

Edinburgh businessman branches out to East Lothian



Local Businessman Blaikie has big plans for new venture

Graham Blaikie the thirty-something owner of Edinburgh's award-winning Mercat Bar & Restaurant has bought the newly named 'Mercat Grill' in Whitecraig, East Lothian for a six figure sum, sourced via private investors. The new owner has big plans to rejuvenate this once thriving, village pub and eatery in a new venture which will create up to 15 new jobs.

Over the next five years, Blaikie aims to invest a further six figure sum, into his new, independent venture, which will be run by him and his family with the support of a strong, local team of staff. A percentage of the capital will be sourced through private investment and over time, the remaining income will come from reinvesting profits as the business grows.

The establishment will be completely transformed over the next three years, with a complete refurbishment of the building's exterior, surrounding grounds, the restaurant and lounge bar. Up to seven bedrooms will also be created to accommodate tourists looking for quality, traditional, countryside 'inn' style rooms. The first phase of the refurbishment is due for completion by this September, which will see the restaurant and lounge bar refurbished, as well as the building's exterior and part of the ground's landscaping.

Further down the line, a roof top terrace bar will be created where customers can drink and dine with views over the surrounding countryside. This will complement the existing, outside seating area at the Mercat Grill. And finally, the

dining area in the conservatory will be expanded to cater for 90, as opposed to the current capacity of 50.

The new owner, Graham Blaikie said: "I've got a great opportunity to make this place into a really popular, countryside pub, where we'll be focusing on providing really good quality, homemade food – from locally sourced, fresh produce – with a selection of special grilled dishes. We'll have a great selection of wines, bespoke Scottish beers though to speciality teas, coffees and soft drinks. We want to create a destination venue which appeals to everyone from families, couples, business people to tourists who are looking for a friendly, stylish yet homely place to relax, dine, drink and sleep.

"I've been in the industry for nearly two decades now. When I took over my first pub eight years ago in Edinburgh's Haymarket area, The Mercat Bar & Restaurant – it was one of the least desirable establishments in the area. However, with a great deal of hard work and determination, my team and I turned it into the award-winning gastropub it is today, which attracts a good mix of clientele from locals to tourists. That's what I aim to achieve with my new venture, with quality food, great service and comfortable stylish rooms whilst also creating new, local jobs."

The Mercat Grill is open now and is also taking bookings for **Christmas Day**. The venue also offers free mini bus transfers for groups of six up to 16 diners. Further details are available from the staff.

The Mercat Bar & Grill

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