

# Seasonal & local

## CHEFS' NOTEBOOK SPECIAL



As the new series of BBC Two's *Great British Menu* gets underway, eight of this year's competing chefs reveal their top places to eat and shop



CENTRAL  
REGION

**Jason Hodnett**, Head chef at **The Raven Hotel & Restaurant** ([ravenhotel.com](http://ravenhotel.com)), Shropshire

**Best restaurant ever** El Molino Blanco in Tenerife ([molino-blanco.com](http://molino-blanco.com)), a rustic Spanish restaurant (below). We've returned time and again as a family on holiday. I always have their three-year cured Ibérico ham – the best ham you'll ever taste.



**On a night off** I like eating at The Golden Cross in Shrewsbury ([goldencrosshotel.co.uk](http://goldencrosshotel.co.uk)). My go-to dish is the belly pork; cooked for hours, it melts in the mouth.

**Great local produce** On Fridays and Saturdays, we run a fresh produce stall, called The Marketplace, at the hotel. It stocks fish, fruit and veg, and baked goods produced in the restaurant kitchen. We have a great relationship with suppliers and get to hand-pick some of the best British produce.

**Jak O'Donnell**, Chef-patron at **The Sisters** ([thesisters.co.uk](http://thesisters.co.uk)), Glasgow

**Most memorable meal** The Captain's Galley in Scrabster ([captainsgalley.co.uk](http://captainsgalley.co.uk)), at the very top of Scotland – you can't get much further! I tried monkfish liver here for the first time, and I can still remember the taste.

**Next on your list to visit** Restaurant Nathan Outlaw in Cornwall ([nathan-outlaw.com](http://nathan-outlaw.com)) – I love eating fish outdoors with a tremendous view, particularly as I work indoors in a kitchen all the time.

**On a day off**

I head to the Lobster Shack ([lobstershack.co.uk](http://lobstershack.co.uk)) by the harbour in North Berwick, which is an hour's drive away. We run on the beach with the kids and dogs, then we'll have a pot of mussels and a Firth of Forth crab cocktail, maybe langoustines if we get there early enough. They're licensed too, so what's not to love!



Lobster Shack



SCOTLAND

SOUTH

**Matt Gillan**, Head chef at **The Pass** ([southlodgehotel.co.uk](http://southlodgehotel.co.uk)), South Lodge Hotel, West Sussex

**Best ever meal** At L'Enclume ([lenclume.co.uk](http://lenclume.co.uk)) in Cumbria last year. We always go somewhere high-end in January, when the restaurant is closed. I love seeing different and new techniques.

I was well aware of Simon Rogan, but didn't know what to expect. The stand-out dish was the lamb hotpot; three spherifications and a little lamb jus – so small and simple in its appearance, yet the flavour it delivered was mind-blowing. I'll never forget it.

**Next on your list to visit** Hedone ([hedonerestaurant.com](http://hedonerestaurant.com)) in London's Chiswick. Mikael Jonsson's approach to food sounds refreshing, and I'm intrigued to see the results of a chef who does not have the constraints of formal (or informal)



Hedone in London



training. He does what he thinks is right, rather than what he has been taught.

**Favourite local shop** I like New Street Butchers

& Deli in Horsham ([newstreetbutchers.co.uk](http://newstreetbutchers.co.uk)). The quality of the meat is fantastic.

• **Matt is cooking at the Abergavenny Food Festival**, see p42 for more details.



WALES

**Adam Bannister,**  
Co-chef-patron at **Slice**  
([sliceswansea.co.uk](http://sliceswansea.co.uk)),  
Swansea

**Best meal ever** The tasting menu at a high-end restaurant called Moments at Barcelona's Mandarin Oriental ([mandarinoriental.com/barcelona](http://mandarinoriental.com/barcelona)). One dish I'll always remember is Iberian pork with daikon, apple & almonds. It used a forgotten cut of pork, but it blew me away.



Barcelona's Moments restaurant

**On a night off** Several times a month I eat at a Chinese restaurant in Swansea called Sichuan Savour ([sichuansavour.co.uk](http://sichuansavour.co.uk)). They use fresh ingredients you wouldn't find in a British restaurant – such as ducks' tongues and pigs' ears – and cook them really well.

**Favourite local shop** A good piece of meat is key to a good meal, so I head to The Gower Butcher in the centre of Swansea.



SOUTH WEST

**Josh Eggleton,** Chef-patron at **The Pony & Trap** ([theponyandtrap.co.uk](http://theponyandtrap.co.uk)), Chew Magna, Somerset

**On a night off** I go to Wallfish Bistro ([wallfishbistro.co.uk](http://wallfishbistro.co.uk)) in Clifton, Bristol. It's so relaxed. I love their native oysters. They do superb Negronis, and the fried squid is excellent too.

**Next on your list to visit** The Parlour gastropub ([parlourkensal.com](http://parlourkensal.com)) in Kensal Green, where Jesse Dunford Wood is chef-patron. He has a great personality and a good pedigree, so I know the food will be amazing.



The Parlour gastropub

**Favourite local shop** Our local butcher in Blagdon ([blagdonbutchers.co.uk](http://blagdonbutchers.co.uk)). It sells grass-fed beef and pasture-raised pork, chicken and lamb, which are all sourced from local farms, including its own. We buy all our beef there; it's aged for up to 50 days, but some cuts are even aged for 150 days. It also does amazing pancetta and lardo.



NORTHERN IRELAND

**Ben Arnold,** Head chef at **Home** restaurant ([homebelfast.co.uk](http://homebelfast.co.uk)), Belfast

**Best meal ever** Lunch at Marea ([marea-nyc.com](http://marea-nyc.com)) by Michael White in New York. It had an electric atmosphere, plus faultless service, and amazing Californian wine. The dish that made the meal was Hand-rolled fusilli pasta with red wine-braised octopus & bone marrow – its beauty was its simplicity and the execution.



The Yorke Arms, where Frances Atkins (above) is chef

**Next UK restaurant on your list** I have a long list, and it's constantly growing, but next is The Yorke Arms ([yorker-arms.co.uk](http://yorker-arms.co.uk)) in Ramsgill-in-Nidderdale, Yorkshire. I admire Frances Atkins; her approach to food, her restaurant and relentless commitment to the trade.

**On a night off** I eat at Macau in East Belfast ([macaubelfast.com](http://macaubelfast.com)). It's family-run and serves authentic Asian food. I love the Crispy soft shell crab, prawn-stuffed aubergine, and Hake in XO sauce, as well as Roast duck in bean sprouts. I could go on...

**Favourite market** St George's Market in Belfast ([belfastcity.gov.uk](http://belfastcity.gov.uk)) has great quality local produce – fish, shellfish and organic veg. You will also find specialist butchers and artisan producers here. It's a living market used by the people.



NORTH EAST

**Michael O'Hare,** Chef-patron at **The Man Behind the Curtain** ([themanbehindthecurtain.co.uk](http://themanbehindthecurtain.co.uk)), Leeds

**Most memorable meal** At 41 degrees in Barcelona, the brainchild of Albert Adrià. Everything was magical: Adrià at his absolute best! It was light years away from anything else I've ever eaten. My favourite dish was the olives – mind-blowingly good.

**Next UK restaurant on your list** House of Tides ([houseoftides.co.uk](http://houseoftides.co.uk)) in Newcastle. I went at its inception, then again six months later, and it's great to watch it evolve. Kenny Atkinson cooks food he believes in. He's never scared to make food taste great, which is something that gets a little lost in some restaurants.



Kirkgate Market

**On a day off** Meat Liquor in Leeds ([meatliquor.com](http://meatliquor.com)) has become somewhat of a local for my team. Every Saturday night, we head down after service. My favourite dishes are the Buffalo chicken with blue cheese, Mac & cheese and Monkey fingers (marinated chicken).

**Favourite market** Kirkgate Market ([leedskirkgatemarket.co.uk](http://leedskirkgatemarket.co.uk)). I fell in love with it from an early age – my parents would always take me, as they wanted to look at the huge selection of fabrics. As my father ran his fingers through the fine silks, I would wander off to the veg stalls and gaze at the carrots, courgettes and daikon radishes and ponder what I could do with them.



NORTH  
WEST

**Mark Ellis, Head chef of 1851 Restaurant at Peckforton Castle** ([peckfortoncastle.co.uk](http://peckfortoncastle.co.uk)), Cheshire

**Next restaurant on your list to visit** Midsummer House ([midsummerhouse.co.uk](http://midsummerhouse.co.uk)) in Cambridge. I've always wanted to eat there since Daniel Clifford judged me on the *Great British Menu* last year. I'm also looking forward to Cambridge's Alimentum ([restaurantalimentum.co.uk](http://restaurantalimentum.co.uk)) as Mark Poynton is a fellow northern lad, and his food is excellent.



**On a night off** I eat at The Yew Tree Inn at Bunbury ([theyewtreebunbury.com](http://theyewtreebunbury.com)), a local pub with excellent food, wines, craft beers, service and atmosphere. It's five minutes from my house and the proprietor, Jon Cox, has done a great job transforming it.

**Favourite food shops** I buy veg at farm shops such as The Hollies ([theholliesfarmshop.co.uk](http://theholliesfarmshop.co.uk)) - I find supermarket fruit and veg tasteless. I get my meat from RF Burrows & Sons butchers ([rf-burrowsandsons.co.uk](http://rf-burrowsandsons.co.uk)) in Bunbury.

## Local heroes

The *Great British Menu* chefs tell us about their favourite unsung British ingredients

**Matt Gillan** It has to be kid goat. Although it has grown in popularity with chefs and in turn restaurant-goers, most people are unaware of this amazing product. Or there are those who have tried goat, but only an older animal, in curry or stew that has a very strong flavour. However, kid goat has a beautiful flavour and texture, and is super lean. It's a very versatile product, not dissimilar to lamb.

**Jason Hodnett** Spelt - we're using it more and more, in breads, risotto, biscuits and cakes. It has a mellow, nutty flavour, is high in protein, easily digestible and healthy, so it's an all-round star of the larder.

**Ben Arnold** Offal, along with game. The versatility and the range of offal, the varying seasons, and the huge range of meats and different flavours.

**Jak O'Donnell** Wild garlic. I am always amazed to find such large patches of it untouched. All the more for me!

**Michael O'Hare** There's a small piece of flesh behind a cod's eyes that's incredibly gelatinous but super tasty. We always roast the cod heads for staff. That piece of nectar behind the eye is perfect for sharing. It sounds a little disgusting, but my chefs love it so much!

**Josh Eggleton** Button mushrooms are hugely underrated. We slice and sauté the mushrooms, then deglaze the pan with Worcestershire sauce and milk, which we purée with the mushrooms. We serve this with ox liver - delicious. I also love mushrooms raw in a salad with watercress, or roasted with chicken or beef.



**Adam Bannister** Swede. Sadly, not a lot of people appreciate it, but it can be stunning. I love it whole, grated, puréed, or tossed in butter.

**Mark Ellis** Rabbit is coming back into fashion. I've always had rabbit on my menus but it would be great to see it more readily available to the public.

**The Great British Menu continues on Wednesday evenings on BBC Two. Read more about judge Prue Leith on p146 and see judge Oliver Peyton's kitchen on p106.**

## KENTISH COBNUTS

Look out for Kentish cobnuts this month - the harvest began on St Philibert's Day on 22 August. Cobnuts (a type of hazelnut or filbert), have been cultivated for centuries on Kent's sandstone ridge. In the 1900s, plats (the local word for an orchard of cobnuts) covered more than 7,000 acres.

Alexander Hunt, who has a six-acre cobnut plantation on Potash Farm, near St Mary's Platt in Kent, is chair of the Kentish Cobnuts Association. He's keen to revive this 'endangered' heritage food and has restored his farm's original 500 cobnut trees and planted 500 more. He sells his cobnuts and cobnut products (including oils and biscuits) in farm shops and at [kentishcobnuts.com](http://kentishcobnuts.com).

Unlike many other nuts, cobnuts are sold fresh, not dried. At the start of the season, they're milky green



and juicy - ideal for salads. By late September, they're brown, drier and sweeter - so perfect for puddings. From November, Alexander sells them dehusked in their shells.



## Dates for your diary

**5-6 Sep North Norfolk Food & Drink Festival, Holkham Estate**

[northnorfolkfoodfestival.co.uk](http://northnorfolkfoodfestival.co.uk)

**6 Sep Lobster and Crab Feast, Clovelly, Devon**

[clovelly.co.uk](http://clovelly.co.uk)

**12 Sep Ashburton Food & Drink Festival, Devon**

[ashburtonfoodfestival.co.uk](http://ashburtonfoodfestival.co.uk)

**12 Sep Blackburn Food Festival, Lancashire**

[blackburnfoodfestival.co.uk](http://blackburnfoodfestival.co.uk)

**12-13 Sep Tooting Foodival 2015, London**

[tootingfoodival.blogspot.co.uk](http://tootingfoodival.blogspot.co.uk)

**28 Sep-11 Oct North Norfolk Restaurant week**

(spans two weeks)

[northnorfolkrestaurantweek.co.uk](http://northnorfolkrestaurantweek.co.uk)

**18-27 Sep York Food & Drink Festival**

[yorkfoodfestival.com](http://yorkfoodfestival.com)

**18-20 Sep Abergavenny Food Festival, Wales**

[abergavennyfoodfestival.com](http://abergavennyfoodfestival.com)

On 19 Sep, as part of the festival, Matt Gillan (a contestant on *Great British Menu*) will cook a feast at Llanfoist village hall (visit [feastwithachef.co.uk](http://feastwithachef.co.uk) for info).

**19-20 Sep Meatopia, Tobacco Dock, London**

[meatopia.co.uk](http://meatopia.co.uk)

**19-20 Sep Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival**

[visitisleofman.com](http://visitisleofman.com)

**24-27 Sep The Radio Times Festival, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey**

[radiotimesfestival.com](http://radiotimesfestival.com) (see p22)

**25-27 Sep Great Cornish Food Festival, Truro**

[greatcornishfood.co.uk/festival](http://greatcornishfood.co.uk/festival)

**26 Sep Thame Food Festival, Oxfordshire**

[thamefoodfestival.co.uk](http://thamefoodfestival.co.uk)