

The

MAIN COURSE

JUNE BY THE MENU PARTNERS





WELCOME

TO JUNE

June arrives with a different kind of energy. The days are longer, kitchens are busier and there is a confidence that comes with the start of summer. Ingredients begin to demand less from us, arriving with natural sweetness, colour and character already built in. It is the season of cooking with a lighter touch, allowing exceptional produce to do much of the work.

This issue celebrates flavours that thrive in the heat. We explore the tomatillo, a cornerstone of Mexican cooking whose bright acidity and versatility have made it indispensable for generations. It feels particularly fitting alongside our Behind the Pass feature with Gabriel Gutierrez of Casa Azul. His story is a reminder that great food is about far more than ingredients alone. It is about heritage, memory and the generosity of sharing a culture through cooking. His passion for authentic Mexican food shines through every answer and makes for a fascinating read.

Closer to home, June's produce calendar is one of the most exciting of the year. Courgette flowers, broad beans and beautiful datterini tomatoes are all beginning to hit their stride, while British strawberries have arrived in abundance, bringing with them the unmistakable taste of summer. These are ingredients that encourage creativity whilst still celebrating simplicity, something every great chef understands.

We also take a look inside the newly refurbished Salt Room, where Executive Chef Kim Woodward leads a kitchen built around theatre, precision and exceptional seafood. From the dramatic open pass to the charcoal-fired cooking at its heart, it is a brilliant example of how hospitality continues to evolve whilst staying rooted in craftsmanship.

As summer gathers momentum, there is a sense of optimism across the industry. Terraces are filling, seasonal menus are changing almost weekly and guests are looking for memorable experiences built around great food and drink. We hope this issue provides a little inspiration for the weeks ahead and, as always, thank you for being part of it with us.

Jack O'Neill

HEAD OF OPERATIONS - BRIGHTON

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BEHIND *The Pass*



GABRIEL GUTIERREZ

This month, we got behind the pass with Gabriel Gutierrez, the man behind Casa Azul, Brighton's beloved Mexican taqueria nestled in the heart of the Open Market. Born and raised in Mexico, Gabriel has built something in Brighton that goes far beyond a market stall.

He cooks and hosts with the kind of generosity that makes his customers feel like they've just been invited into his home.

We talked about the theatre of the kitchen, why the menu never changes and what it really means to bring your culture to the table.

Tell us a little about your background.

I was born in Mexico City in a family where food was *everything*. My friends always ended up at my house because it was always open to everyone, there was always something to eat and something on the stove. That's just Mexican culture. Food is not fuel to us; it is the way you bring people together.

I've been in the industry for almost 36 years and I still love it as much as I ever did. When that stops being true, I'll stop. But it hasn't.



How did Casa Azul come about?

I've been in Brighton for many years and always dreamed of opening something. I tried before but the timing wasn't right. I think sometimes you have to wait for the right moment because you can simply be ahead of time.

Then one day I was walking past the Open Market, saw the space and I said to myself "if Casa Azul works here, it will work anywhere" and within a few months, we were open.

The name comes from Frida Kahlo's house in Mexico. The Casa Azul is where she lived. She was one of the first women to really show the world what Mexican culture and food meant. That felt like exactly the right spirit to build something around.



Why does the menu stay the same?

Because a taqueria is a treat. In Mexico, you might live next to a taqueria and not go to it, because you prefer the one two miles away. And you drive those two miles, because that's the taco you love. I want Casa Azul to be that for people in Brighton.



Casa Azul is located in the Brighton Open Market, London Road. Wholesale products, including salsas, hot sauces and taco kits, are available online and in your favourite local shops across Brighton and Sussex.



You've spoken about cooking as a kind of performance. Tell us more about that.

I always say a restaurant is like a theatre. You do the play behind the curtains, the kitchen team works hard to produce something beautiful, and then you have the stage, which is the restaurant. But here's the thing people sometimes forget: the main actor is the dish.

A chef is an artist in his own right. Not through decoration, but through flavour and feeling. A good artist, when they paint or make something, makes people say, "wow".

Your customers who have been to Mexico seem to have a special connection to what you do.

Yes, they come in taste the mole or the tinga or the chipotle, and something in them recognises it. It's the flavours from their holiday, from their time living there, from something their friend cooked for them once. They thought they wouldn't find that here.



How do you keep the authenticity alive so far from home?

I'll be honest with you: I didn't always get it right. After years in England, I had compromised certain flavours without even realising it. It was gradual, so I couldn't see it.

When I opened Casa Azul, my sister came to visit from Mexico. She was in the kitchen with me and she tasted the dishes and she said: "it's missing this, and this." She helped me enormously to put the flavours back where they belonged in those simple dishes.



The lesson I carry from it is that simplicity is the hardest discipline. My clearest food memory is a bowl of white rice made by my aunt. Simplicity makes everything shine. The moment you over-elaborate, you lose the essence of what you were trying to say.

What local producers are you excited about right now?

I love working with what's around us. My meat is all local and grass-fed. The vegetables are sourced from within 35 miles wherever I can.

And we've been stocking the Picoso spicy sodas, made by a couple who came from Mexico and are building something brilliant here. The mango and habanero is extraordinary. You get the full sweetness of the mango and then just a beautiful tingle at the end. It pairs with everything on the menu.

What's next for Casa Azul?

My dream is to get Casa Azul into the houses of everyone in the UK. I want people to be able to open their freezer on a Tuesday night and find a little piece of Mexico in there.

The wholesale side is growing, we're on Amazon, DELLI, Market and chefs are starting to use the salsas in their own kitchens in all kinds of ways.

And I want to see the Open Market become what I always believed it could be: a proper food destination for Brighton. I see the energy building and when that moment comes, we'll be right here, doing what we've always done.

IN SEASON
JUNE



Courgette Flower

Prized for their fleeting summer seasonality, courgette flowers offer a striking contrast of vibrant sunflower-gold petals and a pale green base. They taste subtly sweet and mildly nutty, carrying a clean, vegetal undertone of fresh summer rain.

In the kitchen, execution relies on the distinct differences between the male and female blooms. The hollow, lightweight male blossom serves as a vehicle for delicate mousselines and crisp deep-frying.

Conversely, the female blossom remains attached to the baby fruit, presenting a dual-texture profile that requires precise, multi-zone cooking to balance the quick-wilting petal with the dense, crisp bite of the young vegetable.





Tomatillos

PRONOUNCED: TO·MA·TI·YOS

Tomatillo is a Mesoamerican staple that predates the tomato and remains the backbone of Mexico's great green sauces. Its papery husk is both armour and a freshness indicator: tight and green means good, dry and loose means move on.

Sharp, citrus-forward and faintly sap-like raw, the profile transforms entirely under heat. Dry comal charring is where it earns its keep, the acid mellows, bitterness retreats, and a deeper, earthier sweetness takes hold.

That shift is everything in a mole verde or salsa verde, where char level is the primary flavour dial.



Broad Beans

Broad beans are one of Britain's oldest cultivated vegetables, marking the brief window between late spring and early summer. They thrive in cool, damp conditions and reward those who catch them early.

Young and small, the flavour is sweet, grassy, and delicate, with a clean, starchy finish. Left to mature, the skin toughens and the flavour deepens; at which point blanching and double-podding are non-negotiable.

Classically paired with pecorino, mint and olive oil, they also hold their own puréed beneath fish, folded through risotto, or simply dressed and eaten warm.





Datterini tomatoes

Datterini tomatoes are a small, elongated Italian variety whose name translates simply as "little dates," a nod to their shape and their exceptional natural sweetness.

Thin-skinned with a dense, low-moisture flesh, the flavour is intensely sweet with bright acidity and very little bitterness. That balance holds beautifully under heat, making them as reliable roasted as they are raw.

A staple of Southern Italian cooking, they are classically used in quick-cooked pasta sauces, blistered whole in olive oil, or slow-roasted until collapsed and jammy. Raw, they need nothing beyond salt.



The Chef's Egg

How Ewe can make difference.

By Praise Zaloumis, The Menu Partners.

There is a growing shift in hospitality towards understanding food not just as fuel or flavour, but as something that actively contributes to guest wellbeing, satisfaction, and overall experience.

In a busy kitchen, consistency is what turns a one-time visit into a regular booking. When dishes are delivered balanced, satisfying and well executed, they build trust and keep customers coming back.

While chefs have always understood the value of well-prepared, nourishing food, there's growing recognition of how ingredients contribute not just to flavour, but to how guests feel after they eat.

Dishes that are thoughtfully put together create a more complete experience that stays with the customer. It starts with the ingredients. A menu built on ingredients that perform consistently, hold their quality under pressure, and deliver on both flavour and appearance supports smooth service and reliable results.

St Ewe's eggs are a clear example of how ingredient quality carries through to the finished dish. Sourced from British family farms aligned with high-welfare standards, their eggs begin with nutrition at the source, supporting both hen health and product consistency.



For their signature Rich Yolk eggs, the feed consists of natural additions such as marigold petals and paprika extract, creating the distinctive deep orange yolk that has become their hallmark. That colour is more than visual appeal; it translates into flavour and performance in cooking.

As a supplier of quality ingredients, we support kitchens in building those foundations by providing ingredients that work as hard as chefs do - delivering both versatility and consistency where it matters most.

“ A golden yolk isn't just beautiful to look at - it changes what your cooking can do. That deep, rich colour signals a higher concentration of carotenoids, which means more flavour, more vibrancy, and a more luxurious result on the plate. ”

- St Ewe

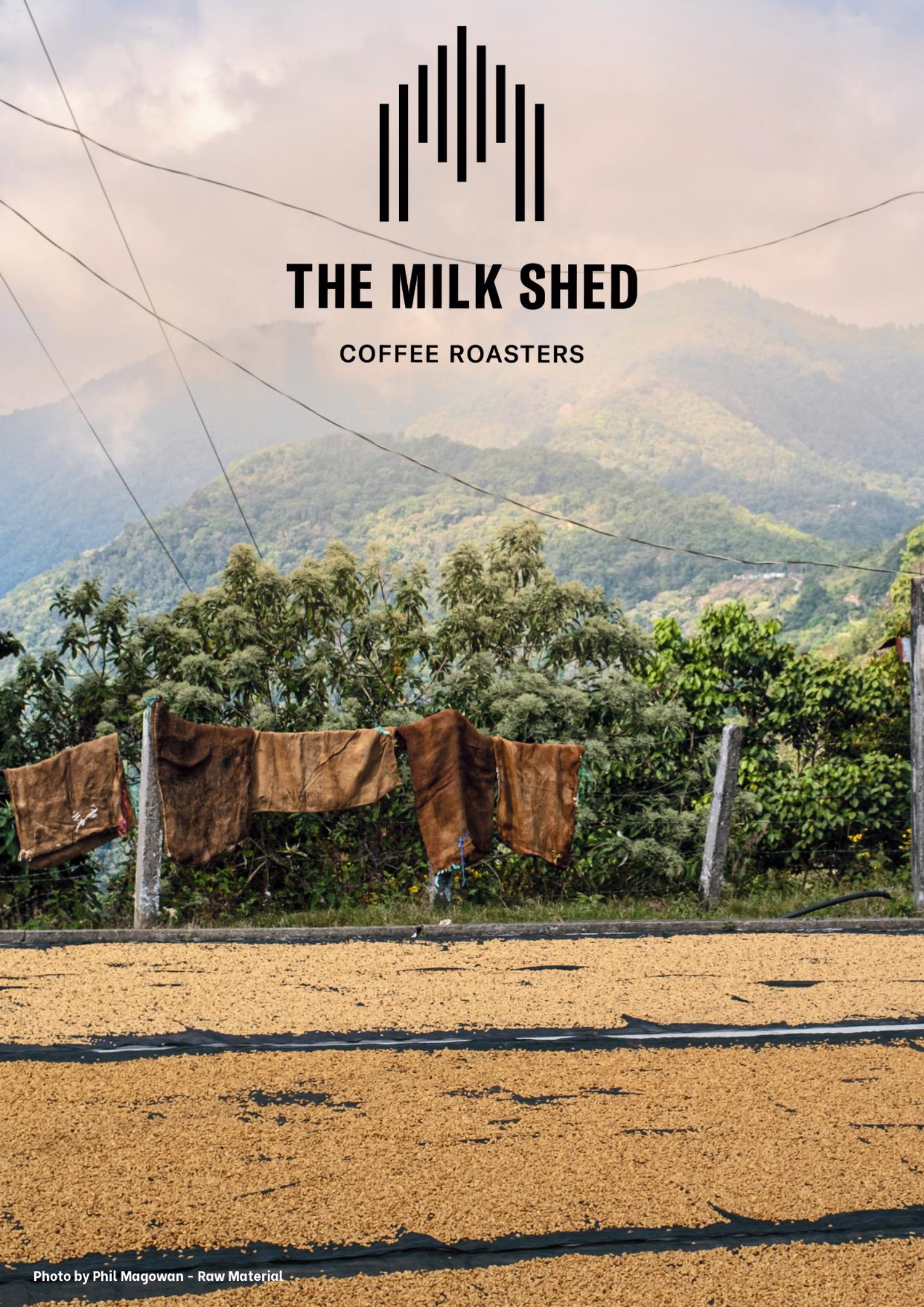


PRODUCT CODE: EGGEWE



THE MILK SHED

COFFEE ROASTERS



KNOW YOUR COFFEE

INSIDE THE MILK SHED'S JOURNEY FROM OAXACA TO BRIGHTON

Around 60–80% of the world's coffee is produced by small-scale growers, many working plots of less than five hectares. These producers operate within a volatile global market, where fluctuating prices and limited bargaining power often leave them competing aggressively while working on unsustainable margins. At the other end of the spectrum, large-scale commodity farms benefit from greater infrastructure, funding and market access, allowing them to produce coffee at volume, often for lower-grade, commodity use. And then there are the buyers with the power to decide, quietly but consequentially, whose work they value.

This month, we sat with Corinne Schalkwyk, Head of Coffee at The Milk Shed. Raised in South Africa within a hospitality family, she arrived in Brighton at just 19. Corinne has worked her way through almost every corner of the roastery, and today, every sourcing decision, supplier relationship, and green bean passes through her hands. The values she brings to that responsibility shape everything that ends up in the cup.



CORINNE SCHALKWYK **HEAD OF COFFEE**

In February of this year, Corinne travelled to Oaxaca, Mexico, hosted by The Milk Shed's importing partner Raw Material and exporter Red Beetle Coffee Lab. She returned, by her own admission, a little different to how she left, and the conversation we had reflected that Corinne's connection to this work goes far beyond the roastery floor but to the communities whose livelihoods rest, in no small part, on the choices that roasteries like The Milk Shed make every day.





A Roastery Built on Relationships

What sets The Milk Shed apart is not just what they roast, but how they think about what roasting means. In the commodity market, coffee is blended, roasted dark and moved through a system with little regard for origin or producer. Speciality coffee inverts that entirely. Every lot is traceable right down to the variety, farm and the farmer.



For The Milk Shed, that infrastructure begins with their partners Raw Material and Red Beetle Coffee Lab. Based in Mexico and embedded in the communities they serve, Red Beetle ensure that individual lots are kept separate, graded appropriately, and priced fairly. Raw Material then carries that transparency all the way through to the roastery. Together, they are the mechanism that makes paying a livable wage not just an intention, but an actual outcome.



Photo by Phil Magowan

“Paying these producers a fair wage, where they can keep reinvesting into what they do, is fundamental to the industry surviving,” Corinne explains. “If their work is not getting recognised and graded appropriately, there is not really much incentive for them to improve their farming practices.” Without that incentive, quality declines, diversity is lost, and the speciality market quietly unravels from the ground up.

This philosophy was solidified when Corinne visited the Union San Pedro Cooperative. She presses, “consistent buyers keep speciality farming performing at the level they do (...) it enables them to reinvest, maintain quality and keep bringing exceptional lots to the table.”

What’s Next

6 new single-origin coffees arrive this summer, including Ethiopian, Burundian, Rwandan and Colombian. Beyond that, the lots she connected with personally in Oaxaca are being secured and are expected to arrive early next year. That will be, she says, “*a very special moment.*”

Corinne’s journey to Oaxaca, alongside The Milk Shed’s commitment to traceability, is a reminder that the most powerful thing a buyer can do is keep coming back. Every flat white ordered, every bag supplied, is another vote of confidence in a farmer who needs to know their work is valued.





Featherbed

MIDDLE FARM, MIXBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

BRITISH STRAWBERRIES

Every June, diners relive the taste of fine British strawberries in the warmth of long summer evenings. Wimbledon is on, the roses are out, and the World Cup brings new appetites to satisfy and impress.

Grown under carefully controlled conditions, Featherbed strawberries reach the pass with a structural integrity that field-grown fruit rarely matches. They hold their form and carry that deep scarlet colour, arriving in the kitchen exactly as nature intended. This deeply sweet berry needs little intervention. Pair with vanilla cream, a sharp sheep's milk curd, aged balsamic with black pepper, or simply alongside warm sourdough and aged Cheshire.

For kitchens that live by the seasons, the British summer is here. Make the most of its short season.

PRODUCT CODE: BERSTRE



*The kind of
strawberries
worth
waiting for.*

the salt room





There is a particular kind of stillness that belongs to the sea. The kind that settles over you before the day gets loud, when the light is soft off the water, the air carries salt, and the world feels, briefly, unhurried. That feeling is precisely the luxury The Salt Room has always captured.

After a four-month closure for a full refurbishment, it is back on Brighton's seafront, returning as something beautifully balanced between the power of a new charcoal-fired kitchen and the elite leadership of Executive Chef Kim Woodward.

The design has transformed the King's Road space from the ground up, balancing warm terracotta floor tiling and off-white lime-washed walls with a striking new bar at the heart of the room. Beyond the glass, a fully weather-glazed, sixty-cover seafront terrace stands ready to welcome the coast all year round, while the open kitchen commands the interior, pulling the intense energy of the pass directly into the dining space.

It is an architectural choice worth paying attention to.

By allowing the full choreography of service to animate the room, the architecture shifts the energy, rewriting the pacing and the standard to which the team holds itself.

That same coal-fired spirit runs entirely through the menu, moving from premium seafood and British wagyu for sharing to vibrant vegetable dishes sourced from the South Downs growing season. Yet the detail that will capture the industry's attention is the bespoke fish press, crafted specifically for a signature turbot dish where the juices are flambéed tableside.



Kim Woodward at the Pass

Executive Chef Kim Woodward's background speaks for itself. Trained within the Gordon Ramsay Group, she rose through Boxwood Café before spending three years as Head Chef at York & Albany. Her subsequent appointment as the first female Head Chef of the Savoy Grill in its 126-year history carries immense weight. Brighton marks her first move outside London.

An open kitchen at this level demands a particular kind of leader. The composure, the consistency, and the rare ability to hold a brigade to a standard that is now entirely exposed are the very environments where Woodward has built her career.

"The fire, the fish, the team moving in unison, it unfolds like a live show," she notes. "That kind of raw openness is incredibly inspiring to me."

For those in hospitality, there is something worth studying in how The Salt Room has structured this. The theatre is entirely load-bearing, serving as the very foundation upon which the experience is built.



The supply chain has been built with that same level of intention, sourcing through Brighton and Newhaven Fish Sales at Shoreham Harbour to work directly with the inshore day-boat fleet, meaning the catch lands within hours of leaving the water.

Line-caught Cornish bluefin tuna stands as a definitive seasonal highlight. Arriving entirely whole, it is broken down completely in-house, marking a profound chapter in the broader story of bluefin returning to British waters after decades of absence. For a kitchen completely dedicated to provenance, it is a monumental ingredient to work with.

The Salt Room is open now, giving you the space to feel the deep serenity and unhurried ease of a coastal holiday at your doorstep. For those in the industry, it is a rare opportunity to see an open pass executed at this level and securing a booking is essential to see how Woodward commands the line.

**106 King's Road, Brighton,
BN1 2FU**

**Opening hours: Monday–
Thursday 12pm–11pm |
Friday–Saturday 12pm–
1am | Sunday 12pm–
10:30pm**



SUSSEX SPOTLIGHT



SOUTH DOWNS FOOD SHOW

Date: 6th - 7th of June

Two days of incredible food, drink, and discovery. Join the South Downs' finest chefs, growers, and makers as they celebrate the very best of the season.

 Stansted Park



WINELANDS

Date: 8th - 13th of June

This unmissable event showcases the world-class quality of Sussex wines. Bringing together wine lovers, local producers and industry experts for a week-long celebration of the region's finest vintages.

 Lewes



BRIGHTON OYSTER FEST

Date: 19th - 28th of June

Curated by BITE Sussex - Enjoy both shucked and cooked oysters alongside English wine, Champagne and cocktails at the city's finest restaurants and bars.

 Brighton



FATHER'S DAY AT GOODWOOD

Date: 21st of June

Celebrate Father's Day against the impressive backdrop of the Goodwood Aerodrome or visit The Kennels for a moreish Sunday Lunch.

 Goodwood



CHICHESTER

Chichester is absolutely beaming this month!


Check out the major events here:

The Festival of Chichester

Date: 13th June -19th July

Various times

A non-stop, month-long rush where historic venues see packed-out audiences and the cathedral floor is constantly flooded with visitors!

 Chichester City Centre

The Chichester Cheese & Chilli Festival

Date: 20th - 21st June

10 am - 5 pm

Busiest queues of the summer, with wall-to-wall crowds jostling for samples and packing out the main arena to watch the extreme eating challenges!


 Oaklands Park

Regenerative Food Festival

Date: 28th of June

10 am - 4 pm

A collection of regenerative & organic growers, bakers, makers, street food vendors, crafters, charities, community groups, demos and more!

 Chichester City Centre

THE Menu PARTNERS



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