



GOURMET LIFE

MARK TAYLOR

THE OLD PASSAGE

The Old Passage at Arlingham has won the best seafood restaurant in the south category of the Food Awards England.

The award coincides with the tenth anniversary since the restaurant on the banks of the River Severn was bought by Sally Pearce.

The restaurant is known for its fruit de mer plates piled high with oysters, mussels, lobster and a variety of other shellfish.



"It's been a fantastic year for us at The Old Passage," said Sally, who runs the restaurant with her head chef, Jon Lane, and front of house manager Rosita Redwood.

"Celebrating our tenth anniversary is very special, we have changed very little in the past decade and remain committed to serving the freshest and best quality fish and seafood in the area."

www.theoldpassage.com

PIZZA PILGRIMS

After launching six sites across London, Pizza Pilgrims, has opened a new pizzeria at Westgate Oxford.

Pizza Pilgrims was founded in 2012 by brothers Thom and James Elliot, who grew up at their parents' pub, The Fox at Oddington near Chipping Norton.

Part of the London street food scene, the business first traded from the back of an original Italian Piaggio Ape van at Berwick Street market.

Specialising in classic Neapolitan-style pizzas, the new Oxford pizzeria seats 180 and is decked out with green-and-white checked tablecloths, a foosball table and vintage arcade games.

Pizzas on offer include the portobello mushroom and truffle, and the signature n'duja pizza.

www.pizzapilgrims.co.uk



Snow falls for Fairford

Sebastian Snow hadn't been thinking about opening a third pub in the Cotswolds – and then he happened upon The Bull at Fairford...

When it comes to transforming Cotswold pubs, chef and restaurateur Sebastian Snow certainly has something of the Midas touch.

His most recent launch is The Bull Hotel in Fairford, a Grade II-listed, 15th-century coaching inn, which reopened in March 2017 after a major refurbishment by Sebastian and his wife, Lana.

This is the third Cotswold pub run by the couple, who also have The Five Alls at Filkins and The Plough at Kelmscott.

Prior to these three pubs, the couple made a name for themselves at The Swan at Southrop. Before that, Sebastian was the chef/owner of the Snows on the Green restaurant in London before moving to the Cotswolds eight years ago.

Located on Fairford's market square, The Bull is made up of two neighbouring pubs, The Bull and The George, which were later joined together.

The Bull was originally a Monk's Chanting House, and in the 18th and

19th centuries a famous coaching inn on the London to Gloucester turnpike road, with stabling for 30 horses. The George was once the town's post office, and later, a pub serving land workers. During the refurbishment work, a secret tunnel was discovered, leading from the hotel to the medieval church of St Mary's nearby.

"Apparently the priests used to come to the pub via the tunnel to do their chanting practice and who knows what else," laughs Sebastian, who says that there was no grand plan to open a third pub but he fell in love with The Bull and the fact it had so many bedrooms. "It's a lovely old hotel in a great location so when I found out it had become available I set my stall out to try and get the owners to assign it to us."

"I always loved the building and its proximity to my house and our other pubs, but the additional 21 bedrooms are very important as the business driver. Cotswold bedroom demand is huge,

especially at weekends, and pubs without rooms can become marginal businesses."

The Bull's bold new interiors were created by BAFTA-nominated film and TV set designer Corina Burrough, who worked on Downton Abbey, Philomena and was part of the production design team for The King's Speech.

Sebastian says: "Corina is a dear friend and she was in between movies when she asked us if she could do the Bull as my sister, who did our other pubs, was ill."

"Working with my wife and Jo Titchener (in-house interior designer for Arkell's Brewery), we asked her to be bold and beautiful and ergonomic. The three of them worked really well together, spending hours at antique fairs and auction houses here and in France."

Although the bedrooms are a vital part of the business, it's the food that is drawing customers from far and wide. Sebastian and co-head chef Piotr Skoczen's menu combines Mediterranean and modern British dishes with stone-baked pizzas. Typical dishes include fillet of plaice with samphire, mussels, beurre blanc, new potatoes and sorrel, and crispy duck leg with Asian slaw salad, crispy noodles and hoisin.

"We try and offer something different across the three pubs to give our customers different dining experiences," says Sebastian, who adds that guests arrive with higher expectations when they know a pub is run by an award-winning chef.

"Yes, I do feel the pressure of expectation, which I suppose we created, and now have to deliver. No chef wakes up in the morning thinking 'how much money can I make today'. It's more like 'will I be ready for my two performances a day and can I deliver this without the customer noticing we are flapping around behind the scenes like little children who



have consumed too many fizzy drinks? Everything else follows usually!"

All three pubs run by the Snows are known to attract plenty of well-known faces so has that been a help or hindrance and does it ever get out of hand with other customers simply there to have a gawp at the celebrities?

"No, it's brilliant; it peeps up the staff, other customers and gives my mother something to gossip about."

"My wife is shameless and annoyingly good at making friends with them, be it Bono, Bob Geldof, Kate Moss or Gary Barlow."

"We've even had Gary Kemp on The Five Alls Cycle Sportive 90k ride for the last two years and no one bats an eyelid which is great for us and nice for them." ♦ www.thebullhotelfairford.co.uk



THE ONE ELM

The One Elm in Stratford has reopened its doors after a major refurbishment and the introduction of a brand new all-day menu.

Mains include classics like fish and chips, burgers and a new grill menu featuring steaks and king prawn sizzlers.

Landlord Mat Faulkner also says the burgers are 'better than ever', with a choice of coarse-ground steak, Cheddar cheese and burger sauce; breaded chicken with baby gem lettuce and garlic mayo and the new Two Elm – a double burger with cheese, lettuce, tomato and burger sauce. All come with a range of extras from bacon, fried egg, gherkins and jalapeños, and with chips. On Tuesdays, it's also 2-4-1 on burgers. www.oneelmstratford.co.uk

THE FIND

The Find is a new coffee house and café in Cheltenham's Regent Street run by former chartered accountant David Orme and his partner, Claire Storey.

Lunchtime dishes include crab, pea and lemon risotto; ras el hanout-braised Cotswold lamb, sautéed butternut squash, beetroot purée and confit apricots, and desserts such as winter fruit pudding served with Winstones vanilla ice cream. www.thefind.co.uk

FOOD EDITOR'S PICK

A new addition to Oxford's Westgate Centre is Cinnamon Kitchen, an all-day modern Indian restaurant from chef Vivek Singh. Sibling to the London original, dishes include Kerala spiced lobster soup flamed with Cognac and chargrilled rump of lamb, keema, spinach and nutmeg sauce. www.thecinnamoncollection.com

warner's Budgens

at the heart of local life

Broadway | Bidford-on-Avon | Moreton-in-Marsh | Winchcombe



Join our Taste Club for exclusive offers

www.warnersbudgens.co.uk

warner's Budgens

at the heart of local life

SAVE up to £38 on your shopping!

Broadway | Bidford-on-Avon | Moreton-in-Marsh | Winchcombe www.warnersbudgens.co.uk