

New landscape for Edinburgh's hospitality sector

Necessity is the mother of invention it is claimed, but it didn't need wise words from Greek philosopher Plato for Edinburgh's pub and hospitality trade to reinvent themselves in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Across the city, pub licensees, restaurateurs and food vendors have been coming up with fresh and innovative ways to continue serving thirsty and hungry customers, while adhering to guidelines aimed at protecting the safety of staff and paying punters.

Measures introduced to ensure diners and drinkers feel comfortable and safe vary greatly. At The Ivy on The Square, measures include using thermal cameras for temperature checks, the use of tracking software for all employees logging daily temperature readings over a seven-day rolling period, and professional deep cleaning and disinfecting on a daily basis.

Contrast this with a pub in Portobello, which on a packed sunny afternoon made no effort to collect any personal information of guests which could assist track and trace if required.

Shahid Ghani, owner of Indian restaurant Shezan in Union Place is pragmatic about the steps he had to take to reopen. He said: "It has cost me quite a bit of money to get to this point but it just had to be done. All our staff have taken

Shezan, Union Place.



Passorn, Brougham Place.

Like many city restaurants, the Michelin Bib Gourmand rated Thai restaurant Passorn in Tollcross, focussed on a take-away offering during lockdown but opened fully on 31 July.

Owner Cindy Sirapassorn said: "Safety, hygiene and social distancing measures are all vital, but reopening is also about making sure both the experience and value for our customers are outstanding. While our menu has been refreshed, all of the long-standing favourites are still there."

Passorn has also enhanced its offering for cautious customers who still prefer to dine at home and with local delivery now available, the takeaway menu is a stripped-down version of the restaurant's offering.

Hospitality businesses which could not trade during lockdown, such as the Edinburgh School of Food & Wine at Newliston, found other ways to keep busy.



Edinburgh School of Food & Wine

Now fully reopened, Principal Iain Pirrie said: “We are delighted to be back up and running again and we started with a wonderful Kids Masterchef summer camp, which was a lovely way to get back in the swing. During lockdown and in a time of global crisis we put our teaching kitchen to good use, sending out over 13,500 meals to those most vulnerable and in need around Edinburgh and a huge thank you is due to the volunteers who helped us as well as Food for Good who have organised and distributed over 55,000 nutritious meals to date.”



The Wee Coffee Bar, Morrison Street.

Smaller coffee shops and cafes – a lifeline for city office staff and workers – have been particular hit hard with less footfall and many businesses still to fully reopen but Haymarket favourite, The Wee Coffee Bar in Morrison Street, is brewing up a storm. Owner Sharon Miller admits recent months have been tough but she and her staff have worked through the crisis and are looking forward to some kind of normality in the coming weeks and months.