

ISSUE 48

CATERING QUARTERLY



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@2022

inside we've GOT...

2022 in numbers

jamon jamon

allergens & alcohol

the foodie shack

the guild of
caribbean cuisine

Burger & Beyond

Brooklyn Brownie Co.

and more...

The Nationwide Caterers Association members magazine.

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A WORD FROM NCASS

And just like that, another year comes to a close! This year has definitely been one for the history books but we remain excited to see what the future holds. As we come to the end of 2022 it's important to reflect on our accomplishments and use them to guide our goals for 2023. Taking the time to not only review, but celebrate your achievements, encourages you to give yourself a well-earned pat on the back whilst creating specific, targeted goals for next year based on experience and previous results. In this year's final issue of Catering Quarterly you will find information on our new Safety Management System, tips for how to engage with the experiential economy and as always, inspirational stories from our members. We hope that you enjoy Issue 48 of Catering Quarterly and from all of us at NCASS we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



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STREET FOOD LIVE:



OUR FAVOURITE TAKEAWAY

Street Food Live is always an enjoyable time and we were on hand throughout the show to support, listen and guide anyone and everyone who came our way.

But don't just take our word for it, take our word for it! We asked some of the team who were there to share their experience at Street Food Live 2022.



“Street Food Live is the foremost street food sector exhibition. It’s a great place to learn new tips and tricks, meet other traders and gain valuable insight and knowledge on everything from equipment advice, to how to brand your business. It’s a terrific opportunity to seek out suppliers, get access to discounts and savings, speak to professionals and learn from other trader’s experiences. It’s always fantastic to witness the camaraderie between traders and it reminds us all of the strength of the community. It brings together key industry stakeholders so that together we can influence, promote and drive the sector and helps to improve standards.



Every year brings with it the same joy; talking to members. It’s always a fantastic opportunity to meet and spend time with NCASS members and to see old faces, as well as meeting plenty of new ones.

The seminars and workshops that we put on are fonts of information. They are put on for traders of all levels, regardless of experience and we are always confident that everyone who attends leaves each session knowing something that they didn’t before. We look to get the best of the best, turning to the most experienced traders to share their insight, knowledge and understanding with all, regardless of experience or expertise.

My top takeaways this year were that despite the many challenges that hospitality faces, there will also be opportunities. Moreover, standing out and not standing still has never been more important. Finally, collaborating with other traders and cobranding menus, events and experiences, is a fantastic way to share followers, supporters and champions. Overall, it’s important to remember to keep things interesting and fun and in turn this will grow your business and your brand.”

Alan, CEO



“Street Food Live helps people who are thinking of getting into street food by giving them the chance to meet and speak to likeminded people who all want to succeed in the sector. I love that it gives new businesses the chance to get information from people who have years of experience.

I honestly think that without Street Food Live they may not otherwise have the opportunity to speak to or listen to these people. It’s amazing that it also helps established businesses by giving them the chance to network and build relationships, everybody is there for the same reasons so it’s incredibly beneficial to both new and established businesses. It’s a great event to be at the heart of. “

Sarah, Account Manager



“Andrew James from The Catering Accounting Company said something that really stuck with me throughout the whole event. He said, “take half a day each week to work on your business, not in your business.” I think this is great advice for anyone, regardless of how much experience they have in the industry. I often hear how hard it is for small business owners to step back from the day-to-day stuff and think more about the bigger picture issues, so this is fantastic guidance to counteract that. Street Food Live is a wonderful opportunity to gain useful insight like that and I know that anyone, regardless of what stage of their business they are at, benefits from these little nuggets of wisdom.”

Alex, Senior Account Manager

What I enjoyed most about the show was meeting members in person and helping them with their technical queries. We have incredibly creative and hard-working members and they came with valid, thought provoking questions. In most cases they had already thought through the solution and just wanted to share their thoughts and hear they were on the right track.

It highlighted to me that members are still struggling to understand allergen and food labelling requirements. They are still hesitant to approach their local authority for advice or alternatively their local authority do not have the time and resources to support them. This is why events such as Street Food Live are so important as visitors can pick up on some handy tips and key bits of information on these, and other, topics by taking part in the seminars and workshops. There are experts on hand to answer questions and that face-to-face interaction with other members and experts in the industry is invaluable.

Fiona, Environmental Health Specialist



“Street Food Live is important as it puts a face to our name and gives us chance to meet our members in person. It is a great opportunity to network and remind people what we do. I always enjoy listening to those who are just starting out, learning about their plans and then figuring out how we can help. It’s also incredibly informative finding out how members are finding trading in the current climate. The seminars give key nuggets of information that policies and procedures can’t tell you; it’s important to hear from experts and those that have made the mistakes already.”

Demi, Partnerships Manager



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK AT STREET FOOD LIVE 2023 OR WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SHOW, GET IN TOUCH WITH ROXY AT ROXY@NCASS.ORG.UK



ALLERGENS & ALCOHOL

How do I know if there are allergens in the drinks I'm serving?

The Food Information Regulations require that the 14 main allergens must be identified in food and drink products. Food business operators, including manufacturers of alcoholic drinks, must notify consumers when these allergens are present in a food or drink product. For prepacked products such as bottles of beer, wine, spirits, mixers, soft drinks etc. this information should be clearly printed on the product label in the form of an allergen warning. Allergen information should accompany casks or barrels supplied by breweries or wholesalers. If this information is missing you can request it from the supplier or use the Cask Finder App, which contains a wealth of information on beers and ales, including which allergens are found in the different varieties.

The main allergens found in alcoholic drinks are gluten and sulphites. Nevertheless, other unexpected allergens can also be present hence why it is important to check and have a good understanding of the contents of all the products that you sell. For example, there are many different flavoured beers and ciders on the market that contain traces of one of the 14 allergens to enhance the flavour. For example shellfish, which is a mollusc allergen, or peanut butter, which is a peanut allergen.

It is also important to identify the specified allergens in any drinks that you prepare from scratch, such as cocktails, as well as those in any prepacked or readymade drinks that you serve. To ensure the accurate and effective communication of this information to customers, it is best to make a record. Just like a food business, it is advisable to record this information in an Allergen Matrix. Don't forget to include allergen ingredients that are used for garnish or decoration such as a celery stick in a Bloody Mary. Allergens could also be highlighted on drinks menus or via signage placed on the bar for customers to see.

Are there cross contamination risks?

It is important to be aware of your use of allergens within the business so you can manage the risks of cross contamination. Cross contamination can occur at all stages of drink preparation including delivery, storage, preparation, service and as a result of cleaning practices.

When asked to make a specific drink for a customer with a food allergy, ensure that any equipment used such as glasses, blenders and shakers, are thoroughly cleaned before use. This will remove any remaining allergen residues that may be present from previous use. If using allergen ingredients such as celery or peanuts, ensure that these are stored in sealed containers to manage the risk of cross contamination.

What do I have to look out for when it comes to gluten?

Most beers, lagers and sometimes even ciders, contain gluten cereals such as barley, wheat, oats and rye and are therefore not suitable for people who are Coeliac or gluten intolerant. Check the product label for allergen warnings to be certain. You may want to include some gluten free alternatives as part of your offering. If so, make sure these are from a reputable manufacturer or supplier who can verify that the product is gluten free.

Some spirits may also contain gluten. It is important to check for allergen warnings on the bottle to see if gluten remains present in the product after the distillation process.

What about nuts?

Peanuts and tree nuts e.g. almonds, walnuts and pistachios, are specified allergens. Some beers, as well as some spirits such as Southern Comfort, contain nut derivatives.

Other drink products which contain nuts are:

- Almond syrups used in many cocktails, often referred to as 'Orgeat' and 'Falernum' on cocktail menus. Similarly, almond sparkling wine, Amaretto and Galliano liqueur contain almonds.
- Hazelnut derivatives can be found in some liqueurs such as Crème d'amande and Crème de Noyaux as well as in some beers such as Dirty Squirrel by Phillips Brewing & Malting Co. and Stubs Old Crow Hazelnut Porter by Alameda Brewhouse.
- Peanuts (also known as ground nuts) can be found in Harp Lager and in peanut flavoured vodkas and liquors such as Castries Peanut Rum Crème.



I use egg whites in some cocktails, what should I be aware of?

Eggs are also a specified allergen. If you are using eggs to create fizz or body in your cocktails then be sure to take steps to minimise cross contamination during preparation. Be careful not to contaminate other surfaces and equipment such as glasses and carry out effective handwashing and cleaning after handling eggs. This is important in terms of maintaining general hygiene standards and in the prevention of allergen cross contamination.

Is there hidden milk in some drinks?

Lactose (milk) sugar is frequently used in stouts and low-alcohol beers. Many cocktails have milk ingredients e.g. White Russians, Pina Colada, Lumumba, Panda Bear and Brown Cow. Baileys liqueur contains cream and some ready-made margarita cocktails contain milk.

Milk can be present in drinks where customers may not expect it to be. Therefore, it is important to provide an allergen matrix that highlights the key ingredients and any allergens present in the drinks that are prepared.

If a customer asks you about the presence of a specific allergen whilst the bar is busy and there are lots of customers to serve, it can be a challenge to check whether this is the case. Hence why it is better to be prepared and have this information already to hand. That way you can focus on making great drinks for your customers to enjoy and they can use the information that you provide to make informed decisions that will keep them safe.

Are people allergic to sulphites?

Yes, sulphur dioxide, also known as sulphites, is often used as a preservative in dried fruit, meat products, soft drinks, wine, beer and vegetables. If a person has asthma then they have a higher risk of developing a reaction to sulphur dioxide. If present above the specified levels then it will be highlighted on bottles of wine and beer.

How should I communicate allergens in my drinks to my customers?

Allergen information can be communicated either verbally or in writing. For example, on menus and signage or via an allergen record folder which is available at the bar for customers to review.



I serve bar snacks that are kept in jars on the bar, what should I do?

As with any other products that you serve, you need to be clear on the allergen content of any bar snacks that you serve. It is advisable to retain the ingredients list from the packaging to ensure you are aware of any allergens and so that you can provide information to customers. It is also worth labelling the jars to highlight specified allergens i.e. contains peanuts.

What happens if something goes wrong?

Common mistakes that businesses can make are:

- Offering products that are 'free from' allergens but then forgetting to assess the risks from cross contamination and inadvertently introducing allergens into a product.
- Adding last minute ingredients and then not realising that this has introduced allergens to a product e.g. relish added to a drink as decoration, or offering a last minute bar snack.
- Taking a guess and providing incorrect information to a consumer instead of accurately checking the ingredients.

The consequences of getting it wrong could be very serious for someone suffering with a severe food allergy. It is helpful to know what steps to take to help someone who may be suffering with an allergic reaction and you can find more information about these steps on the NHS website.

If a customer has an allergic reaction to one of your drinks then you must review the circumstances to determine if incorrect information or advice was given and if you were aware of the presence of an allergen. Ensure that lessons are learnt and the allergen information system is improved. Likewise do the same if there is 'a near miss' incident so you can prevent a serious incident occurring later. Remember; good management requires constant monitoring of these risks.

How can NCASS help me with allergen management?

Allergens in drinks cannot be ignored. Taking a keen interest and being proactive, not only helps to avoid any unpleasant problems further down the line, but will also highlight your business as one that cares about legal compliance and prioritises their customers' well-being.

NCASS have provided members with guidance on allergen management in the NCASS Safety Management System. We have included a template of an Allergen Matrix and ingredient/product specification record sheets. These are also available to download from the additional resources area of the website.

Within the NCASS food safety risk assessments, allergen controls are now incorporated at each stage of food processing to support with the development of an allergen management system and compliance with updated regulations.

Furthermore, the NCASS Allergen Awareness course will be available shortly. This will be invaluable to anyone who wants to enhance their knowledge of allergen controls and familiarise themselves with practical tips to ensure the compliance of their business.





Brooklyn

Brownie Co.

Brownies. AKA little slabs of chocolate heaven. Those irresistible blocks of glory, often gooey, always oozing away our troubles. Providing slices of happiness, one bite at a time is exactly the experience you get with father and son business Brooklyn Brownie Co. We put in some time with them to find out a bit more about their recipe for success.

When you first hear the name Brooklyn Brownie Co, you may be forgiven for believing this is an American style brownie brand – because in effect that is exactly what it is. Owner John candidly describes Brooklyn Brownie Co as “an over the top American brand that is family focused and treats every customer like an extended member of family.” This is an ethos that has rewarded the business and seen their popularity rise like their speciality in the oven. To the point they now boast having five

people with their logo tattooed on them! What began as a humble hobby, making damn good brownies, has evolved organically into a sweet-treat success vehicle. While always humble about the endeavour, John knows his product is the real deal. And he really doesn't need to shout about this – anyone paying a quick visit to their website or social media channels is inundated with insanely attractive propositions of the brownie variety, and must find it as hard as we did to navigate away without placing an order!

One often overlooked aspect in business that is particularly relevant in the hospitality world, is recognising your own strengths – this is something Brooklyn Brownie Co have realised right from the start - “I think people buy into us more than actually the product. So we have realised that over the years as our vehicle was partially crowdfunded.”

Having a great product is necessary to succeed, but how you conduct your business and the perception of the company that you build up and enact can be the difference between completing a sale, and creating a customer: “From the customer's point of view you're spending money with that individual. And we just don't want us to feel like it's a transaction. So you know, we just treat everybody like extended family.” And this family aren't hard to find – it's no wonder that John and Leo are so revered when you look at the reviews they attract online, for example. “It's just what we do. Every transaction, every single thing, we just talk to everyone else the way we'd like to be spoken to.”

Some might be surprised to learn that a business that has achieved the success that Brooklyn Brownie Co has – not to mention the awards amassed (a couple of Great British Entrepreneur Awards and a Northampton Business Excellence Award 2020 to mention a few) – comes from a point of no prior hospitality experience. John's background consists of involvement with training programmes for big global brands like Jaguar Land Rover. Often being drafted in to lead a team or provide consultation, he'd have a lot of work for teams to get through and not always have the luxury of time to complete projects. He thought about how best to motivate his teams, and began incentivising colleagues with his homemade brownies. Little did he know it at the time, he was organically building towards Brooklyn Brownie Co, essentially carrying out lots of product testing. Needless to say, the brownies always did their job! Many more rounds of product testing among friends and colleagues later, Brooklyn Brownie Co was born. It took on a whole new meaning when only a few days after opening the business in 2019, Leo's mother sadly took her own life. John realised then that “I couldn't be out of the house for days at a time. I had to always be around for Leo, for him to know where dad was after his mother passed. I needed to make sure to talk to him every day.”

He refers to this as the moment the business “pivoted”, and became their full focus. Brooklyn Brownie Co really acted as a vehicle for John and Leo to connect more, to build something together while working to support one another, all the while creating delicious brownies! Adopting a “more collaborative, more open” approach allowed the business

to anchor their relationship further, and enabled greater communication: “I guess with making this sort of easy product which most people loved, that is built on and brings people such positivity, it just made it easy for us to facilitate conversation, especially considering this is a typical male dynamic. Guys don't really talk too much.”

There still prevails, despite increasing awareness of the topic, a stigma regarding opening up to talk about their mental health. Everyone can struggle with their mental health, but by increasing awareness and reducing stigmas, Brooklyn Brownie Co hope to encourage the conversation and help people find it easier to talk: “Me and Leo believe in speaking to people. We believe in taking that moment to talk a little bit

more to people in lines, hopefully to change people's day ever so slightly. And make people smile just for a second. Because that instance of momentary happiness, really can go a long way and might just be enough to prevent something happening that can have a detrimental ripple effect to a family.”

As mentioned earlier, it is this kind of approach, this 'service with a smile' attitude and genuine compassion that sets Brooklyn Brownie Co – and in particular the experience that customers receive – apart, above and beyond. What those customers who clearly enjoy their dealings with John and Leo perhaps don't realise, is the positive effect they have on the proprietors just the same, and how it is much more than just a brownie they are investing in.



This facet has been carefully considered in their branding, which comes across clearly and straight away works to give customers a strong perception of exactly who they're dealing with. In terms of advising someone just starting out in their catering journey, John would recommend to "delete all ego and focus on the brand's ethos." He touts being as transparent, honest and open as possible with customers about the business and pour this into the brand persona: "I think customers are a lot more receptive to, and more likely to purchase especially from small businesses when there's a face to it. So definitely put yourself across and give the business a face that people can relate to." The face of the brand is clear straightaway with Brooklyn Brownie Co, they invite customers behind the curtain to see it's just a father and son that they are interacting with and investing in. Speaking about the father and son dynamic of the business, John states how "it's helped us bond significantly as it has allowed

us to talk about everything." Furthermore, he recognises how the business has "just allowed Leo to grow." And grow Leo has, now proudly boasting two Great British Entrepreneur Awards to his name at fifteen years old (!!) which is undeniably an incredible feat and speaks volumes to the working model and success of Brooklyn Brownie Co.

In John's eyes, getting to work so closely with Leo is "fantastic" – even on days where they're catering some big events and have to get up and active as early as 3.30 – 4AM to get prepped and ready to trade on time, he doesn't complain like you might expect a teenager to, but just gets on with it, always with a smile. John has no qualms talking up his praises, and rightly so: "he's taken to it like a duck to water and just runs with it. And I couldn't be prouder. He's done so well." Those early starts and long days can be gruelling experiences, where the two pay for their success with long lines of customers seeking their own

slices of chocolate heaven. But hard work brings about pertinent rewards, and on days catering at large scale events like the MotoGP where the experience is becoming more immersive, comprising concerts and elements to entice all the family, John cites being able to "shut our hatch, run over and watch the concerts" as one of the biggest perks of the job. Not a bad way to finish a day at the office!

When asked what would be the antithesis of this; the worst thing about working events like this, he references customers who come over with a bad attitude that just won't seem to budge: "If a dark cloud comes to your house and just wants to be a dark cloud and rain all over you, no matter what you do, you're not going to be able to push sunlight into that cloud. It's quite disappointing at times, but you just have to walk away because there's a line full of people who want to smile." Well, they say you can't please everyone, and if a Brooklyn Brownie Co brownie can't put a smile on someone's face, we're not sure

anything will! Perhaps the luxury of choice the business boasts can be at fault for making the all-important decision so hard for customers to make.

Considering the range and mouth-watering temptation every product seems to instil, it seemed only right to ask John himself which of their items he'd recommend for a first-time customer to get the quintessential Brooklyn Brownie Co experience: "I would recommend someone try the Biggie brownie. It's a speculoos brownie with a caramelised biscuit on top, drizzled with milk chocolate and white chocolate and then there's white chocolate balls smuggled in, complete with a nice textural crunch. And with each mouthful, it's just filthy (in the best way) with complete pleasure. The textures just keep playing off each other. The tastes, they keep changing. I mean this is not one flavour notes!"

Sounds good to us! Much like the vision and aspiration for the

business moving forward – as we approach 2023 and consider plans for the upcoming year, Brooklyn Brownie Co clearly have exciting times ahead. Building on the latest expansion that was the launch of their dark kitchen/ collection hatch allowing them to bake up to 15,000 brownies a week (!) as well as adding a whopping 25 new products to the delivery menu. John's fiancé Becky has joined the business and got well involved with constructing the dark kitchen – all the while pregnant with their daughter Liberty who has "become the glue that has truly bonded our family together" and completed the duo's expansion to quartet! While looking to solidify their presence on some more delivery platforms and expand the reach and operation that way, another avenue to be explored is expanding the team itself. Getting some extra hands in the dark kitchen would allow John and Leo to focus on the point of delivery and provide that customer service they are renowned for, mindful of how

"with any small business, you're invested in, you know, the other person is just an employee. So we just need to make sure that we get that balance, right." Another exciting thing to look out for that could be on the horizon this year, is a second trailer allowing focus to turn towards providing savoury goods aka traditional New York style, fully loaded hot dogs – now that's the full package. You can picture it now, hungry punters gorging on authentic hot dogs in all their gluttonous glory, then with what room they have left diving into a brownie!

Many exciting times ahead for a business that has earned and deserves every bit of success that comes their way. Keep an eye out for Brooklyn Brownie Co catering at an event near you and you can look forward to receiving your own little slice of heaven from the inspirational father-son duo John and Leo, complete with a big smile of course!



FOLLOW THEIR JOURNEY:

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ENHANCING EXPERIENCES

A new year looms, so new ideas are being thought of and new opportunities are ready to rise behind the curtain of 2023. At the time of writing this, we are just under a month away from the first whistle of the 2022 Qatar World Cup. An event taking place on the other side of the world, yet through being widely broadcast across the globe – especially in the UK – bringing with it a plethora of opportunity. Events create interest, and for food businesses provide a reason – beyond the usual – to draw people in.

It goes without saying that food and experiences are and have always been synonymous - you can't really have an event without food and drink. As time has gone on, and possibilities within both food and events as separate entities have widened and been explored, tastes have developed, and with them expectations among audiences. This has created a need to provide more to keep alluring audiences and

pushed the bracket of this time-old relationship between food and experiences to new heights. After all: Food is the glue that brings people together and is a driver to keep them coming back.

Sticking with the theme of football for a moment, it is testament to the quality of street food vendors filling bellies with goodness that while the age-old tradition of pie and chips still holds up and retains its charm, the shifting dynamic and evolution of consumer tastes and demand has led to the ready availability of great food choice on matchdays for supporters. This speaks volumes to the popularity of multifunctional experiences sweeping across hospitality and the wider entertainment industry. To the extent that the food experiences on offer – now widely (and rightly) considered an event in their own right – can almost frame the 'actual' event, as something of a subtext. Being based in Birmingham, we have seen this development right on our doorstep – Aston Villa

Food is the glue that brings people together and is a driver to keep them coming back

and Birmingham FC have both been somewhat pioneers of this approach, and have seen great results from it. One example is an Indian grill street food vendor that began trading in the Holte End stand at Aston Villa, offering a range of Desi pub classics.

Fans have been vocal about their appreciation, flocking to the vendors pre-match and at half-time to get their fill. This is a pre-existing culture – Birmingham, football fans, Indian food – that the marriage of Aston Villa and caterer have celebrated. There is no reason to not encourage this degree of innovation and widen the choice on offer to fans – it enhances a consumer's enjoyment of the main experience (attending the football) while also existing as a totally unique food experience on its own. This combination of what is effectively two separate events is a mutually beneficial relationship as they play to one another's advantage and ultimately has a positive impact on the attendee.

The acceptance and welcoming of street food vendors into sporting stadiums can be seen as a nod to the wider potential of similar arrangements that can elevate the enjoyment of a huge range of different events. This rise can be charted as something of a phenomenon on social media, with accounts like Footy Food and Footy Scran documenting the fine foods found at football, detailing from which ground and how much it cost. Furthermore, it serves as great inspiration for the sector and individual caterers to see what can be achieved and can open the doors for a wealth of opportunities in the future.

SING YOUR PRAISES

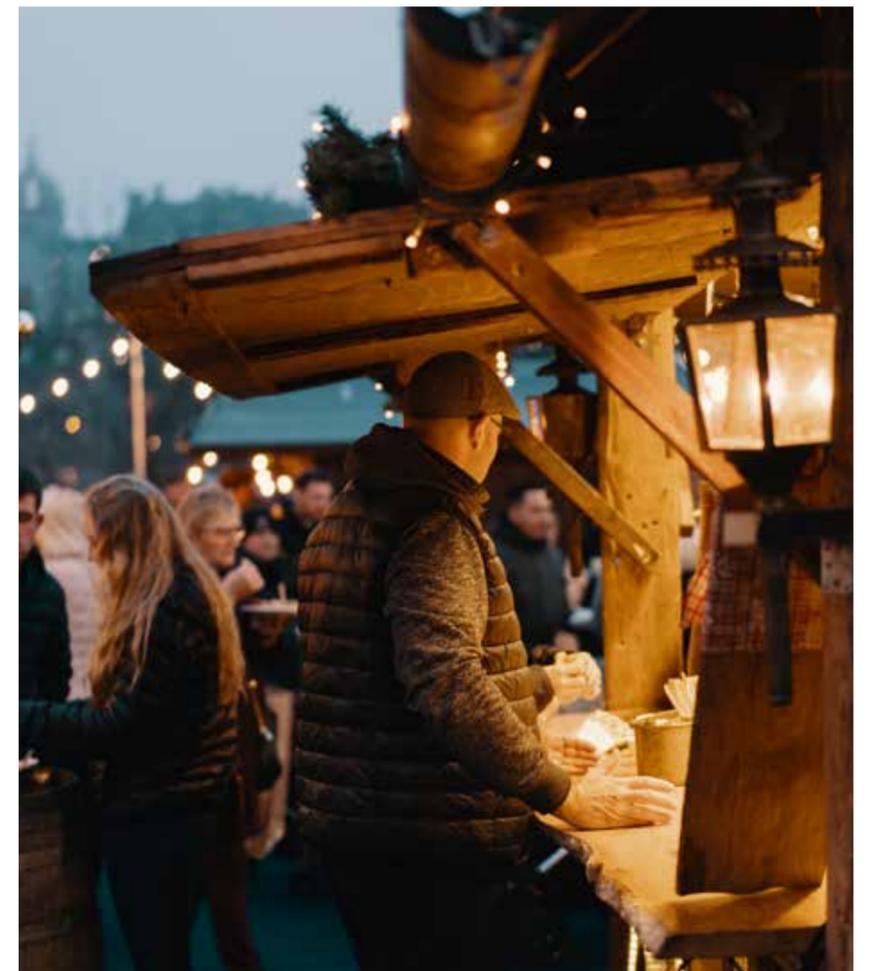
One of the biggest events the UK will host in 2023 is Eurovision, set to take place in Liverpool throughout May. Similar to the World Cup in the hybrid event sense, that it will be broadcast and consumed remotely across the world. Viewing habits of consumers are also shared as groups will congregate to host watch parties in their homes as well as bigger, public screenings that take place, bringing people together. There is also a vested interest in a home nation – a reason for people to engage on such a scale. With all of this, comes ample opportunity. Engaging with an event like Eurovision can be a fruitful venture that you can tailor in line with your business speciality.

It gives a reason for people to visit – and ultimately spend money with – your business. The event is a pre-set theme for you to base everything around. For the World Cup as an example, a quick and easy way to align with the event and show the public you are engaging is to dress up the premises – draping the flags of competing nations all over your business is a classic tactic.

This would be no different with an event like Eurovision – a simple temporary 'look' matching the event will tell people straight away that



it serves as great inspiration for the sector and individual caterers to see what can be achieved



you are on board with the event and more simply put, mark you out as a preferential establishment for them to enjoy the occasion with. Advertising is a must with this endeavour – a sign outside your premises goes a long way, you can also drum up loads of interest through social media and create a palpable sense of involvement.

Eurovision will be enjoyed by many from the comfort of home, so there is a huge takeaway market to access here too. You could put together a package deal to feed everyone, sharing platters, drinks packages – there is so much room to explore and different products you could make good on and have the potential to serve and engage with a huge pool of customers doing this.

Think about menu items with quirky, relevant titles – these always pique interest and are a great talking point. Why not host your own Eurovision contest, with prizes for the best costumes? This adds another dimension of engagement for customers and will increase the likeliness of them staying at your premises for the duration of the event. It's always worthwhile to consider taking bookings pre-event, and advisable to offer some form of group discount as well. An event like Eurovision gives you a fantastic chance to show off your creativity and leave a lasting impression with customers who can quickly build up an affinity with you following an impressive experience, just keep your efforts aligned with the event in question and it will be an enjoyable endeavour all around.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

It is a well-established feature that music festivals, while striving to host and attract some of the most exciting live artists, have become synonymous with boasting mouth-watering line ups of food vendors. To the point many festivalgoers will head into the fields with one eye on trying the chili vegan burritos all their friends were raving about last year, and the culinary experience on offer can be just as fondly remembered as the moment of magic when favoured bands deliver the goods. They serve as a great example of the multifunctional experience working well, and it is great to see the doors for these kind of experiences bursting open to your local street and engulfing communities across the UK, presenting so many options and opportunities for caterers.

2023 is a fresh set of 365 days – that's a whole lot of opportunity. And opportunity really is everywhere – if you look for it, you will find it. As stated in the beginning of this piece, event's always need catering and people's enjoyment of an event is often heightened by quality food. So the demand is already there, you've just got to capitalise on it. Whether you cater indoor and/or out, are mobile, function or fixed-site, there's often events taking place that you can serve well and opportunities you can make good on. Focus on events relevant to your specific business, play to your strengths, think outside the box, be bold and plan for success.



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BURGER & BEYOND



With an incredible six locations under their belt, a popular range of DIY kits and a well deserved reputation as one of the best burger restaurants in the country, Burger & Beyond know how to make an impression. They've come a long way from trading out of a Citroen H van and have soared to magnificent heights with locations across the capital; and they aren't stopping there! We caught up with Craig for a quick fire discussion about all things bricks and mortar, the power of social media and the dish that every customer must try.

What encouraged you to move from mobile caterers to bricks and mortar?

Getting a bricks and mortar place was always a goal of ours and following the great feedback that we were consistently getting, it made us push for this even harder.

What do you love most about being a bricks and mortar business?

Having your place is by no means an easy feat but there is nothing quite like seeing your name above a door and seeing people come in and enjoy themselves with friends and family. That is what it's all about.

Do you still cater mobile events?

Yes we do still cater mobile events, and we will always, always love a festival!

What inspired you to create DIY kits?

This is simple! Survival! We had to do this to make it through numerous lockdowns and roadblocks constantly being put in our way during the pandemic. Thankfully they went down a treat and we were able to bring lots of happiness to locked down homes during Covid! It was great because our food and products suddenly became available to people all over the country, so people who had been admiring from afar were now able to experience what we were about.



"I THINK THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF AN NCASS MEMBERSHIP WAS ALWAYS HELPFUL, IN TERMS OF GETTING ADVICE AND BEING PART OF A NETWORK, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER WE WERE MOBILE OR BRICKS AND MORTAR."

Your website and Instagram are fantastic with strong impressive branding across both platforms. Why is a notable online presence important for both your business and others within the sector?

As with anything in this day and age having a strong online social media presence is key. You can't be a success without it! Instagram started initially with people sharing what they'd had for dinner essentially! So for restaurants and food traders, getting your food seen and featured on social media is crucial. We have people follow us from all over the world and when they are in London they message us often and tell us they are coming and make their bookings via Insta! That is the power of social media.

Your story is an incredibly impressive one of growth and development. What are your plans for the future and do you see yourself expanding outside of London?

In all honesty we have lots of plans for the future. At the moment the market is unpredictable and the cost of living I am sure will present us with many challenges.



Presently we are focused on making a success of our two newest sites in Soho and Borough and yes, one day we will expand out of London!

Did your membership help the transition from mobile to bricks and mortar?

I think the safety and security of an NCASS membership was always helpful, in terms of getting advice and being part of a network, regardless of whether we were mobile or bricks and mortar.

If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice that you would give to your younger selves?

Have faith and believe that everything will work out for the best! If you work hard enough and really believe in what you are doing you're on the right track.



I've come down to London to visit what must I try?

Easy, my favourite will always be a simple BBB which has sort of become our signature burger. It has no gimmicks (except an amazing burnt butter mayo) and the simplicity of the burger really does the talking. Served with some Truffle Tots, a side of fried chicken bites and washed down with a B&B Punch or two!!



To find out more about Burger & Beyond visit:

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Episode 2023:

A NEW HOPE



2022 has seen us take detours, dodge curveballs and weather storms that no one could have foreseen in 2021. Whilst few will be ending the year completely unscathed, it is important to learn from the difficulties of this year and use those to positively influence the year ahead. In lieu of a trusty crystal ball to reveal what the future may bring, we turned to our members to share with us their hopes, aspirations and of particular importance, their needs for 2023. It goes without saying that targeted action is a must in order to actualise these goals and whilst creative problem solving and innovative thinking go hand in hand with independent hospitality, it would be short sighted to ignore external influences that would help the sector to thrive. Despite being one of the largest contributors to the U.K. economy, the needs of the hospitality sector are often overlooked. Nevertheless, by

identifying the specific areas in which help is needed, we can help to drive deliberate and targeted change for the betterment of the sector. Subsequently, we also asked members what external support they felt would help the industry to 'strike back.' Our crystal ball has yet to shine light on whether this support will materialise in the needed manner, yet it is of indisputable importance to still note the areas in which targeted aid would be beneficial for the industry.

A NEW HOPE

It is clear that there is a shared hope for growth and evolution next year, with many members seeking to branch out and expand their businesses. For Ed of Ed Bakes, 2023 will be 'a year themed as a push for growth. Our artisan bakery [...] is still in its baby stage and we are hoping 2023 will enable us to grow the team and substantially scale up our productions and diversification of our baked goods.' Vimal of Baked Bird shared a similar

hope for 'more exciting [...] new opportunities in the street food sector, alongside the growth of Baked Bird.'

For both businesses, 2022 has left them wanting more, but one can't help but wonder what key lessons from this year, have shaped and driven their aspirations for next year. For Vimal and Baked Bird, the key take away is information. 'Choose your events and festivals wisely, do not just believe what [you've heard] in terms of numbers, do your research and ask other traders about their experience.' With this mentality, traders can make better informed decisions about what events to prioritise next year and how these events can help facilitate the growth of their business. Sophie and Holly from What the Cluck emphasise the importance of 'trusting the process and staying true to yourself. It's so easy to worry about what's going to happen next, but as long as you're sticking to your core values as a

business [...] things will work out in the end.'

It is important to be prepared and to have a plan for your business. However, life is often the part in between plans and there are only so many things within your control. Taking a leaf out of both What the Cluck and Baked Bird's book, we can see that thorough research, coupled with a trust in the groundwork that you have already done, can encourage your business to grow organically (no pun intended), guided by past experiences and research. A key goal for any business is growth, whether that is a larger net profit, expanding menus or branching out into new fields. Nevertheless, there are other areas in which businesses can show growth, such as an increased awareness of global concerns such as sustainability. The 'need to act together and be more responsible around environmental factors' stands now more than ever. Other

areas of growth could include evolving the way your business operates, creating a strategy to retain staff, getting that website in place, better promoting what you do across social media or setting up collaborations with other independents. In short there are lots of moving parts when it comes to growing your business.

THE INDUSTRY STRIKES BACK

So how do we go about securing this growth? Individual accountability is an important factor in this and by taking steps to review your previous year and identifying what well and what needs improvement, businesses can ensure a targeted approach to 2023. Moreover, innovative thinking, garnering inspiration from others and ensuring that you stand out from the crowd will further help to bring these goals within reach. Nevertheless, external support also plays a role in making these goals attainable. The current economic crisis, coupled with continuing efforts to recover post-covid, have left the industry in desperate need of external support. It is integral that we look within the industry to discover what kind of support can help to actualise these goals.

Governmental support at both local and national levels can be the extra push that enables many businesses to thrive, not just survive, in the coming year. A stable economy is at the top of many businesses' Christmas Wishlist, however, just like sunshine in July, this can be hard to predict. This year has highlighted how external factors can have a massive knock on effect to supply chains, in both availability and price, and how energy crises disproportionately impact the sector. Though the root cause of these issues are outside of industry control, industry specific considerations can help to reduce any negative impacts.

But what would this support look like? For What the Cluck, welcomed support would come in the form of

'IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE IS A SHARED HOPE FOR GROWTH AND EVOLUTION NEXT YEAR, WITH MANY MEMBERS SEEKING TO BRANCH OUT AND EXPAND THEIR BUSINESSES.'

revisiting the structure of VAT and recognition of the impact that it can have on independents. 'During lockdown when VAT was reduced, it was a massive help and it would be a massive help again. Very few of the products that we buy have VAT on them but as soon as we make them into our delicious street food we are charged the full 20%.' Soaring energy prices and the impact of the cost of living crisis on the spending power of consumers, renders, for many, VAT an additional financial burden. Subsequently, adaptations in the structure and implementation of VAT so that it better reflects the economic pressures felt by the industry, has the potential to alleviate gratuitous financial strains. Comparatively, others have noted the impact of increasing event and festival fees and their impact on accumulated profit. Baked Bird echoed that paying large commission rates can make it harder to make a profit due to very small margins. 'Events and festivals are already incredibly hard work for traders and it would therefore be helpful for the events industry to have a greater understanding of this and reflect this understanding in their rates.' The notion of affordability can also be extended to retail parks and market halls etc. with Vimal noting that 'there needs to be more platforms made available for smaller street food businesses to thrive in.' And so how does the industry strike back? By identifying the specific areas in which external support is needed, the industry, and the collective voices within

it, can champion and advocate for the betterment of the sector; striking back against policies that fail to recognise their unique needs. And this is where NCASS comes in. We will continue to support our members by looking for opportunities to secure the growth of the sector. Additionally, we will continue lobbying government, at both local and national level, highlighting the challenges that the sector faces and the possible solutions to counteract these difficulties.

RETURN OF THE SECTOR

In last issue's article Independent Innovation we explored the ways in which businesses can attract customers and consequently boost the rejuvenation of high streets. From using seasonal and local produce to ensuring strong branding across all platforms, the drive for growth begins with the internal choices that an individual business makes. Yet, these choices have wider implications for local and national economies through the subsequent revival of town and city centres as cultural hubs. Therefore, when actioned in tandem with specific and considered support from governmental bodies, these choices can have a greater, more tangible impact for both the individual business and the wider community. In and of itself the sector does not need to 'return'; it never went away and has in fact continued to fight and thrive in spite of unprecedented adversity. Nevertheless, in order to go back to its Jedi Knight level glory (we had to make a direct pun at least once), the importance of external support and the difference it will make to the return of the sector, should not be ignored.

'INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS AND BY TAKING STEPS TO REVIEW YOUR PREVIOUS YEAR AND IDENTIFYING WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT, BUSINESSES CAN ENSURE A TARGETED APPROACH TO 2023.'



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Jamon Jamon



So I'm no chef,' Nick Friedman of Jamon Jamon tells us after we ask him how it all began. A bold statement from the founder of Jamon Jamon and Deluxe Dogs, a Portobello Market stall operator of 18 years and an irrefutable festival connoisseur. Yet not a completely unsurprising one after you spend time talking to him. Nick's journey to founding his business didn't necessarily originate from a love for cooking that needed to be shared with the world. Yet, his passion for what he does is palpable, so when one listens to the organic journey that led to him founding Jamon Jamon and turning it into the success that it is now, you begin to understand why he would make such a surprising assertion. When 'no chef' Nick came to London from South Africa, he had 'never really cooked much.' Nevertheless, as an immigrant in a new country, Nick was poking his finger into many different pies (pun very much intended). 'I think it comes with being an immigrant. It's never

enough to do just one job.' And so he didn't; working in tech during the week and hustling delicious imported Spanish meats online at the weekend, Nick had his sights set on retiring and living the life of Riley within three years.

'Fast forward three months later, I'd sold five portions through my terrible website, two of which were to friends of mine and I was broke sitting there with a few hundred quids worth of vacuum packed ham and cheese in the fridge, thinking that this retirement thing was not going to work out.' So how did Nick go from an expensive inventory of Spanish ham and cheese getting cosy in his fridge, to his fourth year in a row booking Christmas at Kew Gardens? Simple; incredibly hard work, imaginative thinking and genuine enthusiasm. 'A friend of mine said 'why don't you try the street market, selling ham and cheese baguettes?' and so I went and got a stall, picked up my Spanish friend and stayed up through the night making

20 Spanish omelettes.' Those Spanish omelettes, the successor to ham and cheese baguettes, soon became chorizo rolls before finally settling on paella after, as Nick himself says, 'just generally cooking and buying bits and pieces of equipment and generally figuring it out.' You would be forgiven for thinking that Nick's journey was simple. He tells his story in such an honest, open and seemingly obvious way, one could almost believe it easy to replicate. But what sets Nick apart is his love for what he does, driving him to seek out what makes him happy and in turn better his business.

'THERE IS SOMETHING INCREDIBLY ASPIRATIONAL ABOUT THIS SCOPE TO ATTEND FESTIVALS, NOT OUT OF NECESSITY, BUT OUT OF CHOICE.'



'I wasn't making crazy money in my day job, so [the stall] was a nice supplement to it but I wasn't that bothered by the money. I think I was more enjoying the dopamine hits of engaging with customers and the other traders.' A joy for engaging with customers is a golden thread that runs through Nick's narrative and it is clear to see how this, coupled with a great sense of community with other street food traders, is a notable factor in why he has stuck it out for so long. 'I've always aimed for the best value, which means I want you to buy it, enjoy it and go 'you know what? I'm happy with what I paid and happy with the food.'

Ensuring that customers are happy with their food is often easier said than done, but the authenticity of Nick's paella undoubtedly helps. So much so that in an article disparaging the quality of paella outside of Spain, he was listed as one of the few places where you could get decent grub. 'There was a very well-known Spanish blogger lamenting the paella that people were buying in supermarkets and how drab and soulless it was. Then in the bottom paragraph she listed two places in the UK that actually save paella for Spain. One of them was mine.' Small wonder then that such a compliment had Nick racing through the airport to show his

partner the article, forgetting that it was entirely in Spanish and she couldn't read it!

Authenticity is arguably a hard line to tow when you're 'a South African kid making Spanish food in London.' It can be hard to balance staying true to a dishes' tradition, whilst adapting to the realities of serving food on a much larger scale at a market in cold, rainy England. 'It took me five or six years to learn about reheating our paellas after they'd gone cold, especially in the winter. A member of my staff said 'why don't we reheat it?' and I said 'no you can't do that, they don't do that in Spain.' He was Spanish and he said 'but Nick, we're not in Spain.' This lightbulb moment is a lesson that Nick admits he wishes he had learnt sooner. 'We didn't throw away food very regularly, but it was a lost opportunity to make some more money.

I was thinking about every time I'd been in Spain, I'd never seen anyone reheating paella, but of course not! It's like 55 degrees there, of course they don't reheat it! But we're producing on an industrial scale, we're not doing what they do in Spain. We're doing what we do in London, where it's 4 degrees in January.' But there are things that Nick won't compromise on, regardless of the unpredictable British weather. 'We use the same ingredients that they use in Spain. I won't compromise on that. We use a good quality stock, we don't use food colouring and we use saffron. So I think it's as authentic as authentic can be without us being in Valencia using rabbit, or wood, or water, from the local village.'

Unquestionably a significant learning curve for Nick, it proved to be one that came with a two prong solution. Not only did this adaptation increase profits, it also greatly reduced his waste. 'If I had thought more about how to waste less stuff, then that would have saved an enormous amount of money. But it's not just money, it's the ethical impact of it all.' During a trip to Vietnam in 2012, Nick





visited a rice paddy and was faced with the visual indicator of how much food he had been wasting. 'I was watching these guys work there and realised that in one year,

I had thrown away 50 people's work and I thought, I need to do something about this. I know it wasn't me personally affecting them, but all of that stuff had been grown just to be thrown away and I didn't want to do that food chain of destruction anymore.' Whilst conversations around environmentalism and sustainability are growing in popularity, subsequently increasingly a global consciousness as to how our decisions impact the planet, it is worth noting that Nick was well ahead of the curve with this thinking. Environmentalism has been of great importance since time immemorial and many businesses have been making concerted efforts to improve their environmental impact.

Nevertheless, rewind the tape to 10 years ago and we have Nick making a conscious decision to waste less and improve the environmental ethics of his business, resulting in approximately 90% of his waste being either compostable or recyclable.

Then again, Nick has never been one to shy away from innovative and imaginative solutions to a problem. Case in point; selling garlic bread at Glastonbury. 'It was one of those moments where I was thinking how the logistics of paella at a festival just wasn't going to work.' But undeterred as always, Nick found a solution. 'I was looking around and the only snack you could get were chips and I thought 'I don't want chips, I want something else.'" After hearing about a trader who used to sell garlic bread but had retired the year before, Nick thought 'let me just try garlic bread, why not?!' And so once he had set up his pitch he got to work, selling thousands of portions of garlic bread. 'It was great fun, we stick to salamander

grills and a griddle and it's just fun and easy.' Nick's ability to not only see the potential for opportunity in a given moment, but also to follow through and give it a try, has now enabled him to go to Glastonbury with his family and 'forget about the work part of the festival.' There is something incredibly aspirational about this scope to attend festivals, not out of necessity, but out of choice. 'I'm very fortunate to be in that position; I don't necessarily need to go there to make money. My kids still talk about Glastonbury as if they went to the park on the corner, which I think is heart-warming for me because it should be fun.'

When Nick began, there was little street food around. 'We

were making paella on the street, banging and clanging and singing and shouting. It was a real destination thing. And then 2009 happened and the street food wave took off. We were right at the beginning of the wave and I'm not ashamed to say I really benefited from that.' So as someone who has been surfing this wave for some time, naturally one has to ask what advice he would give his younger self. 'The one piece of advice that I would give everybody, is if you're going to keep cash at home, make sure that nobody knows where it is. Because when you leave it alone for a week and come back and you find it's not there, that's very depressing.' Emphatically good advice and one that reflects his longstanding experience in the industry. Another nugget of advice, indicative of one who knows every

detail of his business, is 'you need to be in touch with absolutely every aspect of your business.' 'Only when you know exactly how to do all your bookkeeping, all of your inputs and outputs etc. should you give it to somebody else to do the admin.'

It is the potential for street food to offer an 'authentic experience' that keeps Nick inspired to share his food and as someone who has been at the heart of the growth of street food, you know it holds water when he observes that 'now you've got amazing street food everywhere you go and the stories are great.' As one listens to Nick share his story, his great sense of enjoyment throughout it all is tangible. The delight with which he shares how an old school fruit and veg trader of 70 years

from Golborne Road Market, the first place Nick set up his stall, recognised him as 'the South African guy,' casts no doubt on it genuinely being 'the best thing ever' for him. 'I just got really high off those hits of chatting with real life Londoners, serving bankers or serving people who lived around the area. It really felt like I was getting into a different part of London, one that none of my mates could ever dream of seeing.' His appreciation for Spanish cuisine is one that enables him to be confident in what he produces, whilst recognising that 'it's not something comparable to a Spanish grandmother; that's not what it's trying to be.' This confidence in his ability, his business and his food is the result of years of hard work and is undoubtedly reflected in his attitude that 'if you like it, fantastic; if you don't like it, also fantastic. I'm still happy.'

'IF I HAD THOUGHT MORE ABOUT HOW TO WASTE LESS STUFF, THEN THAT WOULD HAVE SAVED AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF MONEY. BUT IT'S NOT JUST MONEY, IT'S THE ETHICAL IMPACT OF IT ALL.'



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2022 IN NUMBERS

2979 ONLINE SUPPORT CHATS
LASTING **922** HOURS, **11** MINS AND **56** SECONDS



4 NEW NCASS
TEAM BABIES
(INCLUDING TWINS!)

25,003
CUPS OF COFFEE MADE
IN THE NCASS OFFICE



£6,663
DONATED TO
CHARITIES



210,852 LOGINS TO THE NCASS MEMBERS CONTROL PANEL

7157 RISK ASSESSMENTS CREATED

16 MAJOR TECH UPDATES FOR MEMBERS

1076 'YOU'RE ON MUTE!' MINUTES DURING VIDEO CALLS



2958 HOURS **48** MINS **19** SEC
SPENT HELPING MEMBERS ON THE PHONE



4 MAGAZINES
WRITTEN AND
DESIGNED



MORE THAN
1000
TREES PLANTED



59
MEMBERS
INTERVIEWS

2988 VISITORS TO
STREET FOOD LIVE



1 BRAND NEW SAFETY
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



LONGSTANDING MEMBERS



To achieve longevity is to not only survive the test of time, but to succeed it. In the world of hospitality, we know this is no easy feat!

We spoke to a range of members who have each been there and seen it all to find out what they would attribute their longstanding success to.

CHURROS GARCIA

A legend of churros – running as a business for over fifty years and spanning three generations, they have appeared in The Guardian’s top 10 street food vendors list and always light up events!

What do you love the most about working in the hospitality industry?

It is a different way of life from the office based career I had landed in. I love the buzz we get from the customers, I love the huge smiles that greet us when we make them sooo happy giving them churros. I never made anyone that happy in a boardroom. The range of characters and nationalities is also a bonus – people come into streetfood from ALL walks of life.

Based on your own experience, what steps do you think are integral to the long-term success of a business?

Good staff. They are our lifeblood. Also, you need to be a constant, not just a fair-weather trader. Organisers need to know they can rely on you, and you need to work with organisers that are on your side, therefore building up a two-way relationship that is imperative to success. The look and running of the stall is also hugely important. The devil, as always, is in the detail. Authenticity is also a must. My mother was a Spanish Churros maker, so not many people in the world know more about true authentic churros than us! The phrase we often hear is “you can see how proud you are of what you do”.



What about working in the sector appealed to you and has that continued to motivate you to stay within the industry?

Running your own business is thrilling and terrifying in equal measure but it can give you the flexibility to live the other parts of your life as you wish (which is a huge bonus). For example, I had young children and did not want to continue a 9-5 job as I wanted to be there for the school run, homework etc. That meant I did all my emails at 4am – 7am, but that was far better than getting home just before their bed-time every day. It never gets boring – and that is a HUGE plus. Also – what other job lets me camp and work in festival fields with my (older) children, their friends, whilst working with a bonkers



but utterly fabulous set of staff? What other job lets me see the “waggiest tail” competition at a dog show, whilst giving out our lovely churros?

If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice you would give to your younger self before starting your business?

You are the boss. Everyone else has great ideas for how you can improve your business, but stick to your vision (as long as it is working). If you need advice, ask old-time traders – we all have had to go through the same problems in one form or another.

What words would you use to summarise the ‘secret’ to your success?

Authenticity, pride, reliability, hard work.



FOLLOW THEIR JOURNEY:

@churros_garcia



BUDDHA BELLY

REAL THAI STREET FOOD

Birmingham street food legends, they’ve been stalwarts of the Birmingham food scene over the last decade, serving up delicious Thai street food and are soon to become restaurateurs!

What do you love the most about working in the hospitality industry?

Firstly it’s just so instantly rewarding. Everybody loves feeding people right? We get to feed so many and seeing a happy face at the end of all the hard work really does make it all so worthwhile.

Also, as it’s such hard work and long hours there really is a team spirit amongst all the traders and we become like a family. Don’t get me wrong, it is naturally competitive but at the end of the day, we know we need to support and help each other. It’s the only way to survive!

Based on your own experience, what steps do you think are integral to the long-term success of a business?

I think for a long-term successful street food business these are key:

- Have an identity and specialise...don’t try to do it all. Do one or two things really well and build from there. When you focus on your product and keep making that as good as it can be without worrying what anyone else is doing that’s when people start to take notice. Anyone can turn up and sell 10000 chips at a festival but you have to want to be better than that.



- Build a good team. It's not a one man show. You have to have people in your team that love the business and have a vested interest in it and that can also feel proud of what the business achieves.
- Get professional help for marketing, photography and socials when you can.
- Take risks! You miss every shot you don't take!

What about working in the sector appealed to you and has that continued to motivate you to stay within the industry?

For us it was simply a love of food combined with a want to work for ourselves. Even though we've never worked harder it's our choice and for us. I don't think we would ever want to change that.

If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice you would give to your younger self before starting your business?

Do it sooner! Get the van, get the shop, take on the bigger events. Don't be scared to reinvest in your business.

What words would you use to summarise the 'secret' to your success?

1. Love 2. Resilient 3. Flavour 4. Team 5. Consistent



FOLLOW THEIR JOURNEY:
@saibuddhabelly



A real veteran of the game and an NCASS member from the beginning, Real Meat Sausage Company are a festival favourite specialising in hearty, wholesome grub!

What do you love the most about working in the hospitality industry?

I just like being busy really. Working at festivals too I really enjoy, and I'm often busy when working a festival! I always enjoyed attending festivals anyway so getting to work them is great. When things are going right catering can be a really great experience and I find the buzz of it enjoyable!

Based on your own experience, what steps do you think are integral to the long-term success of a business?

Choosing your events carefully. I can't express that in any greater way – it is so important to choose carefully. You can – and I have – lose a lot of money at the wrong events. I even lost £3,000 at an event this year. Also if you're doing an event that works, keep it! This may seem quite obvious but is so true. When I first started I tried to just fill the calendar. Now I do the events that work for me and keep it at that. Most of my work during summer months April – August. Didn't used to have to work the rest of the year. Limited my events to the ones I know work and that's seen me in good stead. Things do change however – one of my best events has got worse and worse to the point I don't do it anymore. You have to be prepared to adapt and change.

What about working in the sector appealed to you and has that continued to motivate you to stay within the industry?

There's a certain buzz I get with being busy. If you're busy, making money and everything is just working – for me, there's nothing that compares to it. I love it!

If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice you would give to your younger self before starting your business?

Don't try and do it all. Like I said, you definitely want to choose your events carefully and you want to give the best impression of yourself every time. It's better to have a few events that you know you can do well than try and do a lot not so well.

What words would you use to summarise the 'secret' to your success?

Perseverance and caution. Adaptability

REAL MEAT SAUSAGE COMPANY



PREMIER FOOD COURTS

With over twenty years of experience within the industry, Premier Food Courts have seen and done it all. From catering at stadiums to racecourses, you name it – they've catered it!

What do you love the most about working in the hospitality industry?

The challenges it throws at you everyday and, overcoming them, also when a customer come back to the unit and says thank you that was a lovely product. Producing Food Courts that you look at and say, yes that looks good / professional.

Based on your own experience, what steps do you think are integral to the long-term success of a business?

Being honest in your own self appraisal as whether you would pay that price for that product, would you want to be served your food by those staff, would you wish to let your kids eat from that unit. And answering yes to all those questions!

What words would you use to summarise the 'secret' to your success?

Attention to detail, hard work!!!



FOLLOW THEIR JOURNEY:

www.premiercourts.com



COCONUT CHILLI

Boasting many years of experience supplying gourmet Indian food to private events, corporate functions and weddings, they are experts in their field and certainly know their food!



What do you love the most about working in the hospitality industry?

I started out in 2011 by setting up the StrEAT Food Collective in Bristol. I needed a flexible job as I was lone-parenting at the time. Coconut Chilli was one of the vendors & it was early days for the street food industry in the UK. The work was hard, the hours were sometimes challenging but there was a genuine buzz & camaraderie amongst my fellow vendors and the scene in general.

Based on your own experience, what steps do you think are integral to the long-term success of a business?

I've never compromised on quality and that's been hugely important. I've had so many loyal customers over the years – they might have come to Abergavenny Food Festival or eaten on my St. Nick's market stall in Bristol. I'm always super humble (and still a bit surprised) when my curries get compliments, even after so many years. I never take anything for granted.

What about working in the sector appealed to you and has that continued to motivate you to stay within the industry?

Customers who tell me they love my food has always been the most motivating factor. That, and the events Coconut Chilli has catered becoming bigger and set in more glamorous locations. I now have lots of celebrity clients too – but I have a strict policy of not naming anyone or asking for selfies for socials – I'll simply address the customer by their first name during service, then our team fondly remembers which dishes they'd particularly loved.



If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice you would give to your younger self before starting your business?

Don't borrow any money without giving it some serious thought. Personal credit was readily available to me in the early days of Coconut Chilli (but funnily enough, not the same for business funding). I was lucky as I managed to buy equipment but I also wasted a lot on 'professional services' mainly men telling me what I should be doing and why. Now I'd say, try and build a personal network instead – NCASS is brilliant for that.

What words would you use to summarise the 'secret' to your success?

1. Passion
2. Integrity
3. Collaboration
4. Bravery
5. Being an original 90s raver (if you know, you know)

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Terms and Conditions of Average 5 Pence offer: 1. This offer (the Average 5 Pence Offer) applies to all new customers who have their application for the Esso Card™ approved for Credit by WEX Europe Services (UK) Limited (WEX) when submitted by accessing the WEX landing page (whether the application is completed online or by telephone). 2. The Average 5 Pence Offer applies to transactions of fuel using a card within the United Kingdom, and does not apply to any International transactions or purchases of Non-Fuel Products. 3. The saving will be based on a comparison of the weekly price issued by WEX and the national average price. It will not be displayed as a separate price item on any invoices or communications. 4. The Average 5 Pence Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers. 5. If the agreement between WEX and NCASS comes to an end, the Customer will move onto the standard pricing of WEX as at the date of communication and any changes to it thereafter. This will be reflected on all invoices. 6. WEX reserves the right to withdraw or amend this promotion at any time. Other terms, fees and conditions apply to use of the fuel Card. Please see the WEX General Terms and Conditions for more details. 7. Data is based on customers average saving from 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. 8. This limited time offer applies to new customers of the Esso Card™ only. If you enjoy access to the Esso network already through one of their current providers, this offer does not apply. Any applications received via WEX where this service is already supplied will be rejected at the point of order. 9. Offer only available for NCASS members with a registered business. Pump prices across the country vary significantly, in rare cases the weekly price from WEX may be more than the advertised pump price at an individual station.

THE ETIQUETTE OF RAISING PRICES

Before we had ever heard the phrase 'unprecedented times,' the idea of raising prices was, for many, not only an avoidable evil but also incredibly daunting. However, these unprecedented times are unfortunately becoming the precedent and the current economic climate, coupled with the cost-of-living crisis and increase in energy prices, have left few with any alternatives.

It can be an intimidating task with warranted fears about losing customers and out pricing yourself from the market. Nevertheless, in order for independent food and drink businesses to survive, it is integral to recognise when it has become necessary to raise prices. Moreover, there is such a thing as the 'right way' to raise your prices.

When done in an informative, transparent and well-reasoned manner, raising your prices need not deter your customers.

Additionally, it will allow you to continue providing the unparalleled service and unique custom that your customer base has come to love. Raising prices might seem like yet another evil, but it is a necessary evil in order to keep your business not just surviving, but thriving.



HERE ARE 5 TOP TIPS ON THE RIGHT WAY TO RAISE YOUR PRICES:

01 BE CLEAR AND DIRECT

Use 'I' and 'we' language; part of your appeal as an independent business is that you aren't a faceless corporation. Reassure customers that this is a decision that you have made as a reflection of the economy and that these steps are necessary for the betterment of your business.

02 EXPLAIN WHY

It is hard to avoid the constant news about the state of the economy and whilst we can only hope for some semblance of stability in the coming months, few aren't aware of the pressures that everyone is facing. However, the wider public might not be aware of how this is impacting the hospitality sector. Staffing shortages, rise in food costs and business energy prices more than doubling for some, have a knock on effect and unfortunately these price increases must now be passed onto the consumer. Provide a detailed, but not overly complicated, summary of the main factors that have led to price increases.

03 DON'T SAY SORRY

Whilst some have the flexibility to raise prices out of choice and a desire to level up their business, others have had their hand forced. In either situation, avoid saying sorry. As previously mentioned, this may be a necessary evil, but apologising for it implies to customers that it is a short-sighted, reactive decision that you have not carefully considered. Moreover, an apology can come across as disingenuous and inconsiderate of the economic difficulties that customers are also facing. Honest, clear and timely communication negates the need for an apology.

04 SAY SOMETHING

Ensure that you say something about menu price changes. Social media can be a great way to get a quick message out to your customer base about price increases on your menu. Don't simply raise your prices and say nothing as this will likely lead to frustration for customers who have been given no reasoning and may have pre-planned a visit based off of older pricing. Keeping your customers in the loop is a courteous action which can prove to be something they remember favourably when deciding which independent food and drink businesses to frequent.

05 THANK YOUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR UNDERSTANDING

Acknowledge, without apologising, that this situation is not ideal and pre-emptively thank your customers for their understanding and, hopefully, continued custom. Without this your business would struggle to survive, so take the time to thank your customers in advance for their consideration.

The language that you use around price increases can be the difference between a happy and understanding customer and a frustrated one. Ensure that all your staff understand why your prices have changed and be confident that they could explain this to consumers if needs be. As Holly Foster from Captain Hank's Crab and Snack Shack explains, after breaking down the reasoning for price changes to querying customers 'most people are understanding.' Undoubtedly a factor in this has been Holly's determination to 'keep prices at a reasonable level' in order to adapt to the economic pressures without out pricing herself and her business from the market. This clear and informative explanation has allowed her to adapt to rising prices without an excessive loss of customers.

In April, Ed Farrell from The Duck Truck shared his fears that the increasing cost of supplies would create a knock-on effect that would have to be passed onto the consumer. Sharing with us that 'duck prices [had gone up] by £10 a case,' Ed echoed the worries of many that food supply price increases could only be swallowed for so long, before resulting in menu price increases. However, Ed, like Holly, wanted his customers to know why this had happened, clarifying to customers that suppliers raising their prices was forcing him to do the same. By ensuring that both he and his staff can explain this, their customers are able to make better informed decisions which keeps The Duck Truck as a viable option in spite of increased prices.

Independent food and drink businesses have a proven track record of adapting to difficult times. The current economic situation is yet another hurdle which the industry must face and whilst price increases are not a guaranteed way to ensure the success of business, they can create a much needed economic buffer which reflects other increasing prices further up the chain. By providing an honest, transparent and timely update on price changes, businesses will find that the majority of their customer base remain understanding and supportive.

A GUIDE TO THE NEW SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In our last edition of the NCASS magazine we introduced you to the new NCASS Safety Management System (SMS). Now we'd like to tell you a bit more about the key benefits of the new system and share some tips on how to get the most out of it as part of your membership.

The new NCASS SMS is a more comprehensive and improved version of the previous Due Diligence System. Designed as an educational tool to help you as an NCASS member to understand your Food Safety

and Health & Safety responsibilities, it is a compliance document seeking to help drive standards and tackle industry wide issues.

The SMS is packed with lots of information to enable you to comply with legal requirements and meet best practice standards. If you understand and implement as much of this as reasonably practical, you will have the best chance of running a safe and compliant business.

There is a vastly improved look and feel to the new system. The new system is composed of four parts including elements across Food Safety, Health & Safety and Fire Safety:

1. Safety Management System – this contains compliance/educational information, outlining everything you need to know to run your business safely and in a legally compliant manner.
2. Risk Assessments – we have provided updated risk assessment templates for Food Safety processes and a range of relevant Health and Safety topics. Allergen controls are incorporated at each stage of food processing to support with the development of an allergen management system and compliance with updated regulations. The H&S risk assessments are more detailed especially in terms of Fire Safety and LPG Safety so will take a bit more time and consideration but will produce thorough, accurate and customised documents. We have also taken on board feedback from Environmental Health Officers to ensure that the risk assessments are sufficiently detailed.
3. Daily Diary – the new wiro bound Daily Diary incorporates all the relevant monitoring checks (opening and closing, temperature) into one place. Whilst the Safety Management System sets out what to do and how to do it, the Daily Diary allows you to document, record and evidence how these are being done properly.
4. Additional Resources – We have provided template documents that you may find useful. These are an extension to the Daily Diary and include gas and electrical safety checklists, allergen matrix log, cleaning schedules, suppliers list and many more. All the additional resources can be found in the additional resources area of the website <https://www.ncass.org.uk/members-only/safety-management-system-resources/>.

While most of the information outlines key controls that everyone must be aware of, we appreciate that not all of it will be relevant to your business. You just need to focus on the sections of the system that are relevant to your business.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE

You will receive the new system on renewal of your membership.

We suggest that you work through it chronologically and focus on the sections most relevant to you. The contents page can help you navigate through the sections and can be used as an easy reference guide going forward, particularly for staff training or for when needed to check information.

Read through the instructions at the start of the folder and start to familiarise yourself with the contents. After reading, it's time to consider:

- Have I put these measures in place? Am I already doing this?
- Is there anything else that I need to do? Can I do it better?

Upon renewal of your membership you may decide to wait for your new Safety Management System to arrive before completing your online risk assessments. However, if you are confident with your compliance responsibilities then you may choose to get a head start and head straight to the Members Dashboard to complete them. To do this you will need to be clear on the types of foods that you will be using and preparing as part of your business i.e., ambient, chilled, frozen food, and also clear on the processes that you will be undertaking. For example, will you be cooking and hot holding or cooling and reheating foods?

Suggested order of completion:

1. Prioritise Food Safety risk assessments – become familiar with the contents of risk assessments alongside the supporting information in the Food Safety section of the SMS.

These risk assessments cover all stages of food preparation from collection or delivery of ingredients by suppliers, through to service and display of the finished products, with consideration for ambient/chilled and frozen products.

You will need to go to the My Units/Premises page of the Members Dashboard, to complete them online.

There you will be able to select the relevant processes and food types and then create your flow chart in the correct order. After considering the questions at the start of each process and selecting the relevant answers you will be presented with a risk assessment table. Make sure you are familiar with the controls that are outlined within these tables and are able to properly implement them within your business.

Having your Food Safety risk assessments and the relevant controls in place contribute greatly to the food hygiene rating scheme requirements and could be the difference between getting a good hygiene rating or not at your next inspection.

- As a member, you must now complete your own COSHH assessment. We have made this as easy for you as possible by including some typical pre populated information. It is recommended to review the COSHH section of the Safety Management System (Section 3.2, pg 179-187), then complete the COSHH assessment via the Company Documents page in the Dashboard. This is in a new online format that allows you to carry out straightforward assessments by reading through the statements and selecting 'Yes' or 'No'. If you select 'No' to the statements then you will be required to detail your alternative specific controls. This produces an assessment for the safe use of chemicals that is specific to your business and the will be added to the Company Documents page on your Members Dashboard.
- Develop the Cleaning Plan – complete the template plan which can be found within the Daily Diary. Decide whether the simple or detailed cleaning plan is appropriate for your business. This will detail what should be cleaned, when and how. Make sure your staff are familiar with this cleaning plan and know how to implement it. There are further instructions on how to do this within the 'Creating a Cleaning Plan' section of the Daily Diary. Online versions are available at <https://www.ncass.org.uk/members-only/safety-management-system-resources/>.
- Determine an approach for the Daily Diary – You must fill in the business details at the beginning of the diary and make sure that whoever carries out the checks within the business does so properly and the Daily Diary is properly maintained and kept up to date.

The initial business information and operational checks must be completed before production/trading begins (Parts 1 and 2). Once production/trading has begun, activities must be checked to confirm that all reasonable actions are being taken to keep all food and people safe.

Part 3 of the Daily Diary explains how to carry out the checks and what needs to be recorded every time you trade. The new system encourages you to carry out opening checks before food preparation/trading starts each day.

This will help to make sure your business can operate safely, hygienically and to identify and resolve problems early on. The closing checks will help to make sure your business is closed down properly and is clean and ready for the next trading day.

A list of suggested opening and closing checks have been provided in the Daily Diary with space to record any additional or specific checks. When they are completed, confirm by clicking the greyed out ticks on the left hand side of the Daily Record on the corresponding day of the week.

There are two options for recording delivery checks for incoming food ingredients. Option 1: Carry out the checks listed in the Daily Diary and reflect everything as it should be by ticking the greyed-out boxes alongside the statement 'delivery checks complete' in the Daily Record.

Option 2: If you wish to record specific details of every delivery check, for example 'use by date', temperature checks etc., you can use the Delivery Checks Record Form, located within this Diary and also available to download in the Additional Resources area of the NCASS website at <https://www.ncass.org.uk/safetymanagementsystem/resources>.



EHOs will review this diary during routine inspections and spot checks, to assess how well you implement the Safety Management System.

You never know when you will need your due diligence, and having evidence that you have done all you reasonably can to produce safe food and drink will give you piece of mind and can protect you if later faced with a complaint or allegation of food poisoning.

- Complete the H&S policy. You must now complete your own H&S policy via the Company Documents page of the Members Dashboard. This should only take a few minutes to complete in order to outline your commitment to good Health and Safety management. Again, we have tried to make this as simple as possible for you by providing a typical pre populated policy. You may add and edit it according to your requirements and specific business needs. More information can be found in Section 1.2 of the Safety Management System folder.
- Select the relevant H&S hazards and work through the H&S risk assessments – these can be done one at a time online via the My Unit/Premises page, or you may find it easier to print and complete them manually.

Each risk assessment is more detailed and requires you to read through the statements or controls and determine if they are applicable by selecting one of the following: YES/NO/N.A.

Use them as a checklist to complete whilst conducting a walk through or review of your business. You just need to select and complete those hazards that are relevant to your business.

- Work through the relevant Fire Safety assessments – The Fire Safety risk assessments are now broken down into a series of different hazard assessments which relate to different business set-ups e.g., use of LPG in tents/marquees, use of LPG in permanent structures, presence of combustible materials in vehicles and trailers, use of portable generators in gazebos and stalls.

You just need to select and complete those hazards that are relevant to your business. These can be also completed online via the My Unit/Premises page, or you may find it easier to print them and complete them manually. If you need further support selecting the relevant risk assessments then you can speak to an account manager on 0300 124 6866.

If you need more copies of the additional resources, they can be completed online or printed to be completed manually from the NCASS website. There are QR codes throughout the SMS folder which can be scanned to easily access the additional resources available on the NCASS website.

Company Documents and My Units/Premises page – don't forget to upload key documents to these areas of the dashboard such as public liability insurance, gas/electric certificates etc. This will help when it comes to sharing this information with event organisers and Environmental Health Officers etc.

It is vital to ensure that you take the time to read things, understand your responsibilities and get things right in order to run a safe and compliant food or drink business. We appreciate that this can be a lot to take in and to go through and complete. That is why the tools and resources are designed to make the process as simple as possible for you.

Please don't forget, we are always here to help you along the way so if there are things you don't understand or you require any assistance please don't hesitate to reach out!





Introducing Vanessa and the Guild of Caribbean Cuisine

Hi Vanessa, so can you tell us what *The Guild of Caribbean Cuisine* is all about?

It's a brand new organisation that has teamed up with NCASS to push forward Caribbean cuisine, chefs and food businesses. The aim is to highlight the unique flavours and dishes of the Caribbean, to celebrate our chefs and food and to create conditions where our cuisine can succeed in raising awareness and interest in our food culture. To increase the viability of Caribbean owned food businesses and claim our equal place amongst the great cuisines of the world.

Reggae Reggae sauce surely can't be the highpoint of our contribution to the UK's food culture!

That sounds like a bold plan! How did you get involved in forming a Guild and why Caribbean food?

I've run a CIC for several years that promotes Caribbean cultural cooking. Working with young people and victims of violence and abuse, teaching them how to cook, bringing them together in a social context and celebrating Caribbean food. Through this business I came across so many amazing chefs and caterers, but it felt like they had nowhere to go in their career, I mean who are our celebrity black chefs?

I just love Caribbean cuisine and coming from Jamaican heritage I have first-hand knowledge of just how beautiful the cuisine is. My passion is to share this wonderful cuisine with the masses, unfortunately I have not seen much progression within the sector, no support or guidance for businesses to grow with the ever moving trends. We recently launched the Culture Cooking Restaurant a state of the art mobile restaurant, it's

a 20ft container with a fabulous commercial kitchen inside, it just sets the tone of where we envisage the future of Caribbean cuisine, it definitely is a mouthwatering, show-stopping piece of kit and we are so proud that it's part of our community.

I contacted NCASS to ask them to promote one of my events and they ended up providing the CIC with hygiene training which could help my trainees get into employment. Mark and Tom from NCASS also came to support my event which was really lovely.

It was through these conversations that the idea of elevating Caribbean food and businesses started to form. This developed organically, we got to a point where it was a case of put up or shut up – and here we are.

"THE GUILD WILL BE A GREAT ASSET TO US IN HELPING TO CHANGE AND EDUCATE MINDSETS IN REGARD TO CARIBBEAN DINING IN ORDER TO PROPEL US FORWARD AND ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMERS WHO WILL TRULY APPRECIATE THE VISION THAT WE ARE EXECUTING."

So over several years we'd had numerous conversations with NCASS – in the end they said, we love what you're looking to do, as long as you run it – we will support you to do this. We'll help with the standards, hygiene and safety, we will also promote Caribbean cuisine at Government level to help give you a voice and ultimately a seat at the table.

Food is such an important part of who we as Caribbean people are. In terms of culture, however, we haven't got the boost that

other cuisines have enjoyed over the past decade. The UK food culture is stronger since the emergence of Korean, Taiwanese or [authentic] Mexican food over the past few years, for example. At the Guild we aim to push and promote the best of Caribbean cultural cooking. Unfortunately as a culture we tend to stick within our comfort zone and just cook for each other, not venturing out to new audiences. The Guild will help on a national scale to sway new audiences to EAT CARIBBEAN, but we appreciate we need to improve in a couple of areas, and through the Guild with the support from NCASS, we will be able to do just that.

The hierarchy of 'good food' always seemed to be French, Italian and then everything else however, street food, casual dining and other sectors have elevated other 'migrant' cuisines and challenged this franco – western centric appreciation of food. We want Caribbean cuisine to be a part

of that shift and pivotal in those conversations, for Carib chefs and businesses to grow their businesses and to market their offering to a wider audience.

Have you hit any glass ceilings with the project?

Well that's always potentially a nagging concern, but we need to work on the challenges we can fix or influence – not fixate on problems we can't. We need to push through that or nothing will change. This is something I've found in initial discussions, so many businesses are keen for this to happen, but how do you take the first step alone? The Guild will enable our food businesses to confidently sell a great, authentic product and to entice new customers because we've raised the bar together.

There are inconsistencies that have held Caribbean food back, from

issues with service to inauthentic corner cutting that undermines our product. As businesses we sometimes miss out on the 'life hacks' that other businesses adopt with relish – for example, the number of businesses that still use Styrofoam packaging and wonder why they get refused for events is crazy. Or pouring bottled BBQ sauce on chicken and selling it as jerk! If it isn't cooked in jerk pans – it isn't jerk. There are small tweaks and changes that businesses could make to vastly improve their prospects and profitability and we want to help them on that journey.

Where do you see the opportunities for businesses that join up?

The Guild will underpin the quality of the food and increase perceived value. In short – we should sell more food at better margins. Customers will be able to identify authentic Caribbean food cooked properly and will seek us out. We really want to open up the best of our food culture to the wider population.

At the moment, Caribbean food is predominantly aimed and marketed at the Caribbean community. We need some way of demonstrating what authentic food, made properly is. We need a way of celebrating our many great chefs. We need to protect our food culture from appropriation and

exploitation – and we need to be more profitable.

To do this we need solid baselines of ingredients, production methods, good service, hygiene, professionalism and quality. We need a seal of quality that the public can recognize. People increasingly look for authentic experiences – and we want to ensure they can get that.

So how will the Guild work?

We're still in the early stages, with a formal launch penciled in for January 2023. We are currently gathering founding members and supporters and are looking to have a big debate about underlying standards with those businesses, we will then be able to draw a line under what is authentic and move forwards. Ultimately we aim to have the Guild symbol as a sign of authenticity and quality which will enable consumers to pick the best restaurants and caterers.

NCASS will help by providing systems for us to work to, training for staff to improve standards and also with the promotion of the Guild. The work lobbying for independents during Covid was incredible and they continue to push Government to listen to small and micro businesses who need it most, not just those that could shout the loudest.

In a cost of living crisis can caterers afford two memberships?

I'm an NCASS member and I've made my money back several times over thanks to the Booker vouchers and residual cashback so I don't see that as a cost. If you use the vouchers to buy stock you'll cover both memberships and have cash in your pocket when you sell the food. NCASS offer monthly payments for those concerned about cash flow. The reality is by being a part of the Guild and the growth in the sector, businesses will gain an increasing number of customers and sales.

"FOOD AND DRINK IS AN INTERNATIONAL VESSEL FOR BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND OUR AIM IS TO ENSURE THAT OUR DINING EXPERIENCE IS ENJOYED BY ALL NO MATTER THE OCCASION."



Obviously Caribbean – but which types of businesses are you aimed at?

We really want to define the different aspects of Caribbean cuisines and celebrate each one for what it is. Some of our food makes great street food, some would fit into a bistro / trattoria label, we struggle to get our fine dining recognised as such – that's something we need to fix, and of course community based takeaways and function catering. We want to elevate each aspect of our cuisine and celebrate great cooks and chefs.

How do Caribbean food businesses get involved?

We have an NCASS code for people to sign up with that will allow them to identify potential Guild members, we'll then get in contact with you to talk about joining.

We are looking to support the work of the Jamaican Government in defining their cultural dishes and to agree on standards for Jamaican cuisine amongst Guild members. We're keen to get the input of UK based food businesses in order to develop the standards that can

push our food culture forwards. We are also working with NCASS and their network of street food contacts with a view to opening access to Caribbean businesses and even to run Caribbean owned and operated events.

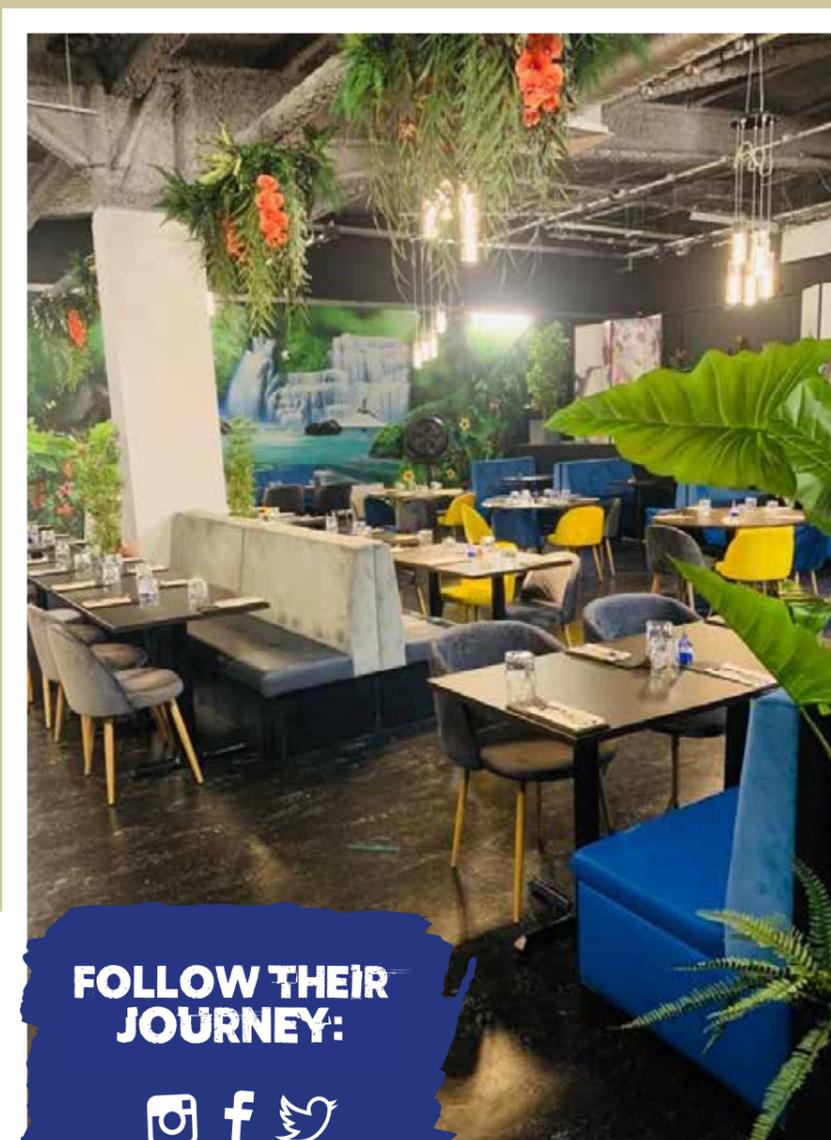
Join up, spread the word – spread the love! Become a founding member and help to define the future of Caribbean cuisine in the UK for years to come.

Raising the Bar

Adian and Eloise opened 'Adian's' a modern Caribbean restaurant with a vision to combine their great passions – food and art. To showcase Caribbean food in a way that has yet to be seen in Birmingham, a city that is full of so much diversity. Pushing boundaries and fusing together flavours that not only work harmoniously but are also presented in a 'show-stopping' manner.

"Food and drink is an international vessel for bringing people together and our aim is to ensure that our dining experience is enjoyed by all no matter the occasion. The Guild will give us the opportunity to broaden our customer base and get more people trying our food. Our cuisine has not always had the opportunity to shine, or a level playing field.

The Guild will be a great asset to us in helping to change and educate mindsets in regard to Caribbean dining in order to propel us forward and engaging with customers who will truly appreciate the vision that we are executing."



FOLLOW THEIR JOURNEY:



@adiansdiningexperience

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND OR DIAL INTO THE GUILD MEETINGS IN JANUARY 2023 EMAIL MARK@NCASS.ORG.UK.





We sat down with them to find out their story and ask – why hospitality?

For proprietors Donna and Ed, running a hospitality business is a far cry from both of their respective careers and working worlds, but it offered them the freedom they sought and let them explore one of life's greatest passions – pizza!

As Donna states: "We were both living in Suffolk where I was working in publishing as I have done since I was 19 and my husband Ed was in the army. When we decided that Ed was going to get out of the army after doing his 21 years, he was being medically discharged for PTSD due to trauma that happened in Afghanistan in 2009 – where he earned a Military Cross in award for his bravery. So we were looking to relocate, to have a slower pace of life that our children could thrive in. I already had family over here and we saw potential for this kind of business to work – if you were prepared to work hard."

After going to the office Donna used to work at in Oxford, seeing and sampling some of the best street food on offer, inspiration struck and the couple thought they could bring that homely vibe and quality homemade food to Mull – offering something different. Having considered their options with the relocation, and with the nature of Ed's PTSD, they felt having their own venture, owning their own business was the way to go.

So the slower pace of life, the love of pizza and freedom in the oven were driving factors in the birth of The Foodie Shack. Add to that mix the desire to provide financial security and a meaningful future for their young daughter who suffers from autism, and you really get the full slice. The Foodie Shack is much more than artisan pizza baked in the undeniable allure of the woodfire oven – it is family, it is freedom, it is friendship, it is a beautiful example of the possibilities within running your own business.

Simply put, Donna and Ed asked themselves: "What can we do to thrive in the area we want to move to and to build something for the future for our family?" and The Foodie Shack was born.

THE FOODIE SHACK

The Foodie Shack has been populating the Isle of Mull with their fabulous and quite frankly, irresistible woodfired pizza for a couple of years now. They are passionate about the product and personable with people, valuing the 'human touch' that they believe has helped them on the path to success that currently finds them working non-stop, six days a week during the summer but still actually enjoying the endeavour!



The venture became a whole lot more official in November 2019 when they bought their pizza truck and got to practising. They make no pretence about needing a lot of practice, and have always injected this degree of transparency into their business. When asked what advice they'd give to themselves before starting the venture, they state: "don't rush it – take your time. We so enjoy the process now, whereas at the beginning we were putting so much pressure on ourselves to get it right. If we'd have taken our time and enjoyed the process, we would have relaxed into it more."

This transparency has become a key factor in their success, they are confident enough to admit where they've made mistakes before which is endearing and puts across a genuine sincerity that customers respect and relate to. This personable approach creates a strong and lasting relationship between customer and business, it's the difference between a human interaction and a business transaction. As Donna puts it:

"Sometimes you can finish a trading session and feel like you've just sort of counselled each other through so much stuff. The conversations that happen at The Shack are just one of those things that I do that makes the experience different. I don't ever remember going to any business where someone has spoken to us the way that we talk to other people. And some people have opened up about really honest things, you know, sharing their mental health issues with us. Even admitting you haven't had a great day yourself just humanises the fact that the world has been a really crappy place for a lot of people for the past couple of years. And sometimes you might just need that stranger making a pizza to ask if you're okay."



"NO ONE ELSE WAS DOING IT IN MULL – WHY DON'T WE GIVE IT A GO AND MAKE THE PIZZA THAT WE LIKE!"



After humble beginnings in November 2019, The Foodie Shack was shifting gears and getting a roll on when progress was ground to a halt indefinitely by the noise of Covid. Something of a make or break moment for a lot of businesses that saw the hospitality industry suffer massively. Donna and Ed decided that although they couldn't trade, it didn't mean they couldn't build the business up and keep generating excitement around the Shack. So that's just what they did – utilising social media, they kept engagement up and decided to use the time to share their journey with everyone, bringing the background and origin story of The Foodie Shack to life. Through this, they were able to convey exactly how much the business meant to them alongside being conscious of the restrictions impinging everyone's lives, they just wanted to give people something to look forward to once lockdowns were lifted. I mean, who doesn't look forward to pizza?!

They recall catering their first post-lockdown event which happened to be a friend's wedding, where they saw just how much joy a piece of pizza was bringing to people – and felt providing this was the best feeling in the world! Affirmations come in all different shapes and guises, but this was certainly a positive one for The Foodie Shack and felt huge after all the uncertainty posed by Covid: "It was really special to see the amount of joy that came from something so simple – from what is really just a bit of dough with cheese and tomato on!"

Things seemed to be on the up from that moment, a collective relief rippling through the world, smiles on faces (masked or not) and high demand in Mull for their ever-more popular pizza. Donna and Ed are nonchalant in reference to their prior lack of experience in the industry, and quickly found out just how much pressure is involved – they comically liken this pressure to feeling like that which you might expect a brain surgeon to wrangle with, but have never shied away from the challenge.

The challenge took on a whole different meaning when Donna and Ed sadly became victims of a trading unit scam. Having decided to invest in a custom made unit complete with everything they'd need to take The Foodie Shack to the next level and really maximise the business potential, they found a company who specialise in just that.

Unfortunately for them, and as it turned out some forty-odd other aspirational caterers, this company were only interested in defrauding people out of lucrative deposits. They had been diligent with their search, mindful of how many scammers are out there, ready to prey on innocent people and their hard-earned money: "We did some research and found what we thought was a great company based in Leeds, we did all our homework – all the reviews were great, website was professional, they had social media reviews, everyone was talking about how brilliant he was."

So Donna and Ed spoke to this company, were impressed with his convivial demeanour and when he explained how he'd need half of the total cost upfront as a deposit – about £16,000 – they thought that a legitimate request. A contract was drawn up, photos and videos updating them on progress regularly being sent over – a professional operation it would seem.

To fulfil their custom-unit dream, they would need to take their own pizza oven down to be fitted as part of the build process. Having initiated proceedings in September, this arrangement was set for January. This is where alarm bells started to ring – after sending over the deposit in good faith, messages became much fewer. To the point where Ed was having to constantly chase up progress when previously it had been provided freely, and the progress they did receive was tales of trouble sourcing the vehicle that would become their custom unit.

"Around this time, we went down to the street food live show and spoke to a supplier there who were also saying they were finding it really hard to find vehicles for this purpose. It seemed really plausible so we thought okay, it must be fine. And then more time went by and still no vehicle progress update so clearly it wasn't going to be ready in January – it's going to be pushed back."

January came and sure enough it was pushed back – with COVID cited as the cause of having to shut the business for a few weeks. Donna and Ed continued communicating with him and were informed a few weeks later that a truck had been found and things could finally proceed. A date was arranged for Ed to transport the pizza oven, but COVID then came down on Donna and Ed, postponing things further.

Finally the day came and Ed travelled over, with the pizza oven, to find no-one waiting for him. In fact, it turned out due to the conduct of the company and repeated instances of people turning up to the premises very angrily as a result of such conduct, the company had been kicked out of the premises. The scammer had been lying to them all along, saying he would be there when he had in fact put his business into liquidation.

FRAUD HAD ACCRUED THE COMPANY AROUND £900,000 AND THE OWNER (WITH THE MONEY) HAD VANISHED.



Donna recalls "I got the phone call from Ed. He went on his own and he called me and he was crying and he just said 'Don, we lost 16 grand.' My immediate thought was like, he's on his own. And now it's another thing that he feels responsible for, that he's dealing with by himself and I just needed to get him safely back here because that was a long trip for him to do alone."

After many conversations with the bank and the police, as well as finding and connecting with many other individuals who had become victims of this elaborate scam, it was stipulated that in total the fraud had accrued the company around £900,000 and the owner (with the money) had vanished.

Talk about a challenge – but as they say, adversity shapes character, and The Foodie Shack weren't about to roll over: "There was just a fight within that was like, we're not going to let one thing take this away from us after everything we have done. We've moved our family 650 miles north to settle here and for a better life. We're gonna smash it."

And smash it, they have. "We've had the best year since, we really have. We put the hours in and absolutely it was really, really hard. And my body felt so broken by the end of the season. But we did it because while okay he might be able to take the money, he's not taking the future of what we want The Foodie Shack to be, you know that the ability for our daughter, that different quality of life for us."

They remark how as an experience it really does make the effort all the more worthwhile, to come through something like that and be able to succeed really is a testament to the work ethic that's got them so far. As much as this tale serves as a hospitality horror story to the dangers out there and how difficult the situation can get, it should also be inferred as a tale of inspiration, of perseverance and drive.

Speaking of drive, one of the biggest events to take place in Mull is the annual car racing rally that draws people from all over Europe, and signifies the end of the peak season. It is considered something of "a final hurrah" for a lot of pubs, restaurants and streateries ahead of the cold winter closed-season.

Having tended it in collaboration with some hot-dog wielding friends last year, The Foodie Shack took to the track solo this year and the experience in their own words was "incredible, absolutely busting - despite awful weather! We sponsored two cars who unfortunately both crashed out – no one was hurt, but a great thing to get involved in. We sold out all three days we were there – and took a well-earned two weeks off after!"

Those two weeks provided some much needed respite after what feels like completing their own rally of sorts. Certainly not a straightforward course, they have dug

deep when needed, found extra gears and sped away impressively, largely due to championing a pragmatic and transparent approach. It's so much more than some cheesy tomato dough, it's that human connection and genuine care that you get with The Foodie Shack and that, the Isle of Mull is lucky to host.

So, looping back to the start of this piece and considering that question we posed of 'why hospitality?' Donna and Ed underline the "freedom it has afforded us, we've had some customers remark we have the "best pizza this side of Italy" – receiving a comment like that is so rewarding, it's such a wholesome, amazing moment that really gratifies the whole situation."

Moments like that make the whole journey so worthwhile – at its core Donna and Ed love making pizza, and seeing people enjoy their pizza brings exactly that - joy. It's that simple.

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10 QUESTIONS FOR 2022



In our last issue, Andrew James of The Catering Accounting Company discussed how to plan for success in 2023. In his article, Andrew discussed the importance of breaking down plans for the future into three manageable steps; goal setting, reflecting on 2022 and planning for 2023. To further the efficacy of planning for 2023, we have curated 10 questions to ask yourself at the end of 2022. These questions will highlight where your business succeeded, where your business can improve and help you to identify what you want for your 2023.

1. WHAT IS MY DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

This may seem like a broad, open ended question but success need not solely be defined by financial gain. Undeniably, you need to make enough money to at least break even, pay your staff and purchase your supplies and Andrew's article in Issue 47 details how to curate this financial information. However, there are different measures of success and once you have reviewed your financial successes, there may be other successes that you achieved that you want to carry forward to next year. This type of success is still a win for your business but may not be categorised under the same umbrella term; so define what success means to you and your business. Did you host/attend different events than previous years? If so, can this venture into the unknown be seen as a successful attempt to try something different? Did you focus on increasing your branding across social media? If so, can an increase in followers across multiple platforms be seen as a success? Were new additions to your menu well received by customers? Has this precipitated an increase in online reviews and your overall online presence? 'Success' has a broad definition and it is beneficial to have an idea of what it can look like for your business so that you can celebrate and reap the gains for the year ahead.

2. HOW OFTEN DID I ACHIEVE THIS SUCCESS?

Now that you have your personalised definition of success, how often did you achieve this? Regardless of whether you are a mobile or bricks and mortar business, it is integral that you identify the moments in which you achieved this success. Did you cater at a new festival that expanded your

audience? Did you host an open mic night at your café that enticed customers during typically quieter months? As well as reviewing your whole year, any deviations from your normal day-to-day service should be reviewed to determine their merit. As mentioned, this could be a financial success or a success in other areas, nevertheless, did the benefits warrant the effort input? Is it worth replicating these or would something different better align with your goals? Taking stock of what elevated your business will help you to determine what you should aim to repeat next year.

3. HOW DID MY STAFF PERFORM THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Reliable staff are an integral part of your business. A strong team is not determined by numbers but by their approachability, competency and ability to share your vision and convey this to customers. Were you staff able to do this? If so, what support or training can be given to maintain it in 2023? If not, be specific in the areas in which you need more from your staff and train them accordingly. Being part of an independent businesses' vision is an appealing element of working in the industry for many. Utilise this and make sure your staff know the importance of their role and its significance to the business as a whole. Taking the time to make sure that your staff feel valued will help with your staff retention and enable you to keep experienced, well-trained and reliable staff at the heart of your business.

4. WHAT AM I MOST PROUD FROM THE PAST YEAR?

There is a notable difference between pride and success. Whilst success can arguably be more tangible and quantifiable than pride, it is still important to pat yourself on the back and take stock of what evoked a feeling of pride in yourself, your team and your business. Write a list of things that you achieved in 2022. Once you have written this list, reflect on which achievements made you feel proud. It could be an unexpected challenge that you overcame, reaching out to another independent business to build a relationship or not taking no for an answer in the face of adversity. Whatever it is, can you replicate it for 2023 and evoke a similar sense of pride? Can that pride inducing moment from 2022 become a lesson for the direction of your business in 2023? Focus on what made you proud and continue to guide your business in that direction.

5. WHAT DIDN'T GO WELL?

Failure is as much a part of life as success. However, with the right retrospective approach, we can gain valuable insight from our failures and use this knowledge to precipitate further success. In business, mistakes can be crucial lessons that enable growth. Certain failures may have been completely out of your control, nevertheless they can help to solidify your resilience, humility and flexibility. Failure can highlight specific areas for development and improvement and direct your focus for change. The point of this question isn't to attribute blame to a specific individual or incident, but to see what can be learnt from that situation for the betterment of your businesses' future. With this in mind, remember that there is such a thing as a good mistake; that is to say those made through strong, educated decisions. They may not have had the desired end result, nevertheless you can still apply the strong foundational knowledge that you acquired to future actions.

6. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST RISK THAT I TOOK THIS YEAR AND DID IT PAY OFF?

Starting your own business is, in and of itself, a risk; nevertheless it is a worthwhile risk. Take this approach with other risks that you took in 2022. Were they worth it and did they benefit your business? If not, you know not to repeat it in 2023. However, if they were, can it become a staple of your business model? Recognising which risks paid off and which didn't can facilitate the growth of your business. Pushing yourself out of your comfort zone will not always pay off, but identifying the instances in which you have done so and succeeded, will enhance your confidence in your own ability and bolster your aspirations for your business.

7. HOW WOULD I LIKE MY BUSINESS TO GROW IN 2023?

Just like success, business growth can mean different things to different people. In a similar way to which you defined your own success, take the time to define what growth looks like for your business. Do you want to cater more festivals? Or host more monthly events? Do you want to reach a new demographic and expand your brand into that market? Do you want to open a new premises? Many businesses think of growth only in terms of increased sales and this is a perfectly

warranted outlook. However, it is also important to focus on how to maintain high standards, improve your product/service, expand your customer base and the area in which you trade. Do you want to diversify your menu items and offer delivery or collection options? Or create strong relationships with other independents to increase your following through access to new audiences? By picking specific areas for growth you can ensure focus and effort is put into the correct areas of your business.

8. WHAT 3 WORDS WOULD I USE TO SUMMARISE 2022?

Be specific. A lot can happen in a year and it can be easy to get bogged down by one incredibly stressful week or month. By summarising your year in 3 words you force yourself to put things in perspective and look at your year as a whole. Was that one bad week or month indicative of everything that you achieved? Or was it actually a small blip in a year of 'growth, turbulence and diversification'? Once you have summarised your year, chose three words to define your 2023. These need not be set in stone, but they will be a direct reflection of your previous year and will emphasise the connection between previous accomplishments and future successes.

9. ARE MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2022 AND GOALS FOR 2023 STILL ALIGNED WITH MY BUSINESS VALUES?

Everything that you do should be in line with your business values. These are the values that you live every day, every time you open up and every time you serve a customer. Nevertheless, it can be easy to get swept away by the tide and lose focus. Taking the time to celebrate your successes, whilst also gauging whether they align with your business values, can enable the evolution of those values or encourage you to take a step back and check if you are happy with the direction of your business. Similarly, are your goals for 2023 aligned with what you want for your business? If an unyielding business value is that you will never compromise on the quality of your ingredients, then setting a goal to seek out a cheaper supplier might not be conducive to that goal. Your values and goals are not mutually exclusive and a synergistic view of the two can prove to be mutually beneficial.

10. HAS 2022 BOUGHT ME CLOSER TO ACHIEVING MY GOALS?

Remember to have perspective. 2022 was not a standalone year in the life of your business; it will have had a notable impact. Did your triumphs bring you closer to achieving your business goals? Did certain difficulties move you further away? Goals do not necessarily have an end point when you own your own business. There are always new areas for growth and there may not necessarily be one single end goal, end figure or end event that you are trying to reach. Nevertheless, each year is a part of your business' journey and should not be dismissed as 'just another year.' Instead, was this the year that bought you closer to being able to expand your business? Was this the year that moved the goalposts, but has now boosted your determination? Taking stock of the year's impact on your goals stops you from simply 'going through the motions' and ensures an active, concerted effort for the year ahead.



We put some quick-fire questions to NCASS Product Owner, Scott Hughes, who joined the tech team in early 2022.

Scott, what does your role entail on a day-to-day basis?

Mainly looking after the updates to the members' control panel / dashboard. This includes management of the backlog and planning and development process, and then the testing and demoing of new features. We've got plenty of big ones on the way so stay tuned!

What's your favourite thing about working at NCASS?

There is very much a relaxed atmosphere and a sense of freedom, which ultimately comes from trust (which is always nice to have)! So, it's a nicely autonomous working environment where everyone can truly be themselves. Oh, and occasionally we listen to the cricket in the office.

Tell us about the best street food you've ever tasted?

In Budapest there is a place called Karaván, a street food courtyard just next to their famous Szimpla ruin pub. Everything there is superb and there's a great vibe too.

What's your signature dish to cook at home?

I make a proper authentic ragù which tastes sensational if I say so myself, which is great with pappardelle or in a lasagne. I also do a wicked slow-cooked salmon and cucumber risotto!

Pineapple on pizza...yay or nay?

Definite yay. In fact, the staunch dislike for it genuinely

irritates me; it's almost become blindly fashionable. It's a holy communion, flavour and texture-wise, as far as I'm concerned. Jalapeño and pineapple is an underrated combo on pizza too.

Spicy or not spicy?

Depends, if I'm dining out or not. At restaurants I tend to favour milder dishes, whereas at home I'm more adventurous. In fact, I had a phaal again recently...

Favourite celebrity chef?

Probably Ainsley Harriott. He's just entertainment isn't he and I love his energy. Then for something completely different I'd say check out 'Nat's What I Reckon' on YouTube.

Coffee or tea?

Tea: white (fairly strong), one sugar. I do like an iced hazelnut coffee though in hotter weather.

What do you get up to in your spare time?

I love football (Brentford), and cricket, which I watch when I can. I'm a big music fan; love most genres and own a few instruments. I'm also a bit of a gamer (Elden Ring being a highlight this year). Ultimately though my favourite thing to do is cuddle up with my partner Vicki and chill with our cat in front of the TV - Black Mirror, This is Us, House of the Dragon, and The Office (US) to name a few we've watched this year.

Favourite independent restaurant or bar?

Restaurant-wise I'd probably say Thai Legend or Jimmy Pickles (both in Pershore), as they are family haunts and have some great memories attached. Bar-wise there used to be a pub called the Brandy Cask (also in Pershore) - a truly unique atmosphere with homemade beer and cider, all of which was delicious. It had a gorgeous garden that backed onto the River Avon, and quite simply the funniest toilets of all time. RIP.

And since 'tis the season have you got any Christmas traditions?

It's all standard tradition really in terms of decorations, celebrations, food etc. but in terms of festive films or TV there are a few that I can't do without. It's a Wonderful Life, Gremlins, Love Actually, Die Hard, The Muppets Christmas Carol and then the Christmas specials for both the original The Office and The League of Gentlemen. My Christmas tippie of choice (that I wouldn't traditionally drink any other time of year) is Baileys; that goes hand in hand with any of those films!

We've got to ask then; what's your all-time favourite Christmas film?

Objectively I'd say It's a Wonderful Life; it's the quintessential choice. But The Muppets Christmas Carol and Love Actually are my two personal favourites.

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Blazing the trail at an industrial scale, faultless barbecuing has seen Trailblazer BBQ go from humble beginnings serving camping outings in Ireland to commanding global sales. True to the name, their innovative product has gone down a storm with caterers and barbecuing enthusiasts alike. We spoke with Managing Director and founder Lester Manley to chart their journey so far:

Hi Lester thanks for speaking with us today, firstly can you tell us how Trailblazer began?

Trailblazer started off accidentally – I got involved in a local church that camp every year on the coast and I helped on the midweek barbecue on the beach, unfortunately it was just a total disaster. Burgers burnt on the outside and raw on the inside, the rising tide starting to surround the BBQ and darkness descending – it was just mayhem! So, I decided then to build a trailer with a barbecue that I took along to the next camp and gave to the group. We hooked it up to a car, got it going and straight away people were intrigued, asking me where I had got it from and where they could get one.

It was only a year afterwards, when I was on holiday that I realised there's actually a massive gap in the market here. I spent the rest of my holiday designing the first ever Trailblazer, got home and started

building work with a guy who had a bit of an engineering operation – we just worked together and built the first ever Trailblazer as you know it.

People then started asking if they'd be able to get one, so I decided to build five of them. And I sold all five. From that moment we felt there was a lot of potential for Trailblazer and that's really where we started. That was 10 years ago!

How important is it to you to keep striving for that innovation, constantly developing the product?

Since the beginning, we have never stopped innovating and developing, we now have seven different models and full range of accessories. For example, the fire tunnel which really is a pizza conversion that's compatible for the entire commercial range, paper roll holders and a full range of hand sanitation stations – so always at the heart of our business is innovation.

We are always looking to develop the product and what it can offer. What makes up a Trailblazer is pretty set, it's a mobile charcoal barbecuing unit with an eye-catching aesthetic, instant heat control and a huge capacity for the operator to cook large amounts of food without compromise. The innovations and tweaks are always about how can we enhance aspects of it, and to do this, we're always listening to what our customers tell us.

Consumers eat with their eyes first, so as well as ensuring you get great grilling every time, we've put an immense amount of theatre into these machines. The iconic gull wing doors open to reveal the authentic live fire cooking experience, and creates sheer excitement for bystanders. These are a real centerpiece and it's always on our minds as to how we can take it to the next level.

We have our main machine which is the Grillmaster 600S and now

cooker that enables users to cook more and get more out of their Trailblazer.

For someone looking to start a mobile food business, how would they know that a Trailblazer is the right product for them?

Honestly, the biggest challenge that we have with these machines a lot of the time is that they provide such an incredibly fast return on investment, that it's hard for people to believe. The interest in the product is always there, it's just about having the trust as a customer to invest with the company. I think some people can be quite dubious about the product and feel that it's maybe 'too good to be true', because on face value it does sound like that. It's a strange position to be in, where the feedback we get is so positive all the time, that I can see how from the outside people might find it questionable. But we've always been transparent about what we are and what we do and that does translate with people.

We've had people come back who'd bought two units and tell us that after just two weeks, both machines had paid for themselves, which is just incredible. We always say to people to just look at the

"WE'VE HAD PEOPLE COME BACK WHO'D BOUGHT TWO UNITS AND TELL US THAT AFTER JUST TWO WEEKS, BOTH MACHINES HAD PAID FOR THEMSELVES, WHICH IS JUST INCREDIBLE."

testimonials and you'll see; it always amazes us really some of the feedback we get and how fast people have recouped the money they've invested in the product.

Finally, can you take us through the Trailblazer plans for 2023?

2023 looks good. We're in production with the PICO which we think is going to be a biggie when the world catches on about it. It just continues to amaze me, how the world has been flooded by cheap and nasty disposable barbecues. This is something we should have moved past long ago, yet they're still hugely popular – but they provide a massive disservice to charcoal, grilling and to the environment.

We've created a miniaturised version of our big commercial machines: The PICO is a multifunctional, portable tabletop charcoal BBQ which is a fully-fledged Trailblazer and is our first entry into the consumer market at a very low, sub £300 price point. On the commercial side, 2023 will see us expand our global reach. We have seen a heightened interest rate from the US and Spain so these will be two key areas we expect to zone in on throughout 2023.

Also, due to the popularity of our 600 Streetmaster, we will be launching a brand-new Trailblazer, the 1200 Streetmaster early 2023. So, watch this space!

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Name: Gareth Price
 Gas Safe No: 562927
 Covers: Brighton & Hove, Sussex,
 Contact: gareth@cke-sussex.co.uk
 07770776662

Gas Bay

Name: Ross Panrucker
 Gas Safe No: 553747
 Covers: Essex, Suffolk & East Anglia
 Contact: gasbayco@gmail.com
 01255 440345 / 07973510565

Grayson Gas

Name: Grayson Eacott
 Gas Safe No: 574285
 Covers: Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, London
 Contact: 07522120942, 01525854750
graysonacott@yahoo.com

Trinity Catering Engineers

Name: Keith Sinclair
 Gas Safe No: 226244
 Covers: Hampshire and the South of England.
 Contact: Trinitygg@hotmail.co.uk
 02380 473617

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