

Restaurant making a comeback continuing to train youngsters

• We have to be ready for better times, & will need to fill the skills gap left by Brexit says Brasserie Ecosse General Manager

A premier restaurant and cocktail bar in Dundee on Shore Terrace, Brasserie Ecosse, which is under the Caird Hall, is leading what it's calling the "covid comeback", for young people from anywhere who want to work in the hospitality industry. Offering a model for other restaurants in Scotland, they explained to us what they have done.

The 7000 sq ft eatery, home to the famous egg chairs, a champagne wall, metal effect curtains, and an eye-catching wall of live moss and succulents, announced that it was establishing a training academy last year, in response to a shortage of suitable training facilities in the City, and a desire to give something back to the local community.

"Since last summer, when the hospitality sector was pretty

much booming here in Dundee, we've been giving workplace training to Jordan Miller from Dundee, who is our Head Chef Scott Cameron's Commis Chef," said Brasserie Ecosse General Manager Nikos Matsikas, who is one of the original team tasked with the set-up of the restaurant in 2018. Taking care of all things Front of House, vastly experienced Nikos, established the brasserie along with Head Chef Scott Cameron who has a considerable knowledge of cooking techniques from around the world.

"Jordan has complemented his training with time studying his craft at a local College," added Nikos. "We've also brought our entire front & back of house team from furlough – no one has lost their jobs, and for that we also thank Dr. Rami Sarraf, our Director, for believing in our abilities to run this beautiful 200 cover venue."

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Nikos explained that, since beginning the training, the brasserie now has several front of house staff who have progressed to a very high level, including Natalie Maitland, who has been promoted to Head Waitress, having started out as a part-time Assistant Waitress.

"We're delighted to say that, even with the current restrictions on closing times, we are fully booked for the next three to four weekends too. The brasserie is spacious with room for a number of private dining areas, if groups of six want some added privacy. All the necessary Covid health & safety precautions are in place here. We received our Covid Confident Award from the AA, together with my World Health Organisation Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Certificate."


“We’d like to thank our regular guests, and Dundee City Council for their support – it’s massively appreciated and has lifted the whole team,” said Nikos.

Working with the City’s attractions and hotels, such as Malmaison along the road where Nikos used to be Food & Beverage Manager, has also been important to Brasserie Ecosse at this time.

“We enjoy good relationships with the management and staff, and they will often recommend us to guests,” said Nikos, who brings a wealth of global Food & Beverage influences to his role at Brasserie Ecosse. Originally from Chicago of Greek heritage, he spent time working in Chicago & Manhattan’s 3 Michelin Star venues looking after the likes of Barack Obama, Johnny Depp, and Jennifer Aniston to name a few. Time in Greece was spent spearheading Luxury 5 star Resort Mutli-Food & Beverage outlet operations for leading Hotels of the World, before coming to Scotland to occupy senior Food & Beverage Management roles at Gleneagles & Malmaison.

Scott Cameron has occupied senior positions at some of Scotland’s leading restaurants and hotels, including Chez Roux at the Rocpool Reserve in Inverness, where he was instrumental in the restaurant gaining 2 AA rosettes. He has cooked for Alex Salmond and visiting dignitaries at Bute House, plus members of the Royal Family.

“Before lockdown it was going really well with the academy,” said Scott Cameron, who has created a 1960s retro dessert “special” in response to the V&A’s current Mary Quant Exhibition.

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The Mary Quant exhibition at the V&A Dundee PHOTOS ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

“When I first entered this industry, I had to leave Dundee to access the skills I needed. We want to retain young talent in the City, Our youngest chef, Jordan Millar, has been here for two years now, starting by helping to prep veg for the general kitchen. Now he is running his own section and has developed really well since coming on full time after finishing his College tuition.”

“We will be reaching out to the local Hospitality Colleges again to let them know we are willing to help with work placements, and so on,” he said.

“Now, more than ever, this is so desperately needed to make sure our industry is strong and ready to fight back when the recovery properly starts, which will hopefully kick in next year. Dundee is now home to some amazing restaurants to rival the best in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and it would be a tragedy to lose any of them,” added Scott.

Nikos added that a shortage of skilled labour in the hospitality industry was expected due to the UK having left the EU.

“The industry has always faced criticism that not enough homegrown talent features in the market – well now is the time to change that, but young people need the proper cross-training to understand every aspect of running a venue such as ours, together with mentoring.”

As soon as life starts to return to some sort of normality, Brasserie Ecosse plans to use its impressive space to host events, lifestyle shoots, small weddings, and special dining occasions.

It's already working with artisan coffee roaster & blender Blendly, and has developed several of its own blends of coffee, which are served to customers in the Brasserie, and

can also be purchased for their use at home by scanning a QR code, displayed in the restaurant, with a percentage going to Brasserie Ecosse as an additional revenue stream.

“We have the perfect set up to cover events,” said Nikos. “This will also boost the decimated events sector. We all need to continue to work together, and as our tie up with Blendly Coffee demonstrates, think out of the box to boost trade and enhance our food & drink credentials.”

www.brasserieecosse.co.uk

www.blendly.co.uk

