

Food & Drink Briefing



Big Jo

LONDON

Chef David Gingell and restaurateur Jeremie Cometto-Lingenheim – the folk behind north London joints Primeur, Westerns Laundry and bakery-cum-restaurant Jolene – are adding the finishing flourishes to their newest opening, in Finsbury Park. What was once a discount fridge emporium has seen its fortunes rise to become a bakery and 60-seat restaurant: welcome to Big Jo.

The long, communal tables are unpacked, the wine rack is piled high with natural tipples and the pair are waiting for a delivery of heritage grain from a farm in Gascony. A friend introduced them to farmer Andy Cato (one



half of electronic music duo Groove Armada) and his “wild farming” technique rooted the restaurateurs’ outlook a few years ago. “There’s a reason why the flour tastes delicious: it’s actually doing something for you,” says Gingell. “It was a huge moment where we went, ‘Oh right, yeah!’”

Cato’s wheat will be milled on site daily to retain flavour, essential oils and amino acids, and customers will have a view of the grain silo. “We will have three mills here so we will have three different types of flour,” says Cometto-Lingenheim. “We wanted to make this process visible. Most people have no idea that we mill our own flour – but it’s important that they understand *why* we do it.” As of 2021, Cato’s back-to-basics farming will take



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root in Sussex and Surrey as he brings his growing methods to the UK.

Apart from baking buttery pastries and its signature sourdough bread, Big Jo will stick to the winning formula of the other restaurants, serving small plates of seasonal produce from Flourish (a small farm in Cambridgeshire that also supplies Brat in Shoreditch and Kiln in Soho). The meat comes from a farming collective in North Yorkshire, the charcuterie is from Italy and Roman-style pizzas come out fresh from the oven. “We work very much like a grandmother doing her shopping at the market,” says Cometto-Lingenheim, being modest about his and Gingell’s burgeoning reputation and growing restaurant

group. “We see what’s fresh and make something with what’s on the stall.”

Big Jo is – as the name suggests – their largest venture yet but it hasn’t lost its neighbourhood appeal, with a walk-in bakery tucked up on one side where locals can pick up coffees, madeleines or a slice of cheese cake, or peruse a line-up of in-house fermentations. It’s a preview of what’s bubbling: the pair are planning to open 10 more small Jolene bakeries, or “little Jos”, across the capital, with Big Jo as the hub. The owners are evangelical about ancient grains and their health benefits. “The biggest message is bringing something that was once considered elitist – ancient grains – to people all around London,” says Gingell. — sz bigjobakery.com



PHOTOGRAPHER: Alex Ingram. STILL LIFE: Tony Hay. IMAGES: Eric Staudenmaier, The Social Food

Pianoterra

PARIS

Parisian architects Benoit Jallon and Umberto Napolitano have opened a Sicilian-flavoured restaurant on the ground floor of their firm Lan’s office on Rue Popincourt in the 11th arrondissement. Pianoterra is run by chef Rosa Vanina, whose recipes are based on the freshest ingredients, with a daily-changing vegetarian menu to which fish – the restaurant’s speciality – is liberally added.

Dishes include lightly seared tuna belly served with a salad of herbs and plump datterini tomatoes, and pasta with mint, pine nuts and an unusual but rewarding raisin sauce. Oh, and take a moment to appreciate the magnificent organic olive oil from Etna, which even ends up in the chocolate mousse. — sz pianoterra.fr



Liberation Coffee House

LOS ANGELES

Conceived by design studio Ora to serve as a community space for the adjoining Los Angeles LGBT Center’s employees, residents and surrounding neighbours, Liberation Coffee House also has a flexible retail space for events and exhibitions. Pop in for California’s Verve coffee, croissants, cookies and gourmet pop tarts from Bakers Kneaded, as well as a soothing reprieve from the harsh southern sun courtesy of the café’s overlapping shear fabric panels. “It’s a really good way to introduce the centre to the outside community, who might not know a lot about us,” says Erin Muscatelli, manager of the café and catering programme. — sz liberationcoffee.lalgbtcenter.org



The Natural Wine Company

BARCELONA

A collaboration between Alfredo Lopez and cult interiors magazine *Apartamento*, this Barcelona-based business posts a box of four-to-six bottles of off-beat natural wine to its international subscribers every month. “There’s no typical sort of wine we choose,” says Lopez. “We’ll include anything from *grüner veltliners* from Slovakia to full-bodied organic Spanish *tempranillos*.”

The subscriber base already stretches across nine European nations and the model has proven popular with people in rural areas who don’t have easy access to obscure vintages or the independents that stock them. “We want anyone, no matter where they are, to be able to find a wine that’s interesting or unique,” says Lopez. — LHO thenaturalwinecompany.com

