

• northcote obsession

FESTIVAL OF FOOD & WINE, TWO THOUSAND & NINE



For the ninth year in succession Northcote is running its legendary week-long gastronomic extravaganza in January/February 2009, with some of the UK's greatest chefs each cooking a special "one night only" menu. John Radford talked to them

Like many ideas, this one came from California. Nigel Haworth was having dinner with Ian Harkness, the chairman of Shire Inns, who had just come back from a food festival at the Highlands Inn in Carmel which had been a great success. Nigel decided to go and see for himself, and during his week there met Tony Baker, the English-born chef of the Montrieo Bistro in Monterrey, who was taking part, and Nigel was inspired: the event broke down barriers between chefs, got them to know each other and displayed different styles and techniques of cookery.

'Why don't we do this?' Was his next thought, and that's how "Obsession" was born. Nine years on it has become an institution in the north-west, but when it started there was no guarantee that it would succeed. Nigel and his business partner Craig Bancroft knew everybody in the industry, however, and between them they contacted chefs across the country and persuaded them to take part. Since then there have been chefs from America, Sweden, Portugal, Denmark, France and Spain – why do they want to come? 'We treat them like kings, and we love to have them with us, we look after their wives and children and, of course, it's a great showcase for them. Our customers are regular travellers and will be very likely to visit the chefs' own restaurants when they happen to be in that part of the world – indeed, they hunt them out.' The chefs can meet and network and some mount their own joint ventures – John Campbell at The Vineyard and Terry Laybourne at Jesmond Dene, for example. And the customers get a taste of something a bit different: demand is high. 'We get tremendous support from our customers – some of them come five times during the week. Last year one customer came six times and wanted to come on the seventh but we were booked solid, and four nights last year were sold out on the first day.' What's the attraction for Nigel and Craig? 'There's a tremendous adrenalin rush over the whole seven days. The event develops its own momentum – it doesn't earn a lot of money but, in a way, it's a "thank you" to our customers for supporting us and an opportunity for the staff to work in seven different ways. We love it.'

Daniel Clifford
Monday 26th January 09

Shaun Rankin
Tuesday 27th January 09

Glynn Purnell
Wednesday 28th January 09

Phil Howard & Brett Graham
Thursday 29th January 09

Atul Kochhar
Friday 30th January 09

Jason Atherton
Saturday 31st January 09

Nigel Haworth & Paul Heathcote
Sunday 1st February 09

WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO VILLEROY & BOCH, EBLEX AND THE MALL BLACKBURN FOR THEIR SPONSORSHIP AND THEIR OUTSTANDING SUPPORT.

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Wines to complement every dish are chosen specially by Craig Bancroft from Northcote's celebrated cellars. Northcote would like to thank the following sponsors for supporting this venture.

