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PLUS...

**HOW TO HOLD
ONTO TOP TALENT**

**INTERVIEW WITH
TOMMY BANKS OF
THE BLACK SWAN
AT OLDSTEAD**



SCOTLAND'S KITCHIN

**TOM KITCHIN ON ACHIEVING FIVE ROSETTES
AND SCOTTISH PUB OF THE YEAR**

YOUR EXCLUSIVE AA QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
ISSUE 40 WINTER 2016

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

THE CATERER

Informed...

JANUARY ROSETTE AWARDS

We are delighted to announce the following restaurants were newly awarded AA Rosettes in January. The higher AA Rosettes, awarded just twice a year, celebrate the exceptionally high standards of cuisine that these restaurants offer.



NEW FOUR AA ROSETTES

- The Black Swan at Oldstead, Yorkshire
- The Five Fields, London SW3
- Manchester House, Manchester



NEW THREE AA ROSETTES

- A Wong, London SW1

- Avista, London W1
- Cambrium, Careys Manor, Brockenhurst, Hampshire
- The Dial House, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire
- The Gannet, Glasgow
- The Hare Inn, Scawton, Yorkshire
- Lake Road Kitchen, Ambleside, Cumbria
- Lumiere, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
- Orrery, London W1
- Portland, London W1W
- Tassili, Grand Jersey, St Helier, Jersey

ANNUAL QUESTIONNAIRES

At the beginning of 2016, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs and pubs will receive questionnaires asking them to update the information the AA uses in its annual guides (publishing in September 2016) on theAA.com and mobile applications.

We know that readers dislike it when there's missing information, and out-of-date information bothers them even more. **So when you receive your questionnaire, please:**

- Read the covering letter and questionnaire carefully
- Check your details and correct as necessary
- Pop it back in the post using the reply-paid

envelope provided (except for the Republic of Ireland)

- Make sure you send it back by the required deadline.

Keeping your details up-to-date helps our readers make an informed decision about where they would like to stay or dine. Displaying the latest information can give an establishment the edge over its competitors, so look out for your questionnaire when it arrives in early 2016.

If any of your details change after you have sent in your questionnaire, you can update your information any time by contacting us at

HotelServices@theAA.com.

Contact details

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Fax 01256 491647

Email HotelServices@theAA.com

Web AAhotels.com



Follow us on Twitter

See @TheAA_Lifestyle, @AAHospitality and @Caterertweets for updates to the scheme, hospitality news, stories from our establishments, updates on awards events and much more.



Comments from the AA

THE CATERER

Comments from
The Caterer

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Welcome notes

A warm welcome to our first edition of *In Touch* for 2016, your quarterly magazine produced in conjunction with *The Caterer*. As we look forward to another busy year for the hospitality industry, the magazine is full of articles that we hope will both inform and help you and your business.

The start of the year has been challenging for many hospitality businesses, with the unprecedented rainfall and subsequent flooding across the UK. If you have been impacted, we hope that you have been able to get your business up and running again.

I am delighted that we have announced two new partnerships for 2016. Firstly, working with STR global, our hotel reports will now feature helpful benchmarking data across the UK for occupancy and revenue per available room rates.



Simon Numphud
Head of AA Hotel Services

Secondly, we have signed a long-term agreement to work with Review Pro, which specialises in guest intelligence for the hospitality industry by polling user-generated content from websites and social media. It produces an online audit tool that allows hospitality businesses to analyse trends and reply to all of their guest reviews in one place. Our partnership will give you access to this fantastic business tool completely free of charge and we will be communicating how you can log in and use this in due course.

At this time of year we also begin to look for our annual award winners. We have various awards now open for nominations on our new website, www.aahospitalityawards.com, and I would encourage you to enter.

Wishing you all a very successful 2016.

We start 2016 with news that eating out in restaurants still appears to be in good health, and openings continued apace in the run-up to Christmas, both in and outside of London and the South East. But there are now some notes of caution.

Restaurant trends analysts Horizons recently predicted that overcapacity in the market due to several years of rapid growth means that growth in eating out will be constrained over the longer term.

The industry also needs to brace itself for the introduction of the National Living Wage in April, and there is of course still concern about the effect it will have on operators, particularly independents.

There was a flurry of deals in the hotel sector at the end of 2015 with AccorHotels paying £2b for the luxury Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel brands, while November saw the largest transaction of 2015 – the £8b purchase of Starwood Hotels &

Resorts by Marriott International, creating the world's largest hotel company.

Consolidation is expected to continue in 2016 as several international hotel groups jockey for position, with IHG expected to try and reassert its dominance with an acquisition.

On a national level, there have been some local shocks to the market such as the Paris terror attacks which pushed down London hotel occupancy in its aftermath, or the flooding in Cumbria, Lancashire, and Scotland, and the continued fall in oil prices wreaking havoc in the Aberdeen hotel market.

In spite of all of the above, the picture still looks positive, particularly in the regions where much of the growth is taking place, and a continuation of food price deflation in 2016 should at least provide some respite for hoteliers and restaurateurs alike.



Amanda Afiya
Editor
The Caterer



WWW.THECATERER.COM
HAVE YOU JOINED YET?

TOP HOSPITALITY STORIES

Each week, *The Caterer* and www.thecaterer.com bring you the most important news from around the hospitality industry. Here's a selection of stories about AA members from the past three months

CALCOT COLLECTION'S NEW PROPERTY TO RECEIVE NEW LOOK, NAME AND FOCUS

Cotswolds88, the 16-bedroom hotel in Painswick, Gloucestershire, acquired by the Calcot Collection in April, is to be relaunched as a restaurant with rooms in spring 2016.

Currently closed for refurbishment, the late-Palladian property is to be renamed as the Painswick. Its new look – created by Nicky Farquhar, the interior designer of sister properties Calcot Manor in Tetbury, Barnsley House near Cirencester and the Lord Crewe Arms at Blanchland, Northumberland – will have a relaxed “country-cool edge that will be reminiscent of Covent Garden rather than Mayfair”.

Newly appointed general manager Luke Millikin, formerly deputy general manager at St Mellion International Resort in Cornwall, will be joined by Michael Bedford as head chef.

Bedford previously ran the Michelin-starred Trouble House pub in Tetbury and recently ran the Butcher's Arms in Oakridge Lynch.

£2.4m SPA COMPLETES CONISTON HOTEL'S 40-YEAR PROJECT

The owners of the four-AA-star, 71-bedroom Coniston Hotel and Country Estate in Skipton, North Yorkshire, believe the opening of a £2.4m spa will complete the property's 40-year development.

Built within the hotel's 1,500-acre estate, the spa has eight treatment rooms, an indoor swimming pool, thermal suite, gym, dance studio, and outdoor spa pool and terrace.

It will also offer the Nourish dining area, where the menu is prepared in consultation with dietician and naturopath Elizabeth Peyton-Jones.

Michael Bannister, who co-owns the Coniston with Ethne Bannister, said: “Taking the Coniston to one of the north of England's top country resorts has been a labour of love, and to a large extent the spa is the piece that completes the jigsaw.”



The Coniston Hotel spa

The planned Park Regis hotel in Birmingham



THREE NEW UK MEMBERS JOIN RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX



Hotel consortium Relais & Châteaux has announced three new UK members for 2016. They are the 19-bedroom Idle Rocks hotel in Cornwall (pictured), owned by former Aston Martin chairman David Richards; the 23-bedroom Llangoed Hall in Llyswen, Powys, which was bought by businessman Roger Hancox in 2012; and the two-Michelin-starred Midsummer House restaurant in Cambridge, operated by chef Daniel Clifford.

The total UK membership for 2016 will be 31, and the worldwide portfolio stands at 540.

EUROPE'S FIRST PARK REGIS HOTEL TO OPEN IN BIRMINGHAM

Australia-based StayWell Hospitality Group is to launch its first European Park Regis hotel in Birmingham in March 2016.

Located in the former Auchinleck House office block on Broad Street, which is nearing the completion of a £50m renovation, the hotel will have 253 bedrooms, two junior suites and what is claimed to be the largest presidential suite in the city.

Pitched at the four-star market, the hotel will also feature two restaurants (à la carte and pan-Asian-fusion), a saké bar, business lounge, meeting rooms, spa and gym. It will become the 17th Park Regis globally.

BESPOKE HOTELS ADDS FIRST PROPERTY IN COUNTY DURHAM

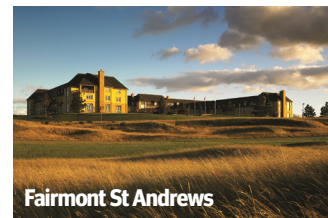
Bespoke Hotels has made its first foray into the North East of England by taking over the management of the three-AA-star, 29-bedroom

George hotel in Piercebridge, County Durham.

Owned by Commer Group's Town and Village Hotels, the George was previously managed by the Coaching Inns Group. It incorporates the Riverside restaurant and banqueting for up to 180 guests.

Bespoke, which operates more than 100 hotels in the UK, has been appointed to market and maximise the potential of the property, a one-time coaching inn on the banks of the River Tees.

FAIRMONT ST ANDREWS TO BEGIN £10m REFURBISHMENT



Fairmont St Andrews

The five-star, 209-bedroom Fairmont St Andrews hotel in Scotland is to begin a £10m refurbishment programme in January 2016.

The project will take 18 months and focus on updating the hotel's bedrooms and public areas, as well as the remodelling of the Kittocks Den bar, lobby and atrium.

The hotel, operated by FRHI Hotels & Resorts, was bought in August 2014 for £32.4m by Kennedy Wilson Europe.

GRAHAM LONG IS NEW L'AUTRE PIED HEAD CHEF



Michelin-starred London restaurant L'Autre Pied has appointed Graham Long as its new head chef.

Long joins David Moore's restaurant from the Chancery in London, which he has worked at since 2014.

Long's appointment comes after Andy McFadden moved from L'Autre Pied to become head chef of Pied à Terre, replacing Marcus Eaves.

2016 LONDON AND SCOTLAND ROSETTE ACADEMIES



AA Hotel Services is pleased to announce the dates for this year's Rosette Academies. Run by two senior AA inspectors, you can expect a full days workshop designed for chefs, senior foodservice staff and managers.

Find out what AA Rosettes are all about and gain a valuable insight into what AA inspectors look for when awarding Rosettes.

We talk, discuss and test our delegates knowledge on:

- Food, flavours and seasons
- The 16 key performance indicators against which AA inspectors assess culinary standards

- Industry awareness
- Reading great books
- Technique vs flavour
- Verbalising flavour
- Menu terminology
- Matching best-practise proteins and garnishes
- Blind tastings
- What is local
- Where does high-quality produce come from?
- The Rosette escalator
- Most common errors that hold chefs back from Rosettes

Over 2,500 delegates have taken part in our Rosette Academies in London and Scotland since 2007. The workshop runs from 9.30am to

4.30pm and includes tea/coffee, a buffet lunch, course materials, handouts and certificates. Smart-casual attire is preferred, whites are not needed.

The day costs £170.00 + VAT per delegate.

Full payment must be made in advance. Workshops will run as long as a minimum of 25 delegates attend – the maximum is 50. If there are insufficient numbers payments will be refunded.

For more information and to sign up to the London or Scotland academy please contact Hotel Services on 01256 844455 or HotelServices@theAA.com

FREE partner workshops

PSL – 9 March 2016 Oxford Belfry, Oxford

PSL – 17 May 2016 Westerwood, Glasgow

STR – 26 April 2016 Oulton Hall, Leeds

STR – 2 November 2016 Norton Park, Bullington

Eviivo – 2 March 2016 Park Royal, Warrington

PSL are the largest independent food procurement company in hospitality. Working with their clients they maximise sustainable food margins through purchasing, operational and system support.

STR and STR Global track supply and

demand data for the hotel industry and provide valuable market-share analysis for international, regional hotel chains and independent hotels. With more than 50,000 hotels participating in their hotel performance surveys, they are the world's foremost source of historical hotel performance trends on a daily and monthly basis. The workshop will involve an overview of the benefits of benchmarking, insight analysis and performance data for your establishment.

Or join Eviivo, where they will be able to

provide expert knowledge on making the most of your social media, the importance of great photos, and tips on how to get more online bookings.

Bookings are made on a first-come, first-served basis so to avoid disappointment please contact Hotel Services to book a place. Workshops will be two hours long with an introduction from an AA representative, and then a 45-minute presentation from our guest partner followed by a sandwich lunch and networking opportunity.

For more information please contact Hotel Services

Tel: 01256 844455 Email: HotelServices@theAA.com

HOW TO HANG ONTO TOP TALENT

Your best people are way too valuable to lose, and salary is by no means the only – nor even the most potent – weapon in the battle to keep hold of them, as *Sally Brand* explains

When you think about it, it's not rocket science: it's people who make or break a business. Yet, in most companies, little focus is placed on how employees play a vital role in business success, despite there being heaps of research showing that the companies whose employees say they are great places to work are also the most commercially successful.

For example, according to management consultancy Hay Group:

- Companies that have a high employee engagement score have revenue levels on average 4.5 times higher than those with the lowest scores.
- Companies that have high levels of both employee engagement and employee enablement are 50% more likely to exceed performance targets.

Even though the link between employee engagement and business performance has been clearly demonstrated time and time again, few employers put enough emphasis on, and investment in, their approaches to talent retention.

So what can be done to keep your people happy? Findings from the previous Best Places to Work in Hospitality survey found that salary was by no means the only key motivator. Employers also need to focus on clear communication, good work-life balance, a positive working environment and team respect – all critical elements in keeping staff happy.

Here are our three tips on how to incorporate these elements into your strategy for talent retention and keeping your people happy.

1. GIVE THEM A VOICE

Engaged employees – the ones who are most motivated, productive and thus profitable –

want to be able to express their opinions and have them listened to. They want to be able to offer ideas that will help drive the business forward. It's therefore important that businesses make the effort to talk to their people and then act on the feedback and ideas given.

When it comes to retention, if people don't tell you what their challenges are, then you won't be able to fix any problems that do exist. Do you really know if your employees' needs are being met? Do they have the tools and opportunities available to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas?

If you don't know whether this is the case, then perhaps it's time to review your communications channels. Performance reviews, employee opinions surveys, and even one-to-one meetings are great ways to give your people a voice. A short survey can uncover ideas and feedback in a simple and anonymous manner and the information generated can be fed directly into your business strategy and make a real difference.



THE FACTS

Employers need to make engagement and retention a priority. The evidence is clear:

- A 2015 Gallup global workplace study across 142 countries revealed that only 13% of the working population does much more than show up on time and meet minimum expectations for their jobs.
- The UK Investors in People's (IIP) 2015

annual Jobs Exodus found that 65% of employees are not happy in their role – companies need to work harder at retaining their talent.

- The Corporate Leadership Council research concluded that profits at engaged companies grow up to three times faster than at their competitors, and that highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave the organisation.



2. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK

Helping others has always been seen as good for the soul. It's no less true when it happens in the workplace, with many employees valuing an opportunity to give back. Work-life balance is becoming more of a priority for employees, who are seeking out employers able to help them make a meaningful contribution. It's more about fulfilment, enriching lives, and developing skills and experience that will make their personal and work lives better.

If you're not sure where to start, ask your people what initiatives would mean the most to them, or simply give support to individuals

and their own personal causes. You could sponsor someone who is doing a marathon, or even support them by starting a running club. The trick is not to do too much; otherwise an initiative can end up tailing off, which can lead to people becoming disengaged.

3. HIRE BETTER

Unless you recruit the right talent first time round, it's always going to be an uphill battle to engage and retain them. To overcome this, it's important that those doing the hiring know who you are as a business and what you stand for – your culture and values. This knowledge is your secret weapon for helping you find and

FIND OUT WHAT MAKES YOUR EMPLOYEES TICK



Learn how to motivate and engage with your workforce by taking part in the Best Places to Work in Hospitality 2016 Awards.

Not only does the award set a business apart as an employer of choice, but each entrant is given a confidential

staff survey, which can be used to inform people practices and improve business performance.

We'll highlight the top 30 operators to enter the awards, and the most enlightened – the very best of the best – will be in with a chance of winning the Best Employer Category.

What's more, all of our Top 30 will benefit from a free place at *The Caterer* HR Forum 2016, where the full list of Best Places to Work in Hospitality 2016 will be revealed.

So if you want to know what drives your employees to perform, enter the awards now.

The deadline for completion of the employee survey is 19 February 2016.

www.bestplacestoworkinhospitality.co.uk

“It's important that those doing the hiring know who you are as a business and what you stand for – your culture and values”

select the perfect person for your organisation.

Assert your values in job adverts, on your website and in job interviews. Ask interviewees for examples of when they've lived by your values, and ask what their personal values are.

This approach needs to be applied for all roles, not just in head office. Most importantly, check how you feel about a candidate by always asking yourself: “If they accepted another job tomorrow, would we be devastated?” If the answer is yes, then you've probably found the right person.

Sally Brand is business development director at Purple Cubed



SPOTLIGHT ON...

FAIRYHILL – WHERE THE MAGIC STARTS

Take stunning scenery, add a magical hotel, fabulous food and a wine list that's been hailed as the best in Wales, and you've got Fairyhill, Gower's best-kept secret.

In a tranquil, secluded setting tucked down a country lane, Fairyhill is surrounded by 24 acres of lawns, woodland, streams and a small lake.

The characterful 18th-century Georgian house has been remodelled for 21st-century living, with designer bedrooms and the latest technology, including flat screen TVs, iPod connectors, Bose sound systems and free Wi-Fi.

Owners Andrew Hetherington and Paul Davies bought Fairyhill in 1993. "We've totally renovated it over the years," says Andrew. "It's been a real labour of love. There's something very special about Fairyhill and we so enjoy sharing it with our guests."

"We've hosted some famous names over the years, too. The likes of Joan Collins, Tony Blair when he was prime minister and Paul Newman and his family for his daughter's wedding."

The Fairyhill experience is akin to staying in someone's rather beautiful home. Its country-house style extends to smart fabrics, warm colours, deep sofas and the daily papers. In summer, the sun-trap terrace overlooking the lawns is the perfect place to enjoy a glass of Champagne or afternoon tea. In winter, relax in front of the open fire in the bar, or tinkle the ivories of the grand piano in the sitting room. It's that sort of hotel.

Fairyhill has just eight rooms, but each one is a gem. Some have painted beams, others a sofa or a wall of golden paper. Sparkling



"Fairyhill is the ultimate sanctuary for rest and relaxation"

bathrooms, some with separate showers, have deep baths, white robes and fancy oils.

The food in the restaurant is truly superb. *The Daily Telegraph* once described Fairyhill as one of the 10 best restaurants outside London, and it's easy to see why. The menu has been developed to make the best use of local produce (Fairyhill was one of the first to promote low food miles), so you'll find the finest local ingredients, including Welsh beef, salt-marsh lamb, sea bass and lobsters from the bays, when available and in season, with vegetables and herbs from Fairyhill's walled garden. Who could resist Cilshafe farm duck breast

with Jerusalem artichokes, Gower beetroot and watercress, or rump of Brecon venison with braised red cabbage, potato and horseradish rosti and dark chocolate jus?

Sweet tooth? How about dark chocolate tart with peanut and blackcurrant ice cream and blackcurrant compote, or iced lemon and pine kernel parfait, with blackcurrant and mint. That's just a taste of what's in store. The wine list is equally outstanding, once earning a prestigious Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. The AA also named Fairyhill the Best Wine List in Wales on three occasions.

Fairyhill is the ultimate sanctuary for rest and relaxation. And what could be more life-giving than some holistic therapy treatments? De-stress with an aromatherapy massage, be uplifted with a stimulating reflexology treatment or you might opt for the ancient technique of Indian head or face massage. Whatever you choose, you'll be pampered in style by a team of fully-qualified and experienced visiting therapists.

One of the best things about Fairyhill is that it isn't in the least bit stuffy. The ambience is relaxed and friendly, presided over by Andrew and Paul, who are the perfect hosts. Together with their lovely team, they provide the perfect combination of attentive service without fuss and formality.

If you can bear to tear yourself away, outside, the Gower peninsula awaits – Britain's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with wild heathland, a rugged coastline, spectacular bays and some of the best beaches in the land.

Who could resist?

How did you get to where you are now?

My parents bought a local pub, so when I left school I started working there as a pot-wash and general dogsbody. I learned as I went along and in 2013 I was made head chef.

Who is your greatest inspiration?

My grandfather – he is just a great person and a genuinely nice man. Growing up on a farm was also a big influence. I learned a lot about natural, home-grown, seasonal food.

What are your tips for an aspiring chef?

Work hard and pick the right job. You need to find a place to work that where you are happy and enjoy being and that helps you flourish. Everyone is different: some people work better when they have plenty of freedom and some people are better suited to a strict environment.

If you weren't a chef, what career would you have chosen?

I would have loved to have been a cricketer. Getting to see the world and travel to some great places. If not, I'd have been a rockstar... but I can't sing or play an instrument.

What has been your greatest career achievement to date?

Getting four rosettes! I don't believe I've had my greatest achievement yet. I never like to invite people for dinner because I always know I'll be better the following week.

What is your favourite ingredient?

Definitely scallops. They are my favourite to cook and to eat. They are one thing that you can always guarantee will go well on the menu.

What would be your last supper?

A really smelly baked cheese, some sourdough bread and a nice bottle of wine.

Where do you eat on your night off?

On my night off I would usually go down to my local pub, the Carlton. I'd have pork stroganoff or sausage and mash and a pint.

What's next for the Black Swan?

In January we've got some big changes coming to the restaurant. We are moving the kitchen out into the restaurant so that the guests get to see the chefs at work and the chefs get to see people enjoy their food.

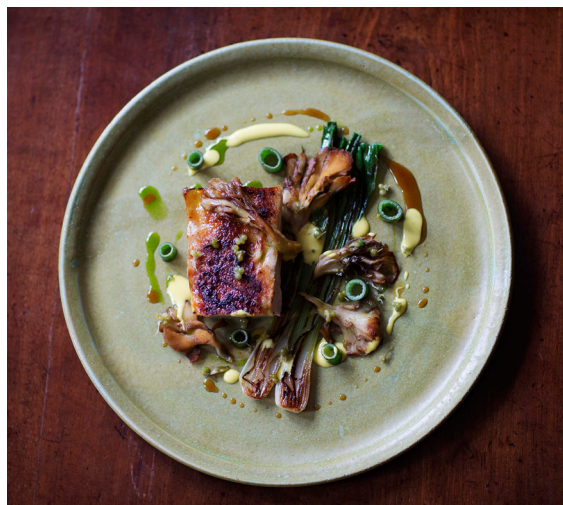
The Black Swan is set in three acres of land and we grow a lot of our own fruit and vegetables. Everyone here is involved, so while one day you might be cheffing, the next you could be sowing the seeds for next year's crop. Bringing the kitchen out into the restaurant takes it full-circle for the chefs

"I don't believe I've had my greatest achievement yet. I never like to invite people for dinner because I always know I'll be better the following week"

INTERVIEW WITH...

TOMMY BANKS

Chef and owner of the Black Swan at Oldstead





SCOTLAND'S FINEST

Tom and Michaela Kitchin and their small but perfectly-formed team have gained a host of AA honours in 2015.

Neil Gerrard discovers more

To say that it was a good night for Tom Kitchin at the AA Hospitality Awards 2015 is probably understating things.

The Edinburgh-based chef walked away not only with the AA Pub of the Year – Scotland award for the Scran and Scallie in Stockbridge, he also picked up five AA rosettes for his Leith restaurant, the Kitchin, making it the only establishment in Scotland at that level and one of only 12 in the whole of the UK.

It caps off quite a year for Tom, who at the end of 2014 handed the keys of his restaurant over to builders and watched them transform it into a much-expanded and completely redesigned venue as part of a £1m project.

In fact, this is just the latest milestone in a long and at times challenging journey for Tom and wife Michaela, who runs the business with him and was instrumental in its redesign.

“You’ve got to understand that when we opened this restaurant, it was just myself, Michaela, and Philippe [Nublat, food and beverage director],” says Tom.

“I had two in the kitchen with me, a pot-washer, a second-hand stove, second-hand fridges, and every year we have evolved and grown naturally.”

Speaking about winning the five AA rosettes, he says: “It is such a great honour and an achievement for the team, from where we started, to get to here.”

“It just shows you there is still a place in this world for pure grit and determination and starting from nothing and growing naturally. You don’t have to start with the biggest budget in the world – you have just got to start and keep going.”

The changes at the Kitchin were substantial. Having taken over the adjoining Chinese restaurant, Chop Chop, the restaurant has been transformed into a clean, modern venue that manages to make its Scottish roots and Tom’s “nature to plate” cooking philosophy abundantly clear, without appearing twee or clichéd.

It has been a great deal more than simply adding another restaurant to the side of the existing one; the site was completely remodelled. What was a bar in the Kitchin was removed, along with the old entrance, and turned into a back-of-house area. The kitchen was enlarged, with air-conditioning added and



The Kitchin, Leith

TOM AND MICHAELA KITCHIN

Tom Kitchin started his career as a trainee at the Gleneagles hotel where he first worked with friend and business partner Dominic Jack, before going on to work for some of the world’s most renowned chefs – including for his mentor Pierre Koffmann at the three-Michelin-starred La Tante Claire in London, the three-Michelin-starred restaurant Guy Savoy in Paris, and for Alain Ducasse at Le Louis XV restaurant in Monte Carlo.

Michaela Kitchin has a BSc Hons in hotel and restaurant management from the University of Surrey and has worked in her native Sweden as well as for Anton Mosimann in London, Savoy London, the Savoy Group, and at the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai. The couple launched the Kitchin in Leith in 2006.

more windows for diners to see Tom and his team at work.

To the back of the main dining room there is a temperature-controlled wine cellar that can hold around 2,500 bottles. Then there’s a new private dining room offering 22 covers, and a whisky snug to the left of the main entrance, reflecting the building’s history as an old whisky bond on the Leith docks.

This means that whereas before the restaurant would seat 45-50 people and, by turning a few tables, could do 70 covers, it can now accommodate 70 covers in the restaurant, with the private-dining room in addition.

Tom credits these changes as part of the reason why the restaurant has managed to move up to the next level.

“It was a bit hairy at the beginning, but we have certainly got used to it,” he says of the alterations. “We are filling the restaurant and I believe the consistency is better than it has ever been even though we are doing a few more covers. Having the flexibility of the private room, just generally improving the working standards, and having the space to operate, has helped to take it to the next level”.

He is also keen to emphasise that the accolades are a result of a team effort and that it is not just his own achievement. That means all of the staff, of course, and his closest friends, colleagues and family in particular.

“So many businesses fail and so many great chefs fail in business because they have been too busy filing their invoices and so on. Without the support of my wife and my dad and Philippe, I wouldn’t have been able to concentrate on the cooking,” he points out.

In fact, having a support network in place is a vitally important ingredient for any chef-entrepreneur who wants to make it on their own, he reckons.

THE SCRAN & SCALLIE

If the Kitchin is very much Tom and Michaela's baby, then the much-lauded Scran & Scallie pub in Stockbridge is a more collaborative affair, run by the couple alongside Castle Terrace chef-patron Dominic Jack, and its director of food and beverage Philippe Nublat.

"Tom and I always used to say that on our days off, there was nowhere we could go with the kids to eat. And that is one of the main factors behind why we decided to do it," says Jack, explaining why they opted to open the pub. "We can get good food and it is child-friendly."

Tom agrees that they spotted a gap in the market in Edinburgh before they opened the 90-cover venue in March 2013. "Myself and Michaela and Dom and Philippe just felt there was a real niche in the market for us. Down south they have been doing great pubs for a number of years. Living in London, I remember going to the great gastropubs like the Ship Inn or the Anglesea Arms or the Harwood Arms. There were so many great pubs in London and we always felt that was lacking here."

"There were so many great pubs in London and we always felt that was lacking here"

The Scran & Scallie's success is also a marker of the way in which pubs have had to evolve in the country, as Kitchin explains. "The Scottish pub would be a place for drinking and smoking and food wasn't really the thing – and that has really spun on its head now," he says. "Sometimes some of the older generation will say to me, 'it's not really a pub is it?' and I will say 'you know what guys, maybe it is not really a pub but this is a modern-day pub and a really happy place'."

Whether you agree that it fits the traditional description or not, one thing is for certain – there is a strong focus on quality, fresh ingredients and good cooking. "We will go down once or twice a week and we will either come up with a dish or the head chef and the sous chefs there will do a dish," says Jack.

On the day that we speak to the two chefs, they have just bought in a load of beautifully fresh queenie scallops from Orkney. "The produce we are getting is just wonderful," says Jack. "We will put them on tonight with some seaweed butter and I think it is that sort of thing that sets us apart a bit. Me and Tom will go down after service for a beer and a wee plate of queenie scallops."

Both were thrilled to discover that the Scran & Scallie had been named AA Pub of the Year in Scotland. "We were overjoyed. It was good for everyone – the whole team works extremely hard so everyone was delighted," says Jack.



Dominic Jack and Tom Kitchin

TOM KITCHIN ON THE SCOTTISH DINING SCENE

There's no doubt that Scotland is enjoying a purple patch when it comes to eating out, according to Kitchin. It's the Edinburgh market he knows best, but throughout the country there are chefs and restaurants making a real name for themselves. "It really is thriving and is coming on leaps and bounds," he says.

"One of the things that I have picked up on over the last few years is that you have got people coming to Edinburgh now who always used to go to London. There were four ladies in the Kitchin last night who were all from the north-east of England and they come here, they do their Christmas shopping, they stay in the hotels, then come here for dinner."

Kitchin singles out the pioneers of the modern-day Scottish dining scene, the likes of Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles, for whom he was "the utmost respect" as well as Martin Wishart who owns and runs restaurant Martin Wishart in Edinburgh. And he also highlights the achievements of Roy Brett, who runs seafood restaurant Ondine on the Royal Mile in the city. "He symbolises everything that is great about Scottish seafood and I just love going to that restaurant. He is really passionate," says Kitchin of Brett.

However, he'd still like to see yet more chefs coming to the fore in the city. "I do get frustrated sometimes when I go to a restaurant and I see guys who are trying too hard," he says. His advice to them? "Keep it simple, don't try and recreate what you find on the internet or in cookbooks, simple and nice and tasty, and the rest will come."

◀ "The environmental health in itself – I don't know how new businesses start now," he says. "You need a slicer for raw meat, a slicer for cooked meat, two vacuum-pack machines, a handwash sink there. It wasn't like that when I was at La Tante Claire. It is incredible. So you need someone who can pick up these pieces – you need to share that burden."

And there is one other area where Tom thinks there is still no opportunity for cutting corners – training. Those chefs who enjoy enduring success, he argues, are the ones who have undergone truly rigorous training first. Young chefs who haven't done their time in the lower positions in kitchens don't give themselves enough time to build a true repertoire of their own, and instead end up resorting to recipe books and the internet when they take on a head chef position, instead of relying on their own creativity, he says.

"The dedication to learning my trade is vitally important. Bloody hell, it is hard. Those moments when you think: 'Bugger this, I am going back home'. Those are big moments. Stick at it," he advises.

Tom claims not to have focused obsessively on the goal of winning five AA rosettes, but



"The dedication to learning my trade is vitally important. Bloody hell, it is hard"

admits that the tradition in which he has been steeped as a chef means that he naturally aims for the highest accolades he can.

To that end (at least in part), there will be further change at the restaurant next year, when he and his long-time friend and business partner Dominic Jack both introduce a new holiday system at their restaurants that will involve closing for a week at a time every

three months so that all staff can take their holiday at the same time – in March/April, July, October, and two weeks over Christmas and the New Year.

Not only, he hopes, will it benefit the staff who can all get away for a break at the times of the year that are most popular, but it should help drive that sought-after consistency even higher, maximising the amount of time that his trusted team are all on duty together.

So, it is onward and upward for Tom and Michaela and their team, but Tom is determined to remember one thing: "enjoy the ride," he laughs. "Because the pressure is even more now – you have got to hold onto it and you have got to deliver when people come with high expectations."

THE SUSTAINABILITY PAY-OFF

Putting effort into creating a sustainable business can be positive in terms of brand reputation and the bottom line. *Rachel Channer* explains

THE PROBLEM

Sustainability is much more than a tick-box exercise. Businesses are starting to realise that being sustainable makes long-term economic sense, and improves brand reputation and customer perception. But there needs to be a policy in place, which is something that can be overlooked in the leisure sector.

THE LAW

Sustainable development and green targets are here to stay. Concerns about the long-term future of the environment, together with the increasing instability of energy supply and finite resources, make sustainability a business necessity. The government has been the impetus behind this, with ambitious targets set to reduce energy use and carbon emissions. To meet these targets, it's likely that regulation and the enforcement of green issues will increase over the coming years.

There are a growing number of obligations that landlords have to comply with, particularly institutional landlords who own substantial portfolios of property. Requirements include organisational carbon footprint reporting and certification, annual carbon disclosure audit and verification, and UK Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) compliance.

These obligations will inevitably have a knock-on effect on tenants in the leisure sector. Tenants will be required to provide information and allow landlords access to their units. This is so landlords can see first-hand whether tenants are complying with their own regulatory obligations. Failure to do so could have costly consequences and inflict reputational damage on the landlord, who will accordingly seek to ensure that tenants are compliant.

EXPERT ADVICE

Being able to demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development comes with benefits. It might assist you when competing for new units, particularly in new 'green' shopping centres, or when taking leases from landlords with strong corporate social responsibility principles.

Importantly, sustainability is about improving the bottom line, whether it's small changes, such as installing energy efficient light bulbs, or looking at ways to reduce waste and minimise transport costs. Businesses should take stock now and analyse their carbon, water and waste footprints to reveal their environmental impacts. This will undoubtedly flag up



“Making a commitment to sustainability can bring positive press and potentially new consumers through the door”

inefficiencies and highlight where costs can be saved. An action plan with realistic targets will help the business keep on track.

In today's increasingly competitive landscape, more and more businesses are seeing the benefits of sustainability as a brand reputation tool. It helps foster positive consumer relations, especially as they expect companies to consider and manage their global footprint. This can be the differentiating factor between you and the competition. Reputation is key to consumer confidence and, in the age of social media, positive steps that a business has taken can be quickly and easily shared – as can any failures.

TO-DO CHECKLIST

Making a commitment to sustainability can bring positive press and potentially new consumers through the door. But you need to be clear and realistic about what you can achieve and consider the cost and timescales involved.

BEWARE

Failing to hit targets will generate negative interest, and may well undo much of your good work, as public goodwill can quickly sour. For example, global drinks firm Diageo set out a number of environmental commitments in 2008 (focusing on water, carbon emissions and waste) and in 2009 (packaging), which it aimed to achieve by 2015. Its annual report, published in August 2015, revealed that it has not been able to hit all of these targets, which was met with public disapproval.

Business owners and managers must consider how and why they want to become a sustainable business, embedding this philosophy in the enterprise from top to bottom. Leisure operators need to accept that achieving sustainability is a marathon, not a sprint.

CONTACT

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BE PREPARED FOR ADVERSE WEATHER THIS WINTER

Make sure that you are ready with the AA's range of winter and breakdown essentials for your car.

In preparation for the frosty nights to come visit theAA.com/shop to see our range of car essentials and kits.

We have a complete range of accessories from Breakdown & Safety Kits, Tow Ropes, Booster Cables and Torches to Travel Blankets, Snow & Ice Grips and De-Icing Salt. We also have a complete range of handy and compact kits, in convenient carry cases to keep in your car.

As a special offer this winter, AA recognised establishments can receive an extra **10% off*** purchases plus free standard delivery at theAA.com/shop To redeem this fantastic offer simply enter the promotional code **HOT10** when prompted in the shopping basket.

*10% off, redeemed at theAA.com/shop when the code HOT10 is entered in the shopping basket. Cannot be redeemed with any other offer or promotional code. Includes free standard delivery (other delivery options available).





WINTER DRINKS TRENDS

Beacon's guide on how to drive bar sales to combat the January dip

Winter is, for many, a time to eat, drink and be merry. For businesses in the hospitality industry, it is also a key time of year to drive bar sales and improve profitability to combat the dip in alcohol sales in the New Year, brought on in part by 'dry January'. Staying on top of industry trends is vital for bar managers to ensure they are offering the best service to their customers and driving revenue wherever possible.

Britain's leading purchasing company, Beacon, has therefore drawn on data and insight from its expert suppliers, including Bidvest Foodservice, Lockhart Catering Equipment and Accolade Wines, to compile its top winter drinks trends for the hospitality industry in the coming year.

Leanne Jarrett, drinks expert and deputy head of purchasing at Beacon, commented: "Working with such an extensive portfolio of expert suppliers allows us to gain access to invaluable information from industry-leading drinks suppliers, which we can then pass on to our customers to ultimately drive revenue and increase profitability."

"The increased sales of premium spirits like Hendricks or Absolut in the retail sector is a trend that very much translates into the hospitality industry. On the other hand, non-alcoholic wines and mocktails have remained popular after a strong year in 2014, which will almost certainly continue into 'dry January'. We often work with our suppliers in order to identify which

products are selling well and to develop our own flavour predictions for the year ahead."

BEACON'S WINTER DRINKS TRENDS 0% ALCOHOL

Zero- or low-alcohol alternatives should be at the forefront of a bar manager's mind across the UK, with the new Scottish drink-drive legislation that came into effect at the end of 2014 still hitting the hospitality industry hard.

Alcohol-free products will be increasing in popularity in 2016, according to Accolade Wines, with Echo Falls recently launching an alcohol-free sparkling drink.

Another of Beacon's suppliers, Bidvest Foodservice, underpins this data by reporting that alco-

hol-free wine sales are currently up by 42%. Bar managers should ensure they have at least one non-alcoholic alternative on the drinks menu in order to cater to their customers' needs.

Sales of Echo Falls Fruits low-alcohol wines have seen a huge increase this year, with Accolade Wines reporting supermarket sales of one million cases in eight months. Fruit-flavoured wines are now able to compete with the fruit cider market, appealing to a much wider customer base.

Following on from this success, Accolade has also reported a demand for wine cocktails from customers, with Echo Falls suggesting mixing its white peach and mango white wine with elderflower cordial, pomegranate and mint for a refreshing drink.





PREMIUM SPIRITS

Sales of premium spirits see an increase of 45% at Christmas time, highlighting that the consumer is much more willing to commit to a higher spend during the festive season.

Insight from Bidvest Foodservice has shown that in 2014, 42% of consumers planned to trade up to more premium food and drink for the Christmas shopping, which is a trend that is expected to continue this year.

Premium spirits such as Absolut vodka or Hendrick's gin are appearing more frequently on drinks menus and are becoming increasingly popular in cocktails, replacing the usual house spirits. Try developing a seasonal cocktail menu using higher-priced, premium spirits, in order to increase revenue into the New Year.

WHISKY AND THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE

American flavours are now hugely popular in the UK and are very much reflected in alcohol trends this winter. Lockhart Catering Equipment recently reported that the sales of American bourbon whiskeys saw a rise in sales of 19% last year, including an increase in sales of Woodford Reserve of 100% in Waitrose.

The slightly sweeter and spicier elements in American bourbon allows it to stand up well next to other flavours in classic cocktails such as the Manhattan, but is also popular served neat.

To ensure bar staff have the right knowledge when serving whisky, hoteliers should consider training courses to learn about every aspect of the drink and how best to serve it.

FLAVOUR FORECAST - GINGER

Drawing on information from the Technomic Inc MenuMonitor, Bidvest Foodservice has highlighted ginger as a flavour trend for winter and into early 2016. This is a flavour that is expected to appear in cocktails such as the Moscow Mule – made with vodka, lime and sugar syrup – with ginger beer added for a winter twist.

Ginger beer is also becoming increasingly popular, either as an alcoholic drink, such as ginger flavoured ales, or non-alcoholic like Crabbies Ginger Beer.

For more information about Beacon, please visit www.beaconpurchasing.co.uk or follow @Beacon_YPP on Twitter





THE WARMEST WELCOME

You can book a free heat consultation with AvantiGas for your hotel



AvantiGas are passionate about energy and our customers. We provide liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and biomass to businesses throughout the UK leisure industry, and pride ourselves on delivering efficient energy solutions for those not connected to mains gas. Through our expertise and technology partners, we continually strive to deliver better, safer and more reliable ways to meet the needs of the off-grid leisure sector.

With the cost for hoteliers rising, it is essential to make efficiencies and a significant opportunity to do this can be through the better delivery of your energy by evaluating your requirements and changing to an LPG or biomass heating solution. AvantiGas can provide:

- An enhanced green reputation, which can attract more customers
- A new, efficient and complete heating system that's tailored to your hotel's needs
- Reliable, no-hassle aftercare
- Delivery by a trusted and knowledgeable energy provider.

We have an established history of working with hotels, giving us a wealth of experience and expertise in off-grid heating. Lake Vyrnwy Country House Hotel & Spa is one hotel that has benefitted from AvantiGas expertise when we provided a reliable and

cost-effective supply of heat to this remote establishment.

The hotel's operations director, Anthony Rosser, said: "We use LPG because the hotel is off the mains gas network, and until recently the electricity supply has been flaky at best. On an annual basis we do our due diligence to see whether we're getting value for money in the marketplace, and we have not been able to better the price."

For the Hardwick restaurant and hotel just outside Abergavenny, Wales – co-owned by celebrity chef Stephen Terry and business partner Derry Nicklin – again, AvantiGas has helped. The hotel accommodates around 4,500 residents every year and, due to the nature of the business, they could not afford any downtime during installation. An LPG installation was chosen as a reliable and constant energy option that continues to operate today, providing reliable heat to the hotel.

Whether it is LPG or biomass you are interested in, we are currently offering a free heat consultation which will help you better understand your energy requirements and what options are available to you, exclusive to AA Hotel Services members.

To book your free heat consultation, register today at avantigas.com/AAhotels or call 0808 208 0000



ARE YOUR FOOD PROFITS UP? IF NOT, WHY NOT?



Recent research by *The Caterer* and food purchasing experts PSL – the Food Professionals, has identified that many operators have not managed to take advantage of the cost savings afforded by food deflation over the past 18 months. So what has happened here? And how should you tackle it?

The first issue is a lack of awareness of external factors such as VAT changes or cost-price movement can have. For instance, if the price of ingredients increases and everything else stays the same, then your margin will reduce.

Conversely, when prices come down, as they have during 2015, then gross profit (GP) should increase without changing anything. With PSL's food deflation running at between 3%-4%, this should mean that you are adding at least 0.5%-1% to your food gross product, or that you have tactically allowed the business to pass the benefit onto customers through upgraded quality, reductions to your selling prices, or a combination of the two.

If you haven't improved your margins or passed additional benefit back to your customers this year, the chances are your GP has been under-performing over the last 12 months.

The difficulty with cost-price movement is knowing trends and

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN FOOD COSTING

1. Do you know what your food margins should be?
2. Do you operate an accurate food flash?
3. Do you negotiate your food prices with suppliers?
4. Do you know what margin each dish makes?
5. Do you manage food wastage?
6. Are you capturing your food revenue?
7. Are you checking your food deliveries?
8. Is your dish information on allergens up to date?
9. Are your tariffs set in line with your marketplace?
10. Do you have an effective programme to grow food revenues?

ensuring your invoices are competitive and in-line with the actual market. It is a comprehensive task by those who have industry intelligence and resources. PSL has found that its purchasing savings against the market have increased due to ensuring its supply chain applies the deflationary factors to its client base.

The second issue lies in budgeting/targeting techniques. Margins will move for a variety of reasons throughout the year, such as changes to revenue sales mix, seasonal food pricing and promo-

tions, yet many still budget a flat margin all year. The risk of doing this is that unachievable target margins are set and then missed in the quieter months, and while the softer targets are achieved in the 'good' months, the overall affect is to not achieve budget.

Of operators surveyed, 64% are over two percentage points from achieving their year-to-date food budget. The best way to manage this is to understand the potential margins you should be achieving, taking into account all the variables – for example, cost of ingre-

dients, menu tariffs and business mix – and budget accordingly.

If you do this, you can start to measure performance and resolve differences between potential and actual margins. In 2015 you should have reviewed food GP aspirations and taken account of the reduction of food prices.

The third issue is resources and knowledge. Many of the management teams running hotels or hotel groups today have come from a rooms-led background. This leaves the task of food cost control with the head chef. You need to consider additional support or training for the head chef to ensure he or she has the right tools to do the job. What gets measured, gets done!

Food costs are usually the second-largest operating costs of a hotel after labour and should be given the attention and support they deserve. You undoubtedly will need to deal with the impending National Living Wage legislation due in April. Perhaps the solution lies in maximising food profitability rather than trying to reduce head count further.

The other alternative is to consider bringing in a company such as PSL, who are experts in food cost control and improving profitability with over 20 years' experience. PSL also offers free evaluations to all AA members.

WHY BEING IMAGE-CONSCIOUS COUNTS

Hotels are losing out on an estimated £8.9m a year due to poor photography – here's some professional advice from interior designer *Sophie Robinson* on how to achieve a smart, successful image

eviivo
Your trusted online booking partner

It's hard to believe that a one single thing can have such a massive impact on bookings, but in the case of pictures of your hotel, guest house or B&B, it's true. Even more so than ratings, review scores and prices, images influence whether a potential guests will book your property. A survey carried out by eviivo found that:

- 82% of travellers are put off solely by poor pictures
- One in three potential guests believe poor photos mean poor service!

In response to the findings, eviivo worked with celebrity interior designer Sophie Robinson to better understand how much of an impact photos can make. They visited several B&Bs on the south coast of England and took two photographs, minutes apart. The first photo was taken by someone with no specialist experience and the second by a professional photographer, with Sophie using her expert knowledge to help set the scene. The catch? They weren't allowed to bring any new objects into the room that weren't already there, nor were they allowed to re-decorate in any way.

THE RESULTS

The results were dramatic. Take a look at the pictures above. When put to the public, 76%

said they would happily book to stay at the property based on the "after" image (right) compared to only 13% based on the "before" picture (left).

More interestingly, when asked how much they would value the two rooms, the average rate per night came in at £43 for "before" and £91 for "after" – nearly double the price.

Furthermore, a majority of people (61%) believed that the photos were taken years apart, rather than just a few minutes.

The findings were consistent across all the B&Bs that took part in the experiment, with the average price difference being £28 per room per night. And with contrasts like this you can see why:

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR IMAGE

The way you style your photographs can make all the difference to the impression that they give your prospective guests. To find out how to show your hotel, guesthouse or B&B in the best light, follow these tips from Sophie, who has a wealth of experience from over 15 years working with some of Britain's best-selling magazines, the BBC, ITV and Channel 5:

- A small vase with a couple of fresh flowers always helps make a room look fresh and clean. Consider popping one on the bedside

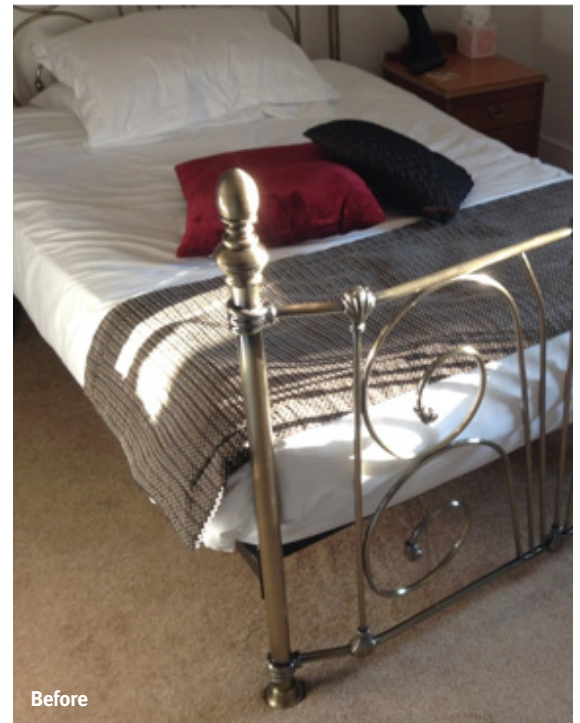
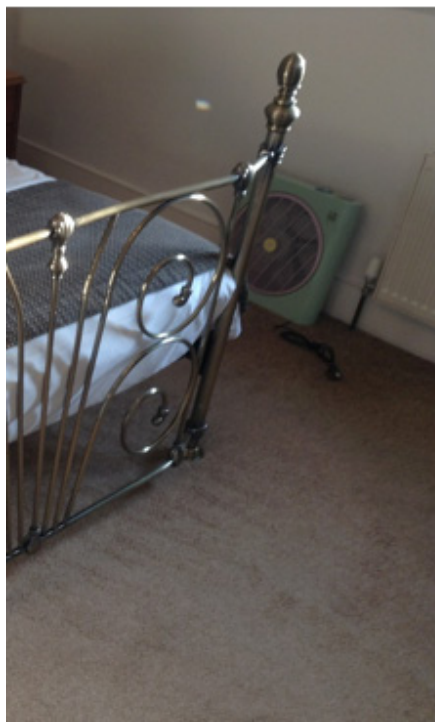


table or breakfast table, or a larger arrangement in the hallway for your photo shoot.

- To help make the bed look more luxurious and comfy, consider turning down the top of the duvet, around 40cm, in front of the pillows, and tuck in neatly.
- When styling the bed, it looks really inviting to have a few scatter cushions. There should be at least two, set symmetrically for a smart yet minimal look, or three with one cushion preferably smaller than the back two. One cushion looks just mean and any more than three looks fussy. Don't arrange your cushions like diamonds. That can look really naff!
- As a rule, lights and lamps look better switched off. Try and get as much natural



daylight into your rooms as possible before you photograph them. Shooting your rooms at night is a total no-no! If the room doesn't have much natural light, use the lamps to create a cosy glow, but only if really required.

- Edit out the necessary yet unaesthetic from your photos. Take away the wastepaper bin, plug-in heater, fan, ironing board and piles of towels and make sure they don't creep into your shot. Those things can be listed into your description so your guests can know they can expect them, but not shown in the pictures as they look plain ugly.
- Avoid showing overtly branded products in your pictures. In the bathroom use a plain bar of soap in a dish or decant your liquid hand soap into a soap pump. In the break-

fast room, take away packets of cereal or decant them into stylish glass jars.

- Photograph your rooms on a cloudy day. This avoids bright white streaks of sunlight bleaching out areas of your photograph and creating sharp shadows.
- A few nicely arranged close detail shots can really add the right mood to your listing. Think about a photograph of a welcoming mug of tea with some biscuits, a collection of pretty toiletries or a posy of fresh flowers on the breakfast table to let your guest know that you also think of the smaller details.
- Whenever possible, use plain white bed linen. This can be accessorised with a neat bed throw and cushions for interest.
- Before you take your photos, make sure

your rooms look their absolute best. Spick and span with smear-free mirrors and taps, freshly laundered, pressed bedlinen, and every surface polished and gleaming.

- Follow this advice, keep your photos up to date on your website and on all the leading travel sites, and see the difference good photography can make to your property. Uploading your photos on multiple websites can be time-consuming and frustrating. But with eviivo suite, you simply upload new photos of your property once and watch them appear all over the web. No need to manually update everything!

To find out more and to pay nothing for your first two months of subscription, visit eviivo.com/the-aa-special-offer



INDEPENDENT HOTEL PERFORMANCE



In the United Kingdom, almost 40% of the hotel rooms are independent whereas more than 60% are chain rooms, according to data collected by STR Global.

When looking at the January 2014 to November 2015 period, on average independent hotels showed an increase of 3.2% in demand. November 2015 witnessed a demand growth of 3.9% when compared to the previous year. This was on the back of one of the highest increases for the period with October 2015 showing an impressive demand growth of 4.2%.

While chain hotels showed a more substantial demand increase (4.7%) for the same 23-month period, they have witnessed a slowdown in demand, which dropped below the 4.0% mark, since May 2015, and grew by only 2.3% in November 2015.

Independent hotels have achieved higher average daily rates (ADR) since 2008 when compared to chain hotels. Occupancy performance for independent hotels tends to remain more stable, growing at a slower pace. Furthermore, as is illustrated by the graph (right), November's 2015 year to date occupancy for independent hotels grew by 1.4% to 74.9%, and ADR was up 3.0% to £123.59.

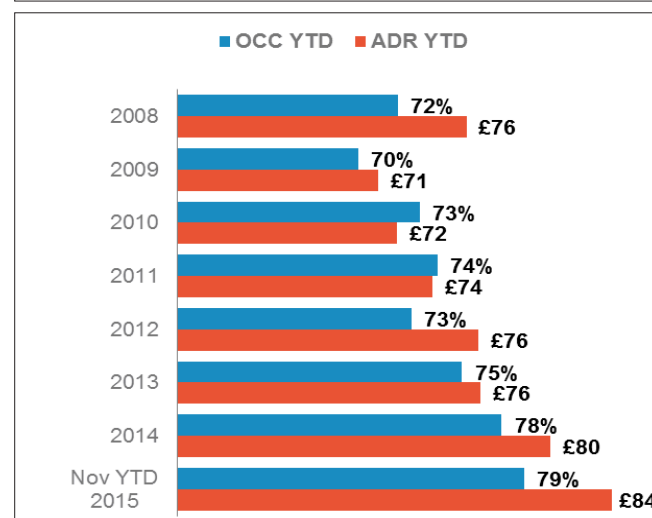
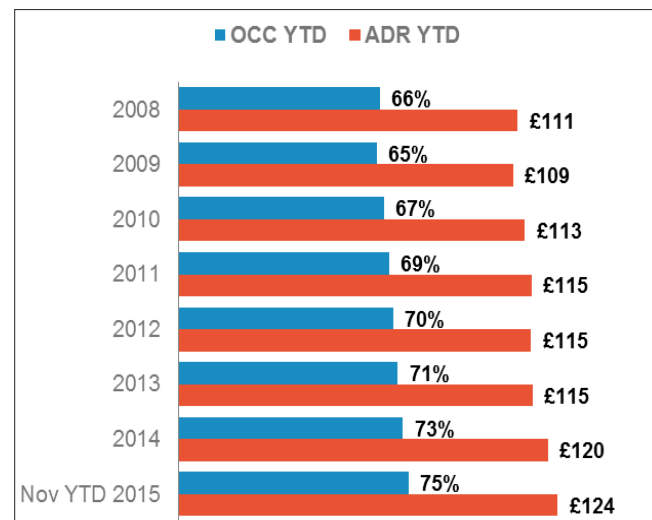
For the same time period, chain hotels have shown a 0.6% increase to 78.8% and a 4.0% ADR growth to £83.53, which is already above full year 2014 results.

What is benchmarking?

Hotel benchmarking is the ability to understand how a property is performing versus another group. This group might be other properties in your city, the whole city, or even another city. Benchmarking allows you to establish the facts and opens a great opportunity to think about why there might be differences; providing you with a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your business. STR Global is a trusted partner of the AA, specialising in research and data analysis, offering various benchmarking products and solutions.

STR Global provides hotel data and benchmarking reports to hotel operators, developers, financiers, analysts and suppliers to the hotel industry; covering daily and monthly performance data, forecasts, annual profitability, food and beverage, pipeline and census information worldwide.

To understand more about hotel benchmarking, and how we can help your property, please contact sales@strglobal.com.





DINE OUT IN STYLE FOR LESS WITH AA ROSETTE RESTAURANT VOUCHERS

You'll likely have heard of AA Rosettes, a recognition of culinary excellence awarded by the AA to the best restaurants across the UK. What you may not know is that there's a voucher that goes with it, meaning that you're guaranteed some fine-dining if you're in possession of an AA Rosette Restaurant Voucher. With face values from £5 to £25, these vouchers can be spent just like cash at your choice of nearly 300 locations across the UK that have all been awarded the coveted AA Rosette status.

The top and bottom line is the food, so no matter where your AA Rosette Restaurant Vouchers are used, good food is guaranteed. From Raymond Blanc's Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxford to the James Martin-



headed Talbot Hotel in York, the best chefs in the country are firing up their kitchens and ready to serve their finest. There's destination restaurants, gastropubs, chic city eateries and cosy locals to try, meaning everyone's bound to find something they'll love.

Even better than good food guaranteed, with your staff discount you can get 10% off every

voucher you buy, meaning 10% off your food, wine or even an overnight stay if your chosen restaurant has a hotel signed up to the scheme. If you've got a big night out or exquisite family dinner planned, that could add up to one almighty purse sparing saving at a fantastic range of restaurants.

If this sounds like a deal you'd

like to take advantage of, give our team a call on 01494 956789 or visit www.theaarosettevoucher.co.uk to find out further details including the full list of participating restaurants.

● If you're the owner of an AA Rosette-accredited restaurant, we'd love to hear from you and help you bring in more customers through the AA Rosette Restaurant Voucher scheme. Encourage trade in quieter periods, tap into the lucrative corporate and gifting market, and open up your business to a huge range of customers – all this and more is possible when you're part of the AA Rosette Restaurant Voucher scheme, so why not give us a call on 01494 956789 and find out why this time of year is the perfect time to join.





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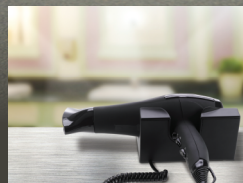
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