural storyteller, with a dry sense of humour.

*Whiskies Galore* is a self-confessed personal foray around the islands with the aim of discovering what makes their distilleries so distinctive. What's at the heart of that romantic, emotional appeal. He wants to take the reader on a bit of an adventure, but not one that's taken too seriously. More of a travelogue, filled with fascinating facts about each distillery and their location, history, people and production, from those that have been around for a long time to some of the newer ones that have attracted lots of investment and attention. Throw into the mix his wry commentary (don't mention whisky cask investment as he has no truck with that at all) and you have an entertaining ride ahead.

Kicking off on Arran, he covers everywhere from Jura and Mull to Harris and Lewis, Skye and Orkney. There are three whole chapters dedicated to the big hitter that is Islay, which will appeal to anyone who's either been or who has a notion to go.

He honours the less celebrated people behind the business, too, not least the wonderful Ronnie Lee, a freelance millwright, who's been keeping the machines turning for many a year.

There is also a selection of beautiful images from days gone by. I loved the vintage poster of Old Orkney Whisky from Stromness Distillery, showing a couple embracing (and, as Buxton says, not one that you'd get away with now).

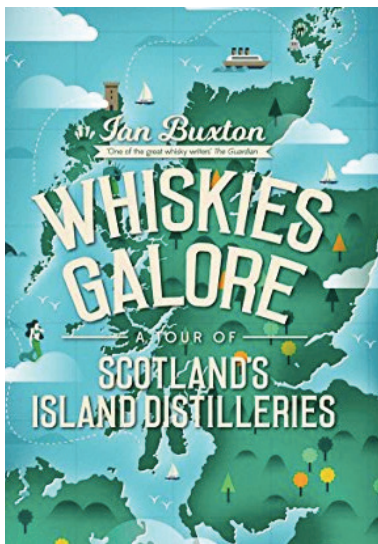
So, what is it about the island distilleries that makes them so different and alluring? Well, you'll have to read the book to find out, but what I can say is that the story isn't finished yet and that it's one that will continue to evolve and entice. No matter which distillery you visit, it will be part of your own adventure and you'll be sure of a warm welcome, lots of stories, a deep sense of place and a touch of magic. Scotland's distilleries, through production and tourism, are at the heart of island communities, creating jobs, supporting livelihoods and caring for the environment. Let's raise a glass to that.  
(Fiona Richmond)

**Copies are available online at Birlinn Ltd — [www.birlinn.co.uk](http://www.birlinn.co.uk) £12.99**

***Ian Buxton is an author and whisky expert. He worked in the drinks industry for more than 30 years as a writer, commentator and consultant, Marketing Director of a world-leading single malt, and accidental owner of a derelict distillery. His distinctive style and deep industry knowledge offer unique insights into the world of whisky, recognised by the award of Keeper of the Quaich (1991, the highest accolade in Scotch) and as one of the few writers inducted into London's ancient fraternity, the Worshipful Company of Distillers. Ian's whisky books have been translated into eight languages.***

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



Clarets, which opened May 1 2026, is the latest addition to The Rocca Group portfolio, perched on level one of The R&A World Golf Museum with sweeping views over the Old Course and West Sands in St Andrews.

Along from Managing Director Stefano Pieraccini's fine dining restaurant The Seafood Ristorante, this new venue sits firmly in café-brasserie territory, with a simple, crowd-pleasing menu executed with finesse.

Mr Bite and I settle in with our sundowners — a beer and a dry martini respectively.

The room is polished wood, steel and glass with warm maroon accents — but with such panoramic views you don't need to do much; that iconic shoreline, the big skies, Tentsmuir Forest on the horizon. *Chariots of Fire* by Vangelis plays in my head until the arrival of Pork Cheek Croquettes, Wye Valley Asparagus with East Neuk White Crab, and Haggis Hash with Fried Duck Egg make me pivot back to the table.



The croquettes, packed with juicy pulled meat, are the size of fish fingers and come with a fruity homemade brown sauce. The grassy asparagus spears are elegantly sliced lengthways. “We work with the seasons,” Stefano tells me later, and this plate is the essence of spring — pure and pristine. Across the table, an immaculately presented fried egg sits on a spicy puck of haggis; pure white, no lacy edges, and a quivering, brilliant golden yolk.

Mains more than stay the course. I choose Cod Kiev — robust flesh, a clever match for the generous, oozy filling of emerald coloured wild garlic butter. Roasted cauliflower and a dish of buttered greens are cooked al dente. Mr Bite has the Claret Burger: dry-aged beef, candied bacon, smoked cheese, house sauce. We add Koffmann fries. He asks why they're so special; I reply that they're crisp outside, fluffy inside, and crucially hold their heat. No one wants a cold, floppy fry.

We're full to the gills but share a Semifreddo with Coconut & Blood Orange reckoning it the lightest option among a line-up of Scottish cheese, sticky toffee pudding and ice-cream. It's a sophisticated, dessert: cold cream folded with generous coconut, sweetness coming mainly from juicy segments of seasonal orange and a raspberry sorbet.

I chat briefly with Stefano — always hands-on — and ask how he keeps everything so on point. He talks about details, recruiting the best people and letting chefs cook the food they believe in. We agree tasting menus are out; casual classics, executed perfectly in an unpretentious setting, are in. People want to enjoy good, tasty food in an unstuffy environment.

I would love to eat breakfast or lunch here too but would secure a booking early. Clarets is a welcoming brasserie in a world-class setting. (Sharon Wilson)

**Clarets Cafe & Brasserie —  
First Floor, R&A World Golf Museum,  
Bruce Embankment, St Andrews, KY16 9AB**

**Open 7 days a week: 8:30am-12pm breakfast,  
12pm-4pm lunch and 5pm-9:30pm for dinner.**



Semifreddo with Coconut & Blood Orange



House Burger



Cod Kiev



Wye Valley Asparagus with East Neuk Crab

# OFF THE TROLLEY

## Salty, Sweet, and Umami

When salted caramel first appeared, many people weren't so sure. Sweet and salty movie popcorn was one thing, but outside of the cinema mixing the two seemed a little bit odd.

A decade on, salted caramel is part of the furniture and a new wave of sweet and savoury flavour combinations draws on Asian ingredients and fermenting processes. Baking with miso, gochujang, or black bean fava paste brings out "umami": a savoury taste that can add an exciting depth and flavour.

Tara Heron, owner of Dainty Monkey micro-bakery, has experimented with some of them in her cooking. All are fermented, which Tara acknowledges is both on trend and good for gut health. Whether the health benefits last through high temperature baking is less certain, but her view is that they add a flavour kick beyond just saltiness.



Dainty Monkey bakery goodies

Tara uses miso in bread and cookies, praising its "lovely, unusual savoury umami flavour." In her speciality miso wholemeal shortbread, "it makes the biscuits seem almost caramelised without an extra, sugary kick." She uses fermented fava bean paste in some breads too. Describing it as a "sort of British dark miso" with a very strong flavour, it's best added sparingly so the taste doesn't overwhelm.

Curious about using these ingredients in your own baking? Here's what to expect. And if you're looking for something local, check out Slow Sauce (<https://www.slowsauce.co.uk>), a Scottish company that makes miso from oats.

**Miso:** originating in China but a staple of Japanese cooking, miso is a fermented soybean paste. It adds saltiness with an additional savoury depth that works well in baked goods. White miso has a shorter fermentation and milder flavour than other, darker misos. Try adding it to sweet autumnal flavours, like caramels or spicy bakes with apples and pumpkin.

**Black bean fava paste:** similar to miso, this fermented paste is made from fava beans instead of soy. It has a strong, salty flavour best used in small amounts. Try adding a small amount to savoury breads or muffins.

**Gochuchang:** a bright red, fermented spicy and sweet Korean paste made from soybeans, sticky rice and salt. Try using it in cookies where it can be melted with butter and sugar to form a kind of caramel.

"Umami" comes from the Japanese for "deliciousness" — and who doesn't want to add some of that to their baking? (Rachel Edwards)

In a world where everybody seems to be stripping back to white marble benchtops, grey sweatpants, and cold facades, Pizza Geeks brings back a little bit of the whimsical we all need. As I always say, in geeks we trust. I may be somewhat biased, being a massive geek myself, but the moment I stepped into the Pizza Geeks instalment on Easter Road in Edinburgh, I was instantly at ease.

Awash with black paint and brick layering, with pops of lights in the neon signs, it would be what some might call 'moody' or 'retro', but what I call perfection. We are greeted by a lovely young lady who supplies us with a tantalising menu. While we're here to sample Pizza Geek's latest range, I am simultaneously tempted by the classics. My friend Matilda and I decide to go for a mix — a couple of the new and shiny pizzas (the Prince of Persia and the BA Burrata) and one from their go-to range: the Bowzer. With a side of House Pickles and Fries on the order, we didn't have to wait long until the delicious range appeared on our table. And yet — we are lured to the arcade games and I discover that competitiveness is the best way to build up an appetite.

Our smorgasbord arrives and, as someone once wisely put, carbs shared have zero calories. Not that we feel any guilt as we tuck into cheesy, meaty, caper-y goodness. I mention capers because that's one of the main ingredients on the BA Burrata and, while neither Matilda or I have ever been tempted to try capers, we are pleasantly surprised by the slight crunch and sharp tang that highlights the pizza... not to mention the jiggly and delectable burrata.

As we eat, I am distracted and entertained by the level of nerd around me. Mario Party

Mystery Boxes for lampshades, *Back to the Future* neon signs add a touch of nostalgia, strange little figurines and multi-coloured twinkly lights at every turn. It's the restaurant equivalent to a loud personality, and I am so here for it.

Matilda is swooning over the BA Burrata, while my inner carnivore cannot overlook the meaty extravagance of The Bowzer. It's times like these where I wish I had a much larger stomach than I do — I could have quite happily sat there all night sampling each pizza (and side) in turn. I guess all it means is that I'll have to come back, or — as the neon sign cleverly puts — Back to the Geeks! (Bronwyn Eley)

**Pizza Geeks — 126 Easter Rd, Edinburgh  
EH7 5RJ - 0131 202 9306  
Open Sun-Thurs 12-9pm, Fri-Sat 12- 10pm**



## What's in Season: It's All About Foraging

As I write this issue of WiS, I have no idea what state the world will be in! But one thing's for certain, I'm not going to go hungry nor you, my dear readers.

We've had fruit trees for years; several prolific apples, along with a pear and cherry tree, neither of which has borne any fruit that I can remember. Hopefully, that will change this year, as Mr H has cut back the undergrowth and overhanging tree branches allowing light to flood that shady nook. I live in hope that they will bear fruit. Also growing are various beans, that I'm hoping will deliver, unlike previous years where the French variety ended up being renamed, 'Fuck All Beans.' I think you will know why they were called that. I've never had much luck with courgettes though, I either get just flowers (great stuffed with herby ricotta, dipped in batter and deep-fried) or they'll produce a small fruit that then just rots. Don't let me put you off growing veggies just because I'm not a great gardener. It might be a tad late to start from seeds, but you should still be able to pick up plants from nurseries and garden centres. Spinach and rocket are a doddle to grow as are salad leaves, you just have to keep the bastard pigeons off them.

Some things will grow like weeds; indeed, some are weeds and quite a few are edible. Ground elder, the bane of many a gardener can be eaten as part of a salad. If you like bitter, young dandelion leaves will fulfil your needs. Nettles make a vitamin-rich soup or a sweet syrup. In fact, many flowers can be turned into something delicious. For instance, lavender, roses, honeysuckle, dandelion petals, rosebay willow herb, and, of course, elderflowers and their berries make fabby cordials.

If you've only got windowsill, grow a pot or two of toms and chillies, as well as herbs. If friends or neighbours have an allotment, barter with them for extras and make pickles, chutneys and jams that you can then swap back.



Nettle Lollies

You could also invest some time and go foraging with a guide, I know an exceptionally good one, she is also a Bite contributor. Go look up @vmnutritionuk on Instagram, Vivian Maeda is a mine of foraging knowledge! Happy hunting ;) (Lea Harris)

**Get in touch with Lea on IG @BakersBunny**

### What Else is in my Basket

Clams, cockles, coley, crab, grey mullet, hake, herring, John Dory, langoustines, lemon sole, lobster, mackerel, mussels, oysters, pike, plaice, salmon, sardines, scallops, sea bass, sea trout, skate, spoots, squid, turbot, wild salmon and trout, wild sea bass, winkles, grey squirrel, grouse, guinea fowl, hare, lamb, partridge, rabbit, roe deer, wood pigeon, artichokes, asparagus, aubergines, beetroot, broad beans, ceps, chicory, courgettes, dulse, fennel, garlic, kohlrabi, mangetout, new potatoes, peas, rocket, runner and French beans, samphire, shallots, sweetcorn, tomatoes, watercress, apricots, blackcurrants, blaeberry, blueberries, brambles, cherries, damsons, elderflowers, gooseberries, greengages, lavender, lemon verbena, loganberries, nasturtiums, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, redcurrants, rosebay willow herb flowers, rosehips, roses, rowanberries, sticky willies, strawberries, tayberries



## Whisky Chat from Tipsy Midgie

WHISKY BAR  
OF THE YEAR

WHISKY GURU  
OF THE YEAR

Hospitality has weathered some wild years, and anyone who has run their own venue knows the weight of it. The long shifts, the uncertainty, the constant reinvention — it takes grit. Against that backdrop, the whisky world has been hit by the loss of someone who embodied that grit with warmth and generosity: Derek Mather.

Derek was a chef, a West of Scotland lad, a restaurant owner, and the heart behind The Artisan. In so many ways, our paths ran in parallel — same background, same industry, same passion for pairing great food with great whisky. His passing at just 50 has been a shock far beyond the whisky community. This edition opens with a heartfelt *Slàinte* to Derek: a genuine, kind, whisky-loving soul who made our world better simply by being in it. Here's hoping he's enjoying a well-earned dram in heaven.

### Festival Season: The Drams Making Noise

May, June, and July are the months when whisky fans barely pause for breath. Between the Campbeltown Festival, Feis Ile, and the Spirit of Speyside, the calendar is stacked — and so are the shelves with limited releases.

One standout this year is the Bunnahabhain 15 Year Old An Cuan Garbh Feis Ile 2026, finished in white port casks and bottled at 51.6%. It's the first in the new An Cuan Garbh range, part of the Westering Home Collection, and it's a beauty. Unpeated, rich, and unmistakably Bunna — they're on a roll. Fans of unpeated Islay should absolutely seek this one out.



### Glenmorangie x Harrison Ford: A Dram with Attitude

We also attended the VIP release of Glenmorangie's collaboration with Harrison Ford — yes, Han Solo himself. The first wave sold out instantly, but a second drop is expected in June/July. The whisky is classic Glenmorangie elegance with a Ford-style growl: citrus, tangerine, and a deeper richness from heavily charred red wine casks. Bottled at 46.5%, it has real presence and a lovely bite. Explore more about Glenmorangie or red wine casks.

—*Slàinte!* (Colin Hinds)

**Tipsy Midgie — Whisky & Gin Drinkery**  
67 St Leonards Hill, Edinburgh, EH8 9SB [tipsymidgie.com](http://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)**





*the walnut*

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