

Keeping it in the family at Karma Lake of Menteith

Karma Lake of Menteith has a new Head Chef, and he's keeping it in the family.

The luxury lakeside hotel has welcomed back Joe Peden, a celebrated chef who grew up in the small Trossachs village of Brig O'Turk from the age of ten, and has previous experience working for the business in 2013 under its previous owners.

Originally from Brighton, food runs in the family for Joe, so it was only a matter of time until he started working in the many local restaurants around the Trossachs area. His mum ran a successful farmers' market home bakery for almost twenty years, whilst three of his siblings work in restaurants as either chefs or front of house management. And his sister Erin Peden works with him currently at Karma Lake of Menteith, where she is the Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, in addition to looking after events at the hotel.

"This hotel means a lot to me as it's where my love affair with food truly began," said Joe, who worked his way up through the ranks here for five years, leaving briefly to open up and lead the kitchen of the multi-million pound restaurant and music venue at St Luke's in Glasgow.

"It was at Lake of Menteith that I met Daniel Bryant, the Head Chef at the time, who had spent years working in America. He got me interested in American cuisine, from southern BBQ, creole to soul food and Jamaican cuisine. I went on to enjoy a working holiday at Buxtonhall Smokehouse in Asheville, North Carolina, ran by the legendary Pitt Master Elliot Moss, and

voted 9th best new restaurant in all of America by Bon Appetit," said Joe.

It was at this point in his career that Joe decided to move to Glasgow, to go out on his own, and start his street food business "Fatboys".

"I intentionally never had a style for the business, allowing me to change menus for each event. This also meant I had no competition," he said.

Joe's highlights with FatBoys include achieving second place in the Scottish Street Food Awards, where the Top 10 Scottish vendors come together to fight it out for the title of best in the country.

Under Joe's expertise, Fatboys took over Citizen M hotel in Glasgow for a week, running a busy seven day bar residency in Glasgow, whilst running events all over Scotland every weekend. The business also took Joe to working at festivals like TRNSMT and numerous reggae events. He even appeared in "Street Food Scotland" by Ailidh Forlan, a book reviewing the top streetfood in Scotland.

COVID-19 saw Joe hang up his street food apron and return to the kitchen, where he successfully ran several of Glasgow's best restaurants, such as The Left Bank; its sister restaurant The Bungo; and the Singl-end branch in Garnethill.

"Ultimately, the call to come home to Karma Lake of Menteith was too strong, and I am absolutely delighted to be back here as Head Chef," said Joe.

"I aim to add my style to the business through a blend of Scottish classics, alongside my unique Asian and American styled dishes, such as Salt and Szechuan pepper oyster mushrooms, paprika rubbed sweetcorn ribs with salsa macha, and my famous fried chicken sandwich with white BBQ sauce."

“This is an area of outstanding natural beauty, as well as a larder for amazing produce which can all be sourced nearby,” he said. “An excellent example is Redknock farm who supply our venison and game.”

Joe’s sister Erin, who has been at the hotel for eight years on and off, returning last March, said: “I’m so pleased for Joe. It’s great to see him back here fulfilling our Head Chef role at Karma Lake of Menteith as it enters a new stage under the ownership of Karma Group. I’m looking forward to developing Events at the Hotel.”

Erin went on to say that she and her brother “work well together, and are keen to see the hotel go from strength to strength.”

Refurbishment of the bar area has recently been carried out, with the Malt Vault, home to numerous rare whiskies from all over Scotland soon to get a new look based on a gentleman’s snug. The conservatory dining room will also be given a fresh look referencing its Scottish location.

“I’m looking forward to the trout season starting up again,” said Joe, “We can cook the fresh trout straight out of the lake, it’s absolutely fantastic.”

Commenting on Joe’s appointment, Chris Diplock, Karma Lake of Menteith’s General Manager, said: “I am thrilled to welcome Joe back to the business as our new Head Chef. He is keen to roll up his sleeves and take us to the next level in this next chapter of his illustrious career.”

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New Head Chef Joe Peden and sister Erin at Karma Lake of Menteith



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