



In the kitchen with - Roger Carr

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Roger Carr is the chef-owner of the Sun and Slipper Inn at Mamble near Kidderminster, which he runs with his wife Wendy. He has built up a reputation for serving fine English food and admits he lives, breathes and sleeps cooking.

Well-travelled Roger Carr has come to run the Sun and Slipper Inn in Mamble via Abu Dhabi, Bermuda and Belfast amongst other places.

Tell us about your menu.

Our menu is traditional English: that's seasonal dishes, cooked fresh to order. Our vegetables and fruit are grown by a local gardener, we use local game and I have used the same butcher for the past 20 years. I believe in continuity.

What's your signature dish?

Picking one dish from a list of bestsellers would be a hard task. I have produced quality fresh food for over 13 years in this establishment and have over 35 year's experience as a chef. I can't pick just one dish!

Which chefs have inspired you?

Melvin Rumbles. He taught me that being a good chef is a lot of hard work. You have to buy the right produce; you have to prepare it well. You have to work hard at presentation. It takes time and commitment. You need to live, breathe and sleep food 24/7 in order to keep your customers coming back to you time after time. I also admire the great chefs Escoffier and Paul Bocuse.

Where did you train?

I started out as an apprentice at the Viking Hotel in York. After winning Grand Metropolitan Hotels' Apprentice of the Year I moved to the Britannia Hotel, Grosvenor Square. London. Then I moved to Oxford, where I first worked with Melvyn Rumbles. He moved to the Grand Hotel in Birmingham as head chef and took me with him.

Melvyn and I really worked well together. He then went to the Ramada in Abu Dhabi and I went to. After a couple of years I was ready to be head chef myself and I applied for a job at the Pink Beach Club in Bermuda. That was a fantastic place to work. We used to have the freshest fish from the daily catch – dolphin, tuna and grouper. We used fresh produce from our own garden and from the market gardens on the island. Although we did import quite a bit from the States. That was the early '80's. I used to cook for the Hollywood stars like Jimmy Stuart. Brian May, of Queen was a regular.

I came back to Britain when Trust House Forte offered me a job at The Swan in Lavenham, Suffolk. Margaret Thatcher used to eat there. Then I went to the Conway Hotel in Belfast which had just been rebuilt after being bombed. I was there two years. I also had a stint helping my father out with his restaurant in Pickering, Yorkshire. I moved back to Bermuda, to the Belmont Hotel, still with Trust House Forte.

We had a beautiful house on the golf course but it was demolished in Hurricane Emily. We had to run for our lives when the eye of the storm passed over with our four-week-old and a toddler in our arms. We made it to the hotel and I left my family in the Laundry room where it was safe and went back to work. We had a thousand guests to feed and only three of the 36 chefs had made it to work – that was a real hard day's work!

We came back to this country because I was working all the hours and never seeing the family. I had a number of places - in Lincoln, then at St Paul's Square in Birmingham. I had the tenancy of the Duke William pub at Callow Hill.

But I really wanted to have my own place so when the lease of the Dog and Duck came up we bought it. We renamed it the Sun and Slipper, bought the freehold five years ago, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Why did you become a chef?

My father ran a pub. The head chef of the Viking used to drink in there. I was apprenticed to him, and 35 years later here I am.

Which local suppliers do you use?

I use WH Grinnals in Stourport. Colin Raybould Butchers at Brierley Hill, Salmond Incorporated at the Birmingham Fish Market, and Jane Apperly prepares our sweets in her own kitchen.

How often do you change your menus?

The menus change at least once a quarter but being the head chef in my own restaurant means I can be flexible and if I want to change the menu from week to week I do. It's game season at the moment and we have some excellent meat dishes on the menu.

What was your favourite childhood food?

Pot stews. My father used to hunt and we'd have rabbit and other traditional dishes. There was always a pot of stew on the go.

What's your favourite dish to eat?

Indian food done correctly.

What was your most memorable meal?

It was in Bangkok about 6 years ago. We asked a taxi driver to take us somewhere good. We ended up in a seafood restaurant. The fish was still alive, we chose what we wanted from the tanks and it was taken to the kitchen. It was fantastically simple, just served, just served up with rice and salads. Basically, it was just delicious food in a memorable location.

Which ingredients would you have on a desert island?

A sack of potatoes. They are so versatile so I'd always be able to fry, bake, boil, roast ...

What's your favourite Worcestershire restaurant (apart from your own)?

Shamraj Balti in Tenbury Wells. We go there for a great Indian meal.

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