

THE DISH

Jackson Boxer and Andrew Clarke from St Leonards restaurant go wild in the country

St Leonards is London's hottest restaurant, but the idea came from a farm, according to its chefs

Lisa Markwell

Sunday July 29 2018, 12.01am BST, The Sunday Times



Fire and ice: Andrew Clarke, left, mans the open grill while Jackson Boxer looks after the seafood

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When most of us lie around in the garden after a boozy summer lunch, the ideas dreamt up are usually best left in the long grass. However, after just such a day back in the summer of 2016, chefs

Jackson Boxer and Andrew Clarke cooked up a scheme along with their barbecue.

The idea was St Leonards, a restaurant opened recently by the pair in Shoreditch. It has become a smash hit, garnering rave reviews — including from our own Marina O’Loughlin on July 1 — and a queue for reservations.

It is a place of extremes. There’s a huge log-fuelled hearth, for their interpretation of the open-fire food they cooked two years ago, and an array of fish and seafood piled high on an icy “raw bar”. The St Leonards menu is a celebration of dishes from England and southern France, and while Boxer and Clarke are both at the cutting edge of London’s restaurant scene, they take culinary cues from their parents and grandparents.

“My granny loves gardening and gave me my first seeds and a patch of earth when I was five,” recalls Boxer. “Eating raw baby vegetables that you’ve grown yourself is just so joyful.” She also thought nothing, he says, of cooking for 30 people. His paternal grandmother was a more formal hostess, and his mum and dad taught him everything he knows about hospitality.

Boxer’s late grandfather Mark was the founding editor of The Sunday Times Magazine in 1962. His grandmother is Arabella Boxer, the renowned cookbook author who wrote a food column for Vogue throughout the 1980s. His father, Charlie, runs a successful deli in London, and his mother, Kate, is a noted artist. It was at Kate’s house, Pound Farm, in West Sussex, that the inspirational drunken lunch took place, and where the photographs that accompany these recipes were taken, showing fresh veg and herbs grown on the land.

Clarke, meanwhile, is a south Londoner who moved out to Kent as a child. His maternal grandfather was into tripe and jellied

eels, and often treated his grandson to a black-pudding sandwich. Clarke — who runs an annual celebration of offal called Glandstonbury as a side project — developed a taste for such dishes as faggot stew, his paternal grandparents' favourite.



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Clarke's father designs restaurants and he grew up visiting the Conran restaurants and branches of Spaghetti House. "I really don't like bolognese," he says now, cheerfully.

After years trying to forge a career as a musician, Clarke started working in kitchens and came to London via a stint as head chef at the Swan in West Malling, Kent. Boxer gained experience with the celebrated chef Margot Henderson and at the buzzy Great Queen Street restaurant.

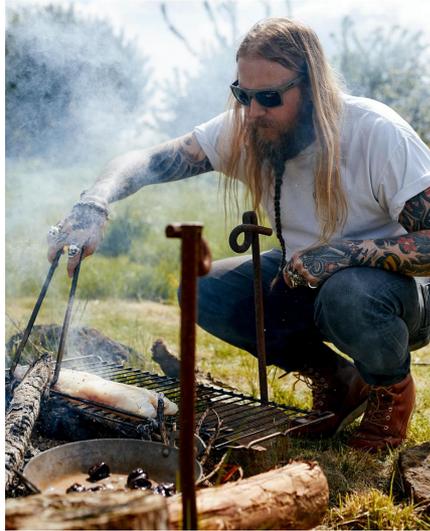
Boxer and Clarke already have another quirky, much-loved restaurant in London, Brunswick House, and bring to St Leonards a convivial ease; the former manning the raw bar and keeping a beady eye on front of house, the latter on the stoves.



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Their food — simple vegetables and sparkling fresh seafood, hearty grilled cuts of meat to share, punchy pickles and foraged herb garnishes — display all their influences. [Monkfish glazed with molasses](#) has become a signature dish, while rustic options such as [a garlicky dip](#) or [an earthy tomato sauce](#) hint at their personalities. (Clarke, in particular, looks thrash metal but cooks with incredible delicacy and finesse.)

These dishes and more are adapted here — perfect for your own leisurely outdoor feast.



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