

Edinburgh chef's recipe for success

AN EDINBURGH hotel chef who fed thousands of NHS workers during the Coronavirus pandemic reveals how they helped fuel frontline medics.

Alan Dickson, Executive Chef at Surgeons Quarter, was part of the star hospitality team which kept Ten Hill Place Hotel open to accommodate NHS workers for free in March and April.

At the beginning, Alan took the decision to strip the usual menus back, focusing on ensuring the team had enough tinned goods, flour, and yeast to last them six weeks.

Alan, who lives in Edinburgh, said: "Working in the kitchen was instantly different – there were three chefs on rotation with only one working at a time. We brought in new health and safety precautions immediately, we couldn't take any risks with the NHS staff who were staying with us.

"Like most people, we didn't really know what we were about to face at the start of the pandemic. We knew fresh fish and meats would be a little more difficult to get, so we redesigned the menu around what we had available.

"As we got to know NHS workers by name and regularly caught up with them after their hectic shifts, we began to appreciate how much many of them were missing their home comforts, so we changed our menus accordingly.

"We served lots of chicken curry, lasagnes – the type of home cooked meals you'd have with your family. It meant a lot to us

to be able to provide some sort of support to the people at the very front of this pandemic.”

The Hotel, which is owned by Surgeons Quarter, the commercial arm of The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, took the decision to provide more than 2,000 nights of free accommodation and meals for frontline medics working at Edinburgh’s hospitals.

Alan was thrilled with the small part Ten Hill Place staff played in providing respite to hardworking frontline staff.

The 31-year-old said: “There wasn’t much we could do, but like everyone else we wanted to help in the one way we could – with our food and expertise. Our guests were fantastic, they were so grateful for the opportunity to stay nearby the hospitals between shifts.

“Our suppliers were also brilliant at communicating with us. We worked with one amazing butcher and one fruit and veg supplier – Campbells Prime Meat and Mark Murphy Fruit and Veg – who were able to source what we needed.

“We ended up sourcing around 200kg of sausages, and 200kg of bacon for cooked breakfasts – as well as providing healthy packs our medics could take to work, with fruit, yoghurt and water bottles.”

Alan joined Ten Hill Place in 2014 and was awarded Hotel Chef of the Year 2017 at the Scottish Hotel Awards.

The hotel reopened on 15 July in accordance with Scottish Government guidance.

Cafe 1505 and Drinks & Dining at Ten Hill Place Hotel are both taking part in the Eat Out to Dine Out scheme for the duration of August.

Guests can receive 50% off their bill in the cafe or the restaurant, to a maximum value of £10, at any time from Monday

– Wednesday.

Profits from the Hotel go towards the College's charitable objectives of improving access to surgery and saving lives worldwide.