



SOAS
University of London

Making Social Responsibility the Main Course: Social change and good business in the restaurant world:

A group lecture led by Iqbal Wahhab

2 December 2015

SOAS, University of London

Hosted by the SOAS Food Studies Centre and
the SOAS South Asia Institute

Introductions

Professor Harry West, Chair of the Food Studies Centre:

Good evening and welcome everyone. My name is Harry West and I am Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Food Studies Centre, here at SOAS.

Our event this evening is co-sponsored by the SOAS South Asia Institute and the SOAS Food Studies Centre, with assistance from our colleagues in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations and in the Centres and Programmes Office.

The SOAS Food Studies Centre was founded in 2007 and its many activities bring together not only SOAS researchers and students but also colleagues and students from other academic institutions in the UK and beyond, as well as policy makers, activists, journalists, and makers and vendors of food.

The Centre fosters the teaching of food-related courses at SOAS, principle among them an MA in the Anthropology of Food. It also convenes the weekly SOAS Food Forum, as well as a series of Distinguished Lectures, all open to members and associate members of the Centre. Information on the Centre and the MA programme is available on the table outside the lecture theatre. Should anyone here this evening wish to join the centre (which is free of charge) and to be placed on our email list, please send an email to soasfoodstudies@soas.ac.uk and we will sign you up.

Before I introduce this evening's speaker, a few words about the SOAS South Asia Institute from its Deputy Director, Dr. Navtej Purewal, who is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Indian Studies and Sociology.

Dr Navtej Purewal, Deputy Director, SOAS South Asia Institute:

Good evening to everyone. It's a pleasure to see so many of you here tonight for tonight's lecture jointly hosted by the SOAS Food Studies centre and the South Asia Institute. The South Asia Institute was established in 2014 but was officially launched earlier this year in May 2015. The Institute was set up as a window through which the world could access SOAS' vast regional expertise on the region, but also as a means for SOAS to showcase, highlight, and share its knowledge of the region of South Asia beyond the university, with our academic members engaged in research and teaching on Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

Within our broader aims to promote research and teaching on South Asia, we are striving to keep the teaching of Bengali alive, which we are proud has a long and rich tradition at SOAS, and we are keen to establish connections with businesses and other links who may be interested in extending their support to our activities.

The South Asia Institute aims to make contributions to our understandings of economic, cultural and social processes affecting the region as well as the region's engagement with the rest of the world. Tonight's lecture is a perfect example of how someone originating from South Asia has made a tremendous mark on London which, in the process of making it his 'home' as part of the South Asian/Bangladeshi diaspora, has also made it his base for entrepreneurship, innovation, and social responsibility. The South Asia Institute is pleased to be a part of the hosting of this event tonight.

Iqbal Wahhab

Main speaker and chair of the panel

Iqbal Wahhab was born in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1963. In 1964, his family moved to London, where he grew up and attended school. He went on to study Business Administration at the London School of Economics.

After university, Mr Wahhab worked as a journalist in the national press before setting up a PR agency specialising in hospitality in 1991. Three years later he launched Tandoori Magazine, a publication focused on the South Asian food industry. He subsequently sold the magazine and, in 2001, opened the Cinnamon Club, an award winning restaurant and bar that changed perceptions of Indian cuisine in the United Kingdom. In 2003 he co-authored The Cinnamon Club Cookbook with Chef Vivek Singh. In 2005, he opened Roast, a restaurant and bar in the old Floral Hall in London's Borough Market that specialises in British cuisine made from the finest seasonal ingredients.

In addition to his successes in the catering industry, Mr. Wahhab has made valuable contributions through public service. From 2006-2013, he chaired the Department for Work and Pensions' ethnic minority advisory group, which worked to reduce ethnic minority unemployment levels. He serves on various boards and committees including as Chairman of: the Asian Restaurants Skills Board; and of Bounce Back, a charity and social enterprise that focuses on the training and employment of ex-offenders. He is Patron of: Mum's The Chef, a social enterprise that tackles long-term unemployment among ethnic minority women by cultivating cookery skills; and of LEAP, a charity helping young people, especially those from disadvantaged communities, to find employment.

For his public service and his contributions to the hospitality industry, Mr. Wahhab received an OBE in 2009. In 2010, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is the recipient of numerous other awards and accolades, from Menu Magazine's "Restaurant Personality of the Year" to being named one of GQ's "100 Most Connected".

Mr Wahhab has received Honorary Doctorates in Business Administration from the University of East London and in Science from the University of West London. He is also a Visiting Professor of the London Metropolitan University Business School.

I could go on, but I'm sure that you'd rather hear Iqbal and the guests on his panel, which is entitled: "Making Social Responsibility the Main Course: Social change and good business in the restaurant world."



Panellists

- Vivek Singh, Executive Chef, The Cinnamon Club
- Asma Khan, Darjeeling Express
- Jacqui Roberts, Shoreditch Trust
- Hardian Garrard, Chicken Town
- Olivia Sibony, Grub Club
- Petra Barran, KERB

In many peoples' eyes, restaurants have a poor image. Rushing customers in and out to maximise profits, swiping service charges away from employees, bullying chefs, nightmare owners with massive egos. We have deserved the reputation we have acquired over the decades. The restaurant world now is a very different place from the one I entered at the end of the 1990s. We are no longer judged by how critics rate our food and service – everyone, thanks to Twitter and Trip Advisor, is now a restaurant critic. This is a democratisation of comment where there are no longer self appointed arbiters of what is good or bad other than those from whom we make our livelihoods.

There is in our world a rapidly moving change of perspectives around what makes a good restaurant and most current smart thinking on the subject means listening to – as opposed to telling – customers about what they want. In its pre-democracy more free form days, London's restaurants would out-do each other in finding something new to present to the market, which was what public relations companies would always advise their clients – if it wasn't different, they wouldn't be able to get media coverage for it. And however much we try and hide it, us restaurant folk love the coverage as much as we love the profits – so much so that we delude ourselves into thinking the former drives the latter.

About fifteen years ago, a central London restaurant decided to create a fusion of Italian and Japanese cooking. The critics largely hailed it a triumph but it proved a pivotal point for the diner revolution when people said "enough is enough" and didn't go and it shut down. In New York, still probably the best city in the world for the breadth of its restaurants, there is still a seemingly insatiable appetite for the quest for something new. Earlier this year, a place opened in Brooklyn where the chef owner imposed a no-talking rule for diners as silence was the only way they would be able to fully appreciate the wonder that was his cooking. The place is packed every day but I imagine in London the only silence such a venture would receive would be on the reservations line. New York may have breadth but London has depth.

It's the increasing depth of perspective that is driving much of the change in the way business increasingly steps up to help tackle social inequalities that is the focus of what I want to present to you today. Food and restaurants are the given tools for me and the distinguished panel of contributors whom you will meet during the course of this talk will I hope help reinforce my message that restaurants are increasingly able to deliver more than food and drink. That we are agents for social renewal. By social renewal I mean strengthening communities and neighbourhoods through enterprise, empowerment and employment. Food and eating can forge intimate connections between people and places. Embracing local foods delivers both ecological and social justice and provides an opportunity for building communities of consumers and producers around what's become known as a 'foodshed' – the creation of local economic clusters. But first let me tell you a bit of my own voyage of discovery which I am sharing with you this evening.

A decade ago when I set up shop in Borough Market to open Roast, that part of south east London was a place to be avoided except for the market itself. On Fridays and Saturdays the place filled with well heeled-types coming from Kensington, Richmond, Chelsea to buy the premium quality produce on

offer. People from those postcodes would be the only ones able to pay £15 for a chicken as it then was. Today you'll be lucky to exchange one for less than a £20 note.

I remember asking the trustees who ran the market then how engaged they were with people from the local neighbourhood, who probably paid £1.50 for a chicken. They said, quite credibly, that their singular purpose was to create an environment for Britain's best food producers to come and display their fayre. If people from the local area couldn't afford it, that was a regrettable consequence but not something they were in the business of fixing.

But I thought that in Roast we could. From the first day we opened, all the profits from one table in the restaurant have gone to support the work of projects dedicated to assist those who through poverty or other misfortune have fallen off the ladder many believe is open for all to climb.

We started by working with the local Prince's Trust and I would regularly host groups of young people to come and have breakfast with me, give them a tour of the market and offer them real-life work challenges in the restaurant so that as they grew on from school they could see us as not some thing that was "other" to them, but as a place that might offer them the prospect of work. In some cases, they had already entered their own parallel economy of gangs – many of them carrying guns at the age of 15. I wasn't really that surprised when I heard this as in a previous generation I had too grown up in south London and indeed had a gang of my own. But with our flick knives, we were wusses by comparison.

In my own time, we had been so engrossed in our extra-curricular activities we saw no point in studying and we all failed our O Levels. My dismayed parents encouraged me to re-take them, which I successfully did and went on to university and set off on the path this enabled me to do. The others received no such nudge. Two ended up in prison, one committed suicide, another was killed. The rest led uniformly meaningless lives. So I had grown up knowing that sometimes it just needed a small touch to trigger a big impact.

I've taken much personal satisfaction over the years in mentoring young kids from council estates who had no father figure and see them set up their own businesses, get into universities, go work for big firms. But those were largely personal gains for me. What about the business? How did this commercially impact on us? Convention had it previously that a business would wait until it reached maturity, which meant reaching profitability, before thinking of anything philanthropic or charitable.

At Roast I threw that old model out. Whilst we were still in loss making mode, it struck many around me that we were only prolonging that period by engaging with what my finance director used to call "fluffy stuff". My challenge back was to not view it as a loss but as a social investment which would one day witness a return back to us. I suppose by social investment I meant a strategic financial input that positively impacts both the communities of concern to Roast and the financial health of the company itself. Only I didn't bring myself to say that ever back then, lest this be viewed as too eccentric an ideal.

Businesses have traditionally syphoned off their consciences to what we call corporate social responsibility. The problem

I view with CSR activity is that is seen as a cost and not as an investment, something relegated to a CSR officer so that the rest of the company doesn't have to think about the role a business can play in its wider community. And indeed for many years I was effectively Roast's CSR officer. It would be me going off to Africa to visit slum dwellings and setting up entrepreneurial programmes to lift people out of poverty. More locally, it would be me going to Brixton Prison to talk to inmates about a world of work and away from crime.

Then one day the light went on in my mind. Gordon Ramsay was making a TV series in Brixton teaching prisoners how to cook and I was invited to a lunch in prison where a group prepared our meal in front of us. I was particularly impressed with the precision and focus one prisoner in our range of view displayed and I shared my observation with Gordon, who said six weeks ago he couldn't even boil an egg. I spoke with the inmate afterwards and said if he was interested in some work experience when he was released, he should ask his governor to connect him with us at Roast.

Fast forward a few months and as I was walking into my office one morning, I saw in our little reception area someone who looked vaguely familiar was filling out a form. I said: "I remember you; we met in Brixton. What are you doing here?" He replied: "You've given me a job and I'm just doing the form." I told him it was really important for him to know that I had nothing to do with him getting the job and indeed I had all but forgotten about my offer, so he had earned it fair and square and not out of charity. Andrew then told Gordon's team who then placed an article in *The Evening Standard* about him getting a job with us. The response to the article was ground-breaking for me. I received a lot of calls and letters from people pretty much all saying the same thing: "Dear Roast, I have never been to your restaurant but now that I know you employ people like Andrew, I shall start coming."

The ground-breaker was that there was now a commercial case for social intervention. I could now actively encourage the rest of the team to become involved. Soon it became clear that by "the team" I meant more than our employees. Our wider stakeholder group – our customers, our suppliers, our neighbours all love to get involved in what we do, which greatly amplifies the effects of our activities.

When we decided to do a pop up Roast in a prison earlier this year at a young offenders institute called Isis next to Belmarsh,



our managers and chefs owned the project entirely, training inmates to prepare some of our most popular dishes. The guests for the evening were many of our regular customers, our landlord, our food suppliers, a potential investor. Five members of our team, including an ex-employee who took these pictures, volunteered their time to help the prisoners make the evening the success it turned out to be.



Two of the participating prisoners came to work for us on release. Some two thirds of released young offenders end up back inside within a year. They're given £43 on the day they get out and it costs the taxpayer an average of £40,000 a year to keep them locked up. Over 20 ex-offenders have found work with us over the years at Roast. Re-offending rates for those who find work drops to single digit percentile rates. Do the maths.



It's become increasingly important to do the maths and prove the case beyond a philanthropic "doing good" mission. So I hired an economist to do a social impact assessment report on our various activities.

We kick-started a social enterprise called 'Mums The Chef' which empowers women suffering on the dreadful benefits cap to use the one skill they had which was to cook and put them through catering college to get appropriate NVQs so they could earn a living for the first time in their lives.



I gave them a six month contract to feed our team daily to get them off the ground. Twelve women found employment through this contract. Not only did this give them many unmeasurable outcomes like increased self confidence and more positive mental health, but it also saved the state £312,000 in benefits. From a £30,000 contract.



But we are not just local actors and players with localised responsibilities; we are global citizens too. About 18 months ago, I went with the human rights campaigner and former

Hezbollah hostage Terry Waite to visit the beleaguered west African state of Togo. His charity Y Care International is an umbrella organisation of the YMCAs across the world and with their local wing there I visited a coastal slum dwelling called Katanga.

I met a number of women desperately trying to make a living by smoking fish. But they were scuppered by middle men who were charging them a tiny fortune to take their product to market and then taking ages to pay them what they were owed. In their attempts at trading their way out of poverty in effect they were static in their social and economic position. I felt that if they were armed with proper financial planning and management over their micro businesses, they would fare much better. So I invested some money to put five of the women through a business studies course. Here's how they did. Aichatou Yerima, aged 24, is an orphan. Before going on the course, her monthly income was 15,000F. Now, it is 25,000F (a 10,000 increase, or +67%) and she is able to buy equipment and supplies for her smoked fish business, hire a female assistant for her business and go to the health centre if she is ill.

Adamah Ayelegan, aged 25, is a widowed mother. Before the course, her monthly income was 20,000F. Now, it is 30,000F (a 10,000 increase, or +50%). She is now able to buy tools and equipment for her firewood business, and has hired a young person to help her. Sometimes, she also has another person to help her.

Gertrude Kluvitse, aged 23, is a single, orphaned mother with two children. Before the course, her monthly income was 3000F. It is now 7000F (a 4,000 increase, or +133%) and she has been able to purchase supplies and equipment for her smoked fish business. She has hired an assistant for the smoking work. She gives her children pocket money each day to buy breakfast at school.

Agbovi Adjovi, aged 15, is an orphan who couldn't read or write. She did not have her own source of income prior to



becoming a beneficiary, but now earns 5,000 FCFA per month (100% increase). She has purchased equipment and supplies for fish smoking and has hired an assistant to help her with her business.

Ahoefa Nohoonyo, aged 15, is an orphan who couldn't read or write. She did not have her own source of income prior

to becoming a beneficiary, but now earns 5,000F per month (100% increase). She has purchased equipment and supplies for fish smoking and has hired an assistant to help her with her business.

I called this an investment into those courses a little earlier but actually I made it a loan – but one that wasn't repayable to the Roast Foundation but to the local YMCA. Those women have now repaid the cost of their courses and I have in turned matched that with a commitment to putting more people in their situation on the course. If I had gone out there as a more conventional philanthropist I would have written a cheque and just assumed it would have been used wisely. As a restaurateur, I knew about how to successfully navigate around the difficult routes agents and suppliers place among new businesses with little knowledge of how markets operate.

One of the Harvard Business Review's most celebrated articles of recent times was entitled "Creating Shared Value" in which Michael Porter and Mark Kramer in exploring a new version of inclusive capitalism made the point that businesses shouldn't have random moments where they act as charities. Only when businesses adopt social values as a core commercial practice do they see the most sustainable and far reaching impacts.

Let's take the example of The Cinnamon Club. Indian restaurants have a reputation of operating 'closed door' practices – only hiring from friends and family, not seeing their obligations to wider communities and the opportunities their spaces could be turned into. My first guest contributor to this evening is fittingly my close collaborator in creating The Cinnamon Club, Vivek Singh. Vivek, please share with us how you've helped de-bunk these stereotypes.

Presentation by: Vivek Singh

The year would have been 2005, and I was saying to Iqbal how fantastic Alun Sperring had been for my kitchen team at The Cinnamon Club. Alun's experience of having worked in so many different places, different experiences, brought new ideas and fresh energy to my team who at the time, were mostly of Indian or Asian origin. I was particularly impressed by Alun's amazement at our flavours, our spices and his eagerness to learn and explore this new world. It was a joy sharing our recipes with him, in teaching and learning from him. Clearly he understood the essence, took the learning and went on to open 'Shoofi - Maafi', a Moroccan restaurant in Dubai, then returned to the UK and now runs one of the best Indian restaurants in the country, Chili Pickle in Brighton!

Iqbal's take on it was something only Iqbal can have, he said something that completely changed the way I looked at teaching, learning, training, sharing. Iqbal said he wasn't surprised that Alun was in some ways more excited about Indian food than some of our own Indian chefs. After all, look at Gordon, he was cooking the best French food in the country then and he wasn't French, Jamie was the most famous Italian chef of the land, and the best known Chef cooking Thai food in

the world, David Thomson wasn't even Thai.

This got me thinking about opening up my kitchens to people of all backgrounds, anyone who wished to cook and learn Indian food. Teaching, training and sharing knowledge was that little extra that would make our jobs as chefs a little bit more interesting. Mind you, this was before, much before, the clamp on immigration, restriction on Visas for chefs, or for that matter, the economic crash of 2008. Our kitchens were already open to people from all backgrounds, being prepared as training and teaching grounds: we were 'future ready' or so we certainly thought! Then of course the entire world went into meltdown, economies crashed, businesses folded, benefits cut, jobs vanished. Young people were starved of opportunity, that first job, that first apprenticeship, the first step on the ladder to earning.

By this time, our experience with training had given us the confidence to further our reach to people who may or may not be trained chefs, just anyone who was interested in learning to cook with spice. With this, and a view to attract talent from anywhere, to develop the future generation of chefs for the Indian restaurants in UK, we launched Mastaracheff, an initiative of the Asian Restaurants Skills Board, with a YouTube campaign to recruit talent.

MASTARA Chef Movie

<https://www.youtube.com/v/78IKzipkavU&Autoplay=1>

It was nowhere as easy recruiting as we thought, but in the last 5 years, in spite of its modest success, the apprentice programme has resulted in 18 examples of people from various backgrounds successfully working as chefs or in some capacity in the world of food, and out of benefits. The opportunity seemed to work.

One day in 2012 I met someone who was very different from the people we had come across so far. This was the power house behind Darjeeling Express, Asma Said Khan herself. Asma had a Doctorate in Constitutional Law, a hugely successful supper club, and best of all, a love for feeding people her food and sharing with her guests, her story.

Asma had probably run over 12 editions of her supper club, very successfully and most of them over subscribed. She said to me she was closing Darjeeling Express down because she couldn't carry on doing this at her home; it was too disruptive. It was clear Asma dearly loved cooking and feeding people. In Darjeeling Express, she had the perfect vehicle to do it; she had people who wanted to book months in advance. She had worked so hard to get this far and yet did she really want to close it down?

I asked what her best days for these supper clubs are and she said Saturday and Sunday afternoons. It occurred to me that these were the two days when our private dining rooms at The Cinnamon Club had least demand! In fact, we weren't even normally open on Sundays, so I offered Asma to use the private dining room for a couple of editions if she wanted. I was amazed at the combined energy of her guests, her team and her food, how it combined seamlessly with the energy in the room, with that of our guests and our teams. I invite Asma Khan of Darjeeling Express to tell the rest of the story herself.

Presentation by: Asma Khan

The pop-up at The Cinnamon Club was a game changer. I feel it changed the way people looked at me: my desire to establish a food business was no longer seen as a "hobby". The success of the pop-up was a big confident booster for me and my team of women. Some of the women working with me were stepping



into a professional kitchen for the first time: later they admitted how good they felt about themselves. They felt at par with the chefs (who were mainly men) who were working alongside them in the Cinnamon Club kitchen (serving their guests). Professionally the pop-up changed the route I took with my food business. I realised we could step out of our home kitchens and cook in a professional environment and be successful. Later when I approached the pub in Soho to do a residency, I began my presentation by telling them about the Cinnamon Club pop-up. I was offered the residency and in July this year our Soho residency was named Restaurant of the Week in the Evening Standard and we were given a 4* review by the well-respected food critic Fay Maschler. After our pop-up at Cinnamon Club I took all my assistants to have coffee. No-one spoke for a bit and then finally one of the women piped up: "hip hip hooray, we are really cooks!"

The experience of being in a kitchen in a restaurant like the Cinnamon Club transformed the attitude of my team. They started asking me: "madam, when will we have our own restaurant?" The idea no longer seemed so absurd- a dad's army kind of restaurant with the kitchen run by middle-aged housewives without any formal chef training! I realised these women who had worked at the Cinnamon Club could cope with pressure and had taken "ownership" of Darjeeling Express when they started talking about the next step. I felt unready to jump into planning a restaurant right after Cinnamon Club and when the opportunity came up to do an extended residency at the Soho pub, I felt it would be the litmus test to see if the Cinnamon Club success was something that could be replicated on a daily basis. I was unsure if the women would see this as a career and put in the long hours needed to full a fully functioning restaurant.



The pop-up has been a great success- not just because of the good reviews. I have a team ready now. On the night of Lakshmi puja and Diwali, we were fully booked following a good review in the Financial Times. I had expected most of the kitchen staff to tell me they would not come; both these festivals need the woman of the house to be at the heart of the festivities. To my surprise all my staff turned up at work. When I thanked my oldest assistant (who has two grandchildren) for coming to work, she told me "You are my Lakshmi (the Hindu goddess of wealth): this kitchen is my temple. If I had let you down today, even God would not have forgiven me."

We are ready, physically and emotionally, to start our journey to open our restaurant. The women are all working part time right now. I have three assistants. They have all told me they will work full time when I open my restaurant.

Iqbal Wahhab

Thanks Vivek, thanks Asma – and congratulations.

Businesses acting as businesses, even those like Roast or The Cinnamon Club, which have an embedded core social perspective, can create credible and permanent social value. Social enterprises can go much further. A number of them have adopted the conventional commercial restaurant platform and made social change not just a value but the very mission for which they exist. We'll hear now from two great projects which have helped re-configure how restaurants are agents for social change.

Firstly I'd like to invite Jacqui Roberts to speak, head of The Shoreditch Trust which owns and operates the amazing Waterhouse restaurant. Jacqui.

Presentation by: Jacqui Roberts

Waterhouse Restaurant is owned by Shoreditch Trust and supports one of our largest programmes – Blue Marble Training (BMT). BMT has been developed as part of Shoreditch Trust's strategic aims to reduce economic and social disadvantage in Hackney. BMT utilises a person-centred approach to enable vulnerable young people to meet crisis need, mitigate risk and enhance skills, knowledge, experience and power. We advocate for greater investment in vulnerable young people, arguing that young people who are supported to participate can also inspire positive change in industry and beyond. Through innovative and dynamic approaches to training, we support young people to become more independent, develop skills and access opportunities to achieve long-term careers in the food industry, with the aim of adding value to and influencing better models of business.

Young people arrive on the programme with many additional needs and facing external challenges with multiple indicators of disadvantage in their lives that continue to hold them back: leaving care or custody and struggling to manage their lives. With gang-related pressure, poor health, social isolation, loneliness and insecure housing, for some trainees, just maintaining a routine and getting to work on time presents difficulties. The risk of entrenched social exclusion, offending or re-offending is high as a result of these barriers. BMT gives young people a chance to turn things around by teaching real skills, in a real kitchen, in a real team, attached to a real restaurant, leading to real opportunities, making a real change to lives.

The programme also focuses on the development of those skills that are so often overlooked but so important in the industry: thinking creatively, emotional development, collaboration, innovation, enterprise, professionalism, and leadership. Once they put on their Blue Marble T-shirt and apron they are Trainee CHEFS (leaders).

Shoreditch Trust commissioned a 'Social Return on Investment' report conducted independently in 2012. The report concluded that "Blue Marble Training demonstrates a successful model of work based training, supportive peer group and pastoral care that enables individuals to overcome their barriers to employment that should be recognised, and continued funding should be made available to continue the success."

"Shoreditch Trust and Blue Marble Training are meeting the aims, objectives and outcomes expected of it by its stakeholders and funders. Working closely with ex-offender and care leavers it is creating many outcomes including those that are not being invested in and this should be celebrated and disseminated."

The SROI report confirmed that the programme generates:

- Reduced truancy/increased engagement in education and training

- Reduction in youth offending (and re-offending)
- Sustained/continued transitions from care to independent living
- An alternative to gang culture, violence and crime

- Increased peer to peer mentoring in communities with endemic underemployment
- Reduction in segregation of social networks for young people in the Hackney area

There are consequences of handing trust and responsibility to people who may not have been granted them in their lives and therefore don't know what to do with them – yet. We accept that running a training programme in a live restaurant setting can come at a cost but we believe that it's the only way to ensure that trainees can really progress and take ownership of their future.

We meet these challenges in many different ways. The course provides self- leadership coaching, physical fitness, one to one counselling through the Trust's mental health programme and healthy eating sessions through the Trust's Food for Life programme. These support activities provide a space for trainees to reflect on issues that might be holding them back and support trainees:

- to understand and navigate the training and work environment
- to contribute to their own outcomes of the training programme
- to understand good practice and how to challenge themselves in a constructive way
- to make the connection between well-being and work satisfaction

Peer mentoring is key to the programme's success. The presence of role models who are themselves graduates of the training programme help our trainees to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to their futures. Advanced trainees support new participants on the programme and are encouraged to inspire, train and mentor others. We continue to mentor BMT alumni and former graduate trainees provide work opportunities (in their restaurants) for current trainees.

Shoreditch Trust

https://www.youtube.com/v/ho_nlsuytgU&Autoplay=1

Iqbal Wahhab

Thanks Jacqui.

When we look at our inner city high streets, we see many manifestations of urban blight which have also witnessed many ironic successes – pound shops being one of them. The most worrying high street success story is the fast food joint. The rapid rise in consumption of fried chicken in particular with the widespread use of saturated fats is a major worry. A study at the University of Cambridge, found that the number of takeaway restaurants has risen by 45 per cent in the last 18 years.

The popularity of these outlets is driven largely by price with chickens so cheap their provenance must be awful and this has a clear trajectory of direction on youngsters. These fast food, fast-buck operators clog up our high streets, youngsters clog up their queues, their arteries then clog up and then they clog up the heart disease and obesity wards of our hospitals. The social cost of a seemingly innocuous food has been too scary a number for health legislators to ever fully quantify.

empowered and inspired to eat better. Trips to farms, growing projects, sourcing and working with local producers are all ways we intend to raise awareness of food and give the restaurant a broader impact locally.

We want Chicken Town to act as a model of best practice in all areas of its business and for the project to tie in with and reinforce the work of the Public Health team in Haringey over the long term. We will recruit and train young people from the local area to work in the restaurant. Chicken Town will be run with expectations of the highest modern hospitality and central to this will be an ethos of team work, mutual respect for colleagues and world class customer service which we will expect our workforce to embrace and learn from. These skills will be necessary for their future working lives, whatever they choose to do. We believe that by giving young people a thorough background in hospitality we will be equipping them with skills that will be relevant for the majority of future careers, as well as diversifying their potential income streams. The modern restaurant sector in the UK is a growth industry - forecast to reach £57bn in value by 2017 - and by giving young people the necessary skills needed to work in this sector we will be enabling them to not only earn a decent income but the means to support themselves with part time work if they choose to study in the future.

The restaurant will employ 15 members of staff at any one time and over the first three years of operation we expect this will create over 40 new jobs for the area. Working with the London Borough of Haringey and with local partners including the Spurs Foundation, we will recruit and train local young people to work in the restaurant, providing good working conditions, mentoring, career pathways and fair pay. We will use the considerable experience we have gained in the job brokerage sector to make Chicken Town an exemplar in the recruitment, support and development of young employees. Our young chefs and front of house staff will be mentored through partnerships with leading restaurants and chefs from across London, so that working in Chicken Town becomes a career pathway into working in London's expanding restaurant sector. Leading guest chefs will be invited to devise a monthly special as well as visiting the shop to teach our young chefs and offering work placements and jobs in their restaurants for our staff.

Iqbal Wahhab

Thanks Hadrian.

All around London we see empty retail spaces and these so easily with a little imagination and entrepreneurial flair can become springboards for aspirant restaurateurs who lack access to finance and opportunities. A great project I came across recently is called Grub Club and has connected many people's ambitions through supper clubs and connected these with the rejuvenation of empty commercial spaces.

Olivia Sibony is one of Grub Club's founders. Olivia, please share with us the story of what you did in Catford.

Presentation by: Olivia Sibony:

What is Grub Club?

Grub Club is a marketplace for unique dining experiences. We connect talented, entrepreneurial chefs with underused spaces (cafes closed in the evenings, disused underground carriages, pubs or restaurants that have quiet times). We thus enable them to set up their temporary restaurants and sell the tickets to those meals on our platform, Grub Club. This helps underused spaces gain an extra source of income, as well as exposure to people who will return there during the official opening hours. It also gives chefs the stepping stones towards setting up their own food business, breaking down the high entry barriers currently involved in setting up a restaurant. And diners get the opportunity to meet other like-minded diners in unique settings, tasting amazing food by up and coming chefs

Case Study of a Regeneration Project

The London Borough of Lewisham earmarked Catford as a priority area with potential to thrive as a culture and arts centre. They therefore decided to invest strategically in community events and public realm improvements to re-energize the community and increase opportunity for local businesses.

The Catford Canteen was launched in April 2013, led by Deck Social, in partnership with Grub Club. It aimed to both support traders in developing their businesses and engage the local community.

Objectives of the Project:

The project had a double-sided aim: Community Engagement for Diners and a vehicle to support food entrepreneurs.

For Diners:

- improve social cohesion
- capitalise on the strength and diversity of the local and changing community
- raise the profile of the area
- promote the night time economy
- attract a demographic that do not currently use the town centre
- promote intergenerational connections

For Food Entrepreneurs:

- provide opportunities for new businesses to trial their business offer
- provide opportunities for existing businesses to develop the business
- support and promote local business
- capitalise on the growth of support for pop and meanwhile and fractional use

Process:

The weekly supper clubs were initially held in a marquee on the Broadway, then moved into a vacant unit in the shopping centre which had recently been purchased by LB Lewisham to enable them to comprehensively regenerate the town



centre. In just over a week a former Chinese herbal medicine shop was turned into a pop up unit designed specifically for food use.

Outcome:

- 7 start- ups – these continue to work regularly with Grub Club both as public events as well as private catering contracts
- 29 events
- 807 paying guests
- 55 press mentions
- 1 BBNC News TV feature <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyO7yYqICUE>
- Catford Society, which meets on a regular basis for further social activities (e.g. Catford Film Club) as well as Civil Society meetings to engage better with the rest of the community
- Deptford Brunch Club
- Catford Canteen Returns – with no funding!

Case Study:

In A Pikkle was launched by Mark and Karen, who wanted to showcase a lesser known Caribbean (Bajan) cuisine to London. After testing out their concept in markets, they took the decision to scale up via Grub Club, to a wider and more established and regular audience. Catford Canteen gave them the opportunity to do this in their local area, and they were able to reach a much larger audience via the Grub Club platform.

Since their first Catford Canteen Grub Club in November 2013, they have held 31 Grub Clubs, and 22 Private events (Corporate

events and special events such as Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.). They have been able to increase their revenue by over 50% per event, through a mix of higher number of guests, better costing efficiencies and a gradually increased price. Through the Grub Club platform, they not only benefited from ease of Admin headache (payments taken in advance, dietary requirements and diner communications streamlined through the system), but also gained exposure by being on the platform included in our Comms strategy and building their own brand through the integrated Star rating system on the platform.

The team increased from 2 people to 6 and they are now booked up for most of December for a number of public as well as private events. They will continue to build on this and focus increasingly on Corporate events, as their reputation – along with recommendations – continue to grow.

Testimonial:

This was an excellent initiative which brought together local people who were committed to authentic food and connecting with local people who were delighted no longer to have to go to Bromley or Blackheath. They had a good night out a stone's throw from home.

Clr John Muldoon | A Labour Councillor for Rushey Green Ward | LB of Lewisham | Chair, Healthier Communities Select Committee

Iqbal Wahhab

Thanks Olivia. Grub Club's goals are admirably ambitious. They want to be the Uber of supper clubs – a global business.

Business people often ask me when this London restaurant explosion will come to an end. Not only does every spare bit of prime central London real estate seem to become another restaurant, they also seem to be snapped up by men (and it is usually men) with deep pockets happy to pay eye-watering sums to keep in the game. So how democratic and accessible is the process of becoming a restaurateur or food entrepreneur?

Until recently, the answer was "not very much". But entrepreneurs emerge out of all social challenges and our final contributor this evening along with Olivia shows how the democratisation of food businesses is enabling those without the friends and family connection or the trust fund to become the next Meatliquor, Wolseley or Cinnamon Club.

Enabling entrepreneurship has become an entrepreneurial activity in itself. Kerb has set a path for dozens of individuals to become street food heroes and heroines and in some cases restaurateurs too. Underpinning our restaurant revolution is a street food revolution where in a parallel universe to our fancy establishments hordes of food lovers are passing us by to go and find more edgy, authentic food offerings in wholly new environments at wholly different price points too.

The promoters of the food market project Street Feast have launched a multi million pound crowd funding initiative called London Union. But really the advent of street food in London has largely been the creation of Petra Barren, the founder of Kerb. She understandably hates the title the press have given her of being the queen of street food but there's no denying

that she is.

Petra: tell us how Kerb has triggered a new generation of food entrepreneurs.

Presentation by: Petra Barran

Thank you Iqbal. First, I want to say that KERB is one of a few factors triggering this new generation of food entrepreneurs who are ditching more conventional careers to sling food in the open air in a less than balmy UK. But there are key ideals that have informed our approach and which have resonated with wider cultural shifts and people making changes in their careers.

What is KERB? KERB is a membership organisation of over 60 of London's best street food traders. We organise lunch markets and events across the city, as well as book traders for corporate events looking for something different from their catering - all drawing from our delicious cluster of cooks and entrepreneurs.

How it started

It's 2005 and people aren't 'street food stars', they're just mobilers - people with quirky lifestyle choices. I'm one of them and I take off in Choc Star AKA Jimmy, a converted ice cream van-turned choc-wagon, to peddle sundaes, brownies, milkshakes and ice creams to whoever I can up and down the country.

While on the road - at festivals and markets, fetes, concerts, weddings and any other kind of event where food is required - I encounter all kinds of great people selling all kinds of delicious food from carts, stalls and vans. They are go-getters, entrepreneurs, swash-bucklers, do-ers. They're my kind of people, the kind of people that haven't gone after the obvious but instead are carving their own way in the space between the buildings.

"We should get organised", I realised one day. Agglomerate, combine forces and we can make so much more happen than in the random, serendipitous way that we had up until then. That was in 2010 and Britain's first street food collective was borne from it: eat.st. Our strap-line? 'Driving British Street Food Forward'. I scoured every event I went to in my van for great stalls, collared the unsuspecting trader and signed them up. eat.st started to grow into more than a hobby and as it did, in 2011 we got picked up by the new King's Cross estate, eager to create a new narrative for the development. And it was all about food served by passionate street cooks helping to create a scene and attract more people to the site. This was our first lunch market. Since then KERB has replaced eat.st and we have set up sites all over London - from King's Cross to the Gherkin to the Southbank to Peckham, Hackney Wick, Paddington, Spitalfields.

From the position of food-lover, food trader and then market organiser to business owner with a lusty interest in urbanism, there have been some key objectives I've identified and around

which KERB has developed and continues to hold true:

Clustering is key. It creates: strength in numbers, greater visibility, sharing of information, more opportunities, and alternative communities.

Food transforms space:

Love of food is one of the only universal human truths. We live in cities that are full of change and cultures we don't always understand. When you put food in public, on shared space, at street level, boundaries are dissolved and co-production is created. Everyone is bonded for those few moments in a space of common experience that can make you feel part of a city like very few other things can.

British food needs to improve:

By clustering together the best traders we can find - the most delicious, dynamic, entrepreneurial and spirited - market forces have to exist in our markets in a way that they really haven't



for a long time because of antiquated British laws. This creates healthy competition, whilst membership of KERB also creates a culture of not wanting to let the side down in front of your peers. When we bring in some new buck with new skills, others look to their own businesses for ways to improve and this keeps the standards rising.

As we've grown in numbers and visibility, awareness of selling food on the streets as a career choice has also grown. It has been extraordinary to watch the perception of it change in the last 10 years - from 'when are you going to get a real job?' to bankers and lawyers ditching their well-paying yet ungratifying jobs to pitch a gazebo on the kerb and start carving out a new career path.

Whilst I'd like to take credit for triggering this 'movement', I believe it has come along at a time when we are also entering a new age:

"We have entered a new age of fulfillment in which the great dream is to trade up from money to meaning." Roman Krznaric

And a food business that is set up and run by you and you alone presents the most amazing (albeit incredibly challenging) route

to fulfillment. I think for feeling like an individual, in charge of your own product and with a valuable role to play in the city, as well as a creator of change in the London food scene and a member of an exciting and engaged trader community, it is addictive.

However, it still has a long way to go if it is to become a genuine part of London life. This generation of food entrepreneurs are growing up and the whole thing is changing. KERB's next move is to ensure we adapt whilst retaining our core values of trader community + street life + great food.

KERB

<https://www.youtube.com/v/78IKzipkavU&Autoplay=1>

Iqbal Wahhab

Thanks Petra.

I began this talk by making the claim that restaurants are agents for social renewal. We've heard how Vivek triggered the restaurateur in Asma, now glorying in full houses and queues. We've seen how social enterprise restaurants like Waterhouse and Chicken Town can use the dining environment to correct social failures head on as their core purpose. We've learned from Olivia and Petra about the new economy that has emerged to challenge the convention of restaurant start ups. Let me tell you one more story before concluding.

This is Mohammed Munim. I first met Mo when he was barely out of his teens but had already seen more of the insides of prisons than any well intentioned kid who just fell into bad ways out of a lack or other avenues should have done.

In his time in prison he had worked in the kitchen and found he quite liked being around food and when I met him he was fearful that a return to his old east London gang would be his only means of earning a livelihood. I gave him a job at Roast as a food runner. He progressed upwards to be a waiter and then surprised me one day by saying he was leaving us to work in a café.

I asked him why he would leave Roast to work in a café and he said he'd applied for the job of manager and had been successful. He did so well with that the owners put him in charge of a second one and then a third and he employs ex-offenders in each of them. He told me just today that he's now setting up a fourth. He's turned down the title of Managing Director lest it goes to his head but that's what he now is. And that's what restaurants can and indeed do achieve beyond our traditional purpose.

We drive social change as evidenced many times over this evening. We educate, encourage, empower the many that haven't had the lucky breaks that a few of us have had. We can measure and communicate the impacts our activities have. We can put a resource behind this now because with the case of Andrew from Brixton Prison, we have stumbled across the ultimate sustainable commercial crowd pleaser. That doing good is good for business.

Thank you.

SOAS Food Studies Centre

SOAS, University of London
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG
United Kingdom

Web: www.soas.ac.uk/foodstudies/
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7898 4414
E-mail: soasfoodstudies@soas.ac.uk

SOAS South Asia Institute

SOAS, University of London
University of London
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

Web: www.soas.ac.uk/south-asia-institute/
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7898 4390
E-mail: ssai@soas.ac.uk

