

Sating an appetite

A new venture in London has gone back to basics: launch a market, fill it with tasty food purveyors and watch as hungry customers get in line.

By Thomas Reynolds
Photography Harry Mitchell

It's early on a sunny Friday afternoon in southwest London and something rather British is forming on the Fulham Road: an orderly queue. For once, however, it's not caused by football fans from the nearby Stamford Bridge stadium – it's for lunch. "We only work with independent companies, people who are passionate, driven by ingredients and provenance, everything that is brilliant about the British food scene," says restaurateur Simon Anderson, one half of the team that's behind the clever new food-focused market that's inspired this patient waiting.

The notion of a market is nothing new but this project shows that new ones can thrive in and enliven otherwise forgotten spaces. Anderson worked with business partner Andy Lewis-Pratt, a property developer, as a former railway station's wood-panelled ticket offices and Edwardian glasswork were refashioned to accommodate 10 kitchens and more than 200 covers in an otherwise empty spot. It's a wonderful architectural rediscovery, complete with restored hand-painted signs and plenty of natural light, as well as a boon to smaller businesses looking for spaces that they would probably struggle to secure alone on the high street.

"It's really nice to bring something back to life and bring that character back; being British, whether we know it or not, we love old things," says Anderson as he shows us to Claude's Deli. Its owner, Claude Compton, is an important ingredient in Market Hall Fulham: not only does he own two of the berths (Claude's Deli and Fanny's Kebabs) but he is also a familiar name in these parts. Elsewhere in Fulham his restaurant Claude's Kitchen,

champagne bar Amuse Bouche and pub-and-restaurant The Tommy Tucker are all within walking distance.

Despite his obvious passion for Fulham, Compton is the first to admit that there was nothing like this in the area before the market opened in May. "There are a lot of people travelling from Fulham to go and do stuff and now they have this on their doorstep," he says.

Another trader is Seb Holmes, who started Thima by Farang, a flavoursome Thai affair. "We were geared up to do a massive festival season but then after lunch with Simon [Anderson] I knew we couldn't do both – there is something a bit hairy about festival cooking so we cancelled them all and came here," he says.

But Anderson and Lewis-Pratt aren't done by a long shot: they will open two more locations this year. One will be in the arcaded bays of Terminus Place in Victoria (the former Pacha nightclub, for those who remember it) and another on Oxford Street in a 1950s block – another spot where the party had long since ended until the pair arrived.

It all leaves one pressing question: why have other cities been slow to revive (and finance the restoration of) long-empty nooks in the same manner? Judging by the queues, there's an appetite for it. — (M)
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(1) Seb Holmes, founder of Farang (2) Treats at Claude's Deli (3) Sampling the house Helles (4) The Bar (5) Claude Compton, deli owner (6) The kitchen at Ahi Poké (7) Yard Sale pizza (8) Cuts straight from the smoker (9) Prep work for a meaty masterpiece at Hot Box (10) Whole crispy seabass at Farang (with a Fulham Spritz)





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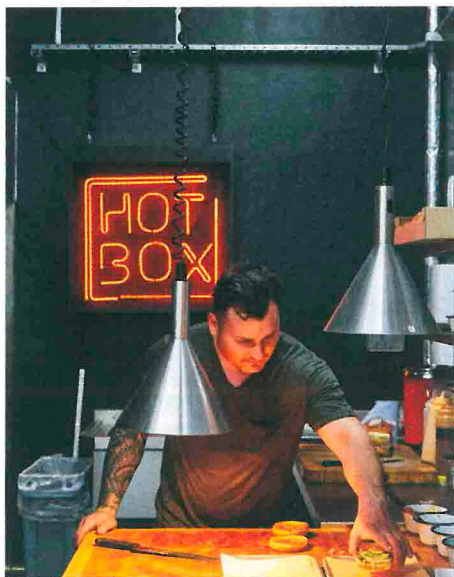
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Market Hall Fulham favourites:

1. **Yard Sale Pizza**
From back-garden baking to four locations across London, Yard Sale offers pizzas inspired by New York by way of Naples.
2. **Thiima by Farang**
Fresh Thai fare made with a few choice ingredients straight from Chiang Mai. Share the whole crispy seabass.
3. **Calcutta Canteen**
A new concept from the restaurateurs behind Darjeeling Express, this spot grew from humble beginnings as a simple supper club. Asma Khan's kitchens are run by women with no formal training – unless you count the skills gleaned from their respective grandmothers.
4. **Fanny's Kebabs**
Free-range and flame-grilled fare from Fulham favourite Claude Compton and business partner Jacek Bilinski. Try the lazy lamb with a side of baba ganoush.
5. **The Bar**
Run by the Market Halls team and situated inside the pretty former ticket office, The Bar offers independent UK-made beer and spirits. House lager Market Helles is a must.

Monocle comment:
Markets are a savvy way of recharging a neighbourhood and bringing footfall to fallow buildings. The key to success here has been the connection with the surrounding area in the form of trusted traders, as well as casting the net wide to introduce exciting new talent. The fact that's it in a pristine former Underground station doesn't hurt.



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