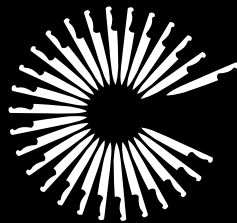
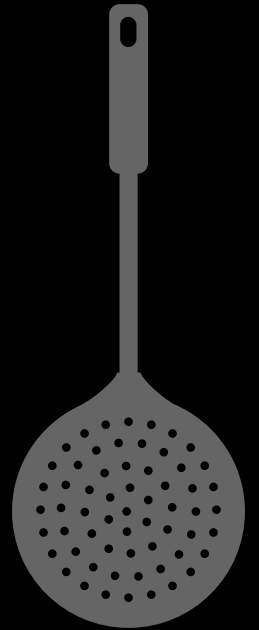
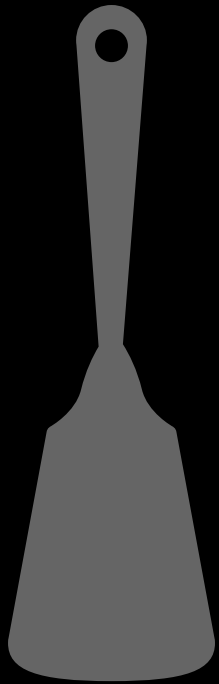


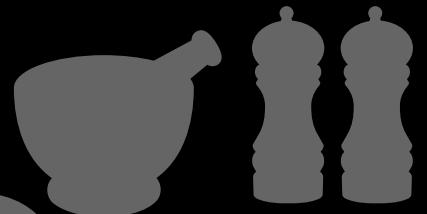
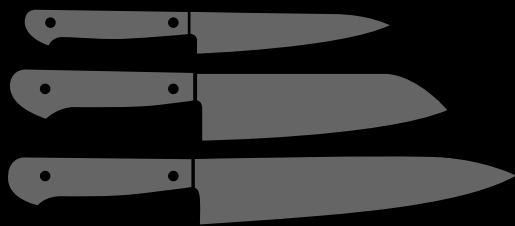


COOKERY SCHOOL

with Russell Brown



GREAT
BRITISH
CHEFS





Russell Brown

It was a sad day for diners when Russell Brown's Michelin-starred restaurant Sienna closed, but the critically acclaimed chef isn't leaving the industry he loves, he's merely diversifying.

When Russell Brown was growing up, his parents ran a farm shop in Cornwall. "Looking back it was a big influence," he recalls. "I was exposed to cooking for a business from an early age." A seed was sown but it took time to germinate, and after an eclectic career that included photography he began cheffing at the relatively late age of 27.

Russell Brown's first position – as a commis chef for Truro's Alverton Manor Hotel's two-AA-Rosette restaurant – came as a bit of a shock. Previously, he'd been selling fishing tackle, an altogether more sedentary occupation. But head chef Colin Gilbert – whom Russell credits for teaching him "discipline, attention to detail, the importance of being en place" – spotted the rookie's determination, and soon promoted him to chef de partie on sauces.

A sojourn at Percy's Country Hotel in Virginstowe followed, then came one of Russell Brown's "most significant experiences" – his first head chef job at Yalbury Cottage, a small hotel in Dorset. "I think it had eight rooms at the time, a 26-cover restaurant, one rosette. My brief was to take it to two." Here, with the freedom to experiment, Russell Brown's cooking style evolved. In 1999 he won a second rosette, maintaining two for the remainder of his three-and-a-half year tenure.

A stint under Peter Gorton at The Horn of Plenty in Devon was a defining moment that still excites the chef: "The food was incredible, different to what I was used to cooking. Peter's food definitely had an influence on my own cooking." In April 2003, in the picture postcard town of Dorchester, Russell and his wife Elena opened Sienna (which only recently closed): "I felt I'd learned enough

by then to have a decent crack at having my own place.” Seating just 15 diners, the tiny eatery was awarded two AA Rosettes seven months after opening; a coveted third came in 2007.

Then, in January 2010, the Michelin Guide gave the “unassuming high street restaurant” a star, making it Dorset’s only Michelin-starred eatery, and the Guide’s smallest featured. “The chargrilled veal with carrots and white-bean casserole was mentioned in the Michelin Guide the year we got the star,” remembers the chef. It often graced Sienna’s menu, becoming Russell Brown’s signature dish almost by default.

Russell Brown believes that there’s “almost nothing more disappointing than a plate of food that looks stunning but doesn’t actually deliver on flavour,” so his concise modern British food – often with an Italian accent – focused on taste. First-rate produce, he says, is “absolutely paramount.” His uncomplicated yet well-dressed plates were the expert outcomes of a chef who worked incessantly to simplify his food: “If I can make a chocolate mousse that delivers the texture and flavour I’m looking for with three ingredients, I will. Why would you want to have eight in it?”

At Sienna, canapés, homemade breads and petit fours were given equal consideration because “canapés are the first thing that the customer will get, then they’ll get bread, so the quality’s as high as the main course or the dessert.” Everything was made in Sienna’s cosy kitchen, a space that was both “a challenge and a joy.”

In April 2015, 12 years to the day it opened, Sienna’s lease ran out. Russell was sad to see his “greatest achievement” end but ready for pastures new: “Seeing the business grow, staff move on and succeed, and the increase in my Creative About Cuisine consultancy and other activities outside of the restaurant are also significant.” He now develops recipes; gives demonstrations and cookery courses; writes; blogs and is a proficient food photographer.

Moreover, the chef uses his experience for the greater good, working for the Chef’s Forum, which fosters relationships in hospitality: “Anything you can do to encourage young people to pursue [hospitality] as a career is really important.” He’s also given his time to Hospitality Action, an initiative that supports catering staff, and is a Fellow of the Master Chefs of Great Britain, a well-established trade organisation.

Today, Russell Brown is arguably at his most creative: “One of the things I love about the industry is its diversity, taking different ideas, picking the best bits and adding some of my own to come up with something different.” We certainly haven’t seen the last of him.



Ricotta agnolotti with spring vegetables

Serves 6 – Cooking time: 90 minutes plus resting and infusing

Ingredients

Ricotta

1l full fat organic milk
7g Maldon sea salt
20ml distilled vinegar

Pasta dough

400g '00' pasta flour
2 whole free range eggs, plus enough yolks to make 230g in total
10g olive oil
14g finely ground Maldon salt

Agnolotti

400g pasta dough
250g ricotta, drained
65g finely grated Parmesan or Old Winchester
1 egg yolk
egg yolk wash to assemble
Maldon sea salt
freshly ground black pepper
semolina for dusting trays

Vegetable stock

2 bulbs of fennel
1 stick celery
1 large leek
1 medium onion
1 small bunch flat leaf parsley
1 level tsp fennel seeds
1 star anise

Reduction

100 ml Noilly Pratt
200ml white wine
750ml vegetable stock
300g peas
1 large courgette
200g butter



Ricotta agnolotti with spring vegetables

Serves 6

Cooking time: 90 minutes plus
resting and infusing

1. First, make the ricotta. Warm the milk in a saucepan to 37°C and add the salt and vinegar. Continue to heat to around 85°C until the curds have separated and there is yellow whey
2. Remove from the heat and allow to sit for 10 minutes before removing the curds with a slotted spoon into a colander. Leave to drain over a bowl in the fridge
3. To make the pasta dough, sift the flour and salt into the bowl of a food processor and start the motor running. Beat the egg mix and the oil together and pour through the feed tube
4. Stop the motor immediately and then use the pulse button until a breadcrumb texture is achieved
5. Squeeze a small amount of the dough together to check the texture. Often 2-3 grams of egg will make difference so use a rubber spatula to scrape the egg out
6. Tip onto a work surface and knead briefly just to bring the dough together. Form into a cylinder and oil lightly. Wrap in clingfilm and rest in the fridge for at least 30 minutes before using
7. To make the agnolotti, push the ricotta through a sieve and blend in the egg yolk and grated cheese. Season well and transfer the mix to a piping bag with a 1cm plain nozzle. The mix should almost taste over-seasoned to come through the pasta
8. Roll out the pasta dough to the point where you can just see your fingers through it. Pipe a line of ricotta mix 2cm in from the long edge nearest you. Egg wash lightly and fold the pasta over as if making a sausage roll
9. Using a fluted pastry wheel, trim the pasta off a thumbs width beyond the far edge of the ricotta tube
10. If the pasta is wide enough, reserve to repeat. Keep the pasta covered with clingfilm while you are finishing the first strip
11. Squeeze the ricotta tube at 2cm intervals to leave sealed sections clear of filling. Divide into individual pieces by cutting across the gaps with the fluted cutter, using your other hand to help the pasta turn over to create the pocket as it is sealed
12. Transfer the agnolotti to a semolina-covered tray and store uncovered in the fridge. The pasta can be kept like this for 2 days. It can also be blast-frozen and stored in the freezer
13. To make the vegetable stock, slice and wash all vegetables and place in a large pan with the parsley, fennel seeds and anise. Just cover with water, bring to a boil and then simmer for 30 minutes. Store with the vegetables until required
14. To make the reduction, in a medium pan combine the alcohols and reduce to around 75ml. Add the vegetable stock and reduce by two thirds
15. To serve, blanch the agnolotti in boiling salted water for 2-4 minutes depending on how dry they are. Heat the vegetable stock reduction, whisk in the butter and season to taste. Add the peas and courgettes, warm to just below simmering point and remove from the heat
16. Drain the pasta and add to the sauce, tossing together to gently warm through the pasta. Serve in pasta bowls with a drizzle of olive oil and a few shavings of Parmesan



Raspberry and Mascarpone mille feuille

Serves 6 – Cooking time: 90 minutes plus setting time

Ingredients

Mascarpone mousse

300g Mascarpone
75g caster sugar
1 vanilla pod
65g semi skimmed milk
1 leaf of gelatine, soaked in cold water until soft
150g double cream

Raspberry jelly

300g Boiron raspberry puree
100g white wine
1 vanilla pod, seeds only
30g caster sugar
28g Sosa vegetable gel

Oat tuile

100g unsalted butter
80g caster sugar
70g Golden syrup
40g soft flour
100g oats
4g Fine ground Maldon salt

To serve

Fresh raspberries
Icing sugar to glaze the raspberries
Raspberry gel



Raspberry and Mascarpone mille feuille

Serves 6

Cooking time: 90 minutes plus setting time

1. To make the mascarpone mousse, beat the mascarpone with the sugar and seeds from the vanilla pod
2. Warm 50g of the milk in a small pan and dissolve the gelatine in the milk. Pass through a fine strainer into the mascarpone mix and blend in thoroughly
3. Whip the cream with the remaining 15g of milk until reaches very soft peaks. At this stage the cream and mascarpone should be of similar textures. Fold the cream into the mascarpone using a whisk. Depending on how you wish to serve the dish either divide the mousse between glasses or pour into a plastic container and refrigerate to set
4. To make the raspberry jelly, combine all of the ingredients in a pan and bring to a boil, whisking well. Pour onto a silpat mat or into moulds and allow to cool and set. Dice to use as cubes or blitz in a food processor to use as a gel
5. Preheat the oven to 170°C/gas mark 3.5
6. To make the oat tuile, melt the butter, sugar and syrup together in a pan. Beat in the oats, flour and salt, allow to cool then roll out on a silpat mat. Cover with a sheet of baking paper to make this easier
7. Bake until pale golden brown, then turn out onto a board and carefully peel off the silpat mat
8. Cut into the 10cm x 4cm rectangles and then return to the oven to cook to a deep golden brown. Slide the silpat mat onto a flat surface and allow the tuiles to cool and harden
9. To serve, layer the oat tuile with quenelles of the mosse and serve with the gel and fresh raspberries