

FROM FIGHTING TO FOOD - FORMER NAVY CHEF WITH A RECIPE BOOK OF THE WORLD BRINGS GLOBAL FLAVOURS TO THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GOLF CLUB

FLAVOURS OF THE WORLD

A FORMER Royal Navy chef who combines military discipline with a passion for food has brought a genuinely international twist to the historic Denham Court Mansion's Heron Restaurant.

James Hatswell, 27, from Plymouth, joined the Navy at the age of 16 and trained at HMS Raleigh's Cookery School. During his eight-year career, he visited 36 countries and has eaten some of the most exotic and exciting foods on the planet - an experience which has developed his passion for global cuisine and influenced his dishes.

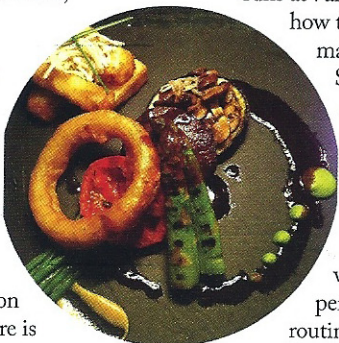
"The world is a huge place with vast amounts of ingredients and I think we need to explore as much as we can as chefs to be influenced by other cultures and backgrounds. And food brings people together to share those experiences," he said.

James added: "From countries as laid back as Spain where you eat and drink four to five times a day, to New York where you grab something on the go, everywhere is

different. That's how we discover different recipes and tweak them to fit our tastes and lifestyles. I've eaten some of the best breads cooked fresh on the streets of Iraq, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, to amazing fish platters fresh out of the water in Souda Bay and possibly the best shrimp and steak in South Carolina. In fact, I've wandered into every kitchen I've been able to, to see how all these wonderful chefs are doing it."

As well as the travel influencing the food, Navy discipline has moulded the running of the kitchen and James ensures a superior standard of hygiene - the restaurant being awarded five stars from Environmental Health - and he encourages the 'do it nice or do it twice' motto in his staff.

"I went from going on squad runs at 7am to learning how to fire and maintain the SA80 rifle, to making sure the length of my apron and the creases in my chef whites were absolutely perfect and routines were



structured, as you would expect in the Royal Navy.

"Although the worst bits were having to jump into freezing waters on the assault course and my first 'Galley Sports' where you have to rip the kitchen apart and clean it from top to bottom - and let's face it, what 16-year old enjoys that - passing out was one of the proudest days of my life," said James.

Although he added it wasn't all plain sailing.

"When we were out somewhere in the Middle East, we phoned ahead our meat order and were meeting the delivery on the jetty so we could store ship as we had been at sea for weeks. But when we got alongside, all the meat was still very much alive. There were chickens flapping and a cow mooing. Needless to say we didn't take it, but it



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was very funny."

James was also lucky enough to have worked with Bill Ferguson, another former Navy chef who appeared with Heston Blumenthal on TV's Mission Impossible series.

And on his first ship, HMS Cardiff, James worked alongside Ian Spencer, who now cooks for the Queen.

After leaving the Navy, James worked in fine dining before joining the Heron Restaurant, based at the Buckinghamshire Golf Club in Denham, Bucks.

As the club is owned by Asahi Breweries, Japanese food is a constant theme, but James is always creating new dishes and ideas on how to tweak the traditional and with presentation techniques. The club also offers private dinners and parties with completely bespoke menus he writes.

"With food you never stop learning and what is why I love what I do here so much. The more people who see this beautiful location with the breath-taking scenery makes a fantastic accompaniment to any good meal. Along with the location, the history of this place also makes for great conversation over a nice glass of wine next to the river," concluded James.

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