

# Dining Out

## Outlaw's at The Capital Hotel

By Marius Brill

Photograph © Capital Hotel



Nestled behind Harrods in the heart of Knightsbridge is Outlaw's Michelin starred restaurant in the Capital Hotel. Catches that come into the Cornish village, caught by local fishermen, are expressed to London and "on the plate within twelve hours," according to Outlaw's at the Capital's keenly articulate Head Chef, fellow Cornishman, 28-year-old Tom Brown. And recognising that London itself is a port, a few fishes and dishes, including some poor soles (Lemon and Dover), arrive even fresher from the Kent coast.

Our Spring Menu featured a shoal of diverse marine creatures from flatfish to shell dwellers. Rather than gently easing into the flavours, an hors d'oeuvre of cod's roe dip loudly announced the fish theme with a powerful tang of the sea. The accompanying breads were as soft as southerner on a Geordie night out and rich in taste and texture. Ronald, our *Maitre d'* and a man who might have given Tom Hiddleston lessons in poise and composure, proudly told us that even this was an Outlaw production: Clive, Nathan's dad, baked all the breads for the restaurant.

Ronald also neatly disposed of the hoary commonplace of wine-with-fish apartheid, offering wines of colour but still recommending a fruity Sauvignon Blanc from The Capital Hotel's own vineyards. It was served so crisp and chilled the initial swig exploded like that first bite into a Granny Smith.

My starter was cured monkfish draped with fennel, parsley and lemon providing an incongruous but delicious combination of an almost savoury *umami* with tiny dashes of sweetness leaping around the mouth. Claire went for a pickled mackerel with grapes, verjus and a horseradish

yoghurt that delivered another surprisingly successful blend of sweet, sharp and smooth.

Nathan's signature Red Gurnard Soup contrasted the Sea Robin's firm white flesh with sweet orange bits and salty sea purslane, continuing the Outlaw appeal to as many of our taste receptors in a single bite as possible.

For my main, for my name, I went for Brill. A dish which could have comfortably included 'iant' after it. Resting on celeriac, dipped in a tarragon and roast chicken gravy, it seemed a very British Surf'nTurf. The Brill's earthy, meaty, flavour was offset with a sweet parsnip-like celeriac and a light umami chicken juice. Claire decided she'd get turbot charged, which was served with asparagus and a creamy potato tureen and flavoured with a tang of lemon and the gentle bite of shallots.

For pudding it was a divine Chocolate Mousse with Cornish Stout Cake, topped with a Cream Cheese Ice Cream smoother than David Cameron's body oils, and possibly richer than him too.

There is no doubt that Tom Brown's



city incarnation of Outlaw's restaurant, 250 miles away in Cornwall, is worthy of its Michelin star. He is a passionate advocate of sustainable fishing and what he calls, "cooking that lacks pretension." Even if it is a far cry from what most of us mortals usually eat, in or out, within the context of top restaurants the food does have a certain homeliness. Certainly I can see how, for Brown who has been wrapped up in this world of gastronomic excellence from an early age, this menu seems down-to-earth, or at least down-to-the-sea-bed. Tom Brown's school days were relatively short, leaving at 17, to fish and cook, but he is plainly a man of passions. An autodidact and inspired classicist, tattoos of Prometheus, Icarus and Socrates writhe around his arms while he carries a copy of Plato to read on the tube into work. Brown is a thinking man who instinctively, and from long experience, knows how the sea's flavours work. So if you want to excite your taste buds, stimulate your gustatory perceptions and arouse your olfactory receptors, all without paying a heavy price in calories, head to Outlaw's at the Capital.

**Outlaw's at the Capital**  
The Capital Hotel  
22-24 Basil St, London SW3 1AT,  
Phone: +44 20 7591 1202  
Hours: Open today · 12-2PM, 6:30-10PM  
Reservations: [bookatable.co.uk](http://bookatable.co.uk)

Two Course Menu £45  
Three Course Menu £55  
Five Course Tasting Menu £75

## From quays to the Capital

By Henry Tobias Jones

The British fish menu comes with a romance that is hard to replicate in Knightsbridge. It takes quite a character be as comfortable with the shopping bags of the Royal Boroughs, as he is the cottages of Cornwall. Cue; Nathan Outlaw.

When Outlaw barrelled into a little reception room for our interview at the Capital, I expected to stand on ceremony for the Master & Commander of British Fish. But this is not at all Nathan. Instead, he is the bloke you want cooking your fish.

"I've sort of just become the fish guy" Outlaw says, (assumedly only half joking) "this is the only place you can get decent fish in London." Listening to him talk about sustainable sourcing and experimenting with menus, you quickly realise how extensive his knowledge of fish is.

But, it hasn't always been smooth sailing, as Outlaw explains "there are certain things that won't work in London, but which are very successful" in Port Isaac, Outlaw's two Michelin starred Cornish restaurant; "with a lovely sea view" and "nice clean air, simple cooking works, but on a street in Knightsbridge, the dishes don't have that romance."

That is really the truth of

Knightsbridge. It does have its own, distinct romance.

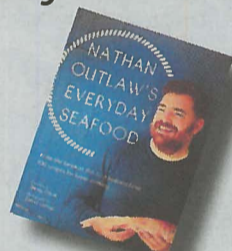
In Cornwall you might chat to Callum who catches the crabs that you eat. But, in Knightsbridge Outlaw's restaurant is "one minute to Harrods, two to Harvey Nichols." The religion of Knightsbridge is service and quality, and the romance relies on the service.

"Albeit what we do is fine dining," Outlaw explains, "it's informal and approachable." The ethos is "if you want to fill your restaurant and to have a buzzing atmosphere, people have to be comfortable." Shedding the old Knightsbridge "robotic service" Outlaw has married the approachability of a Cornish village with the fine dining experience the world expects in Knightsbridge.

"In the past a stuffy, very, very formal" restaurants defined Knightsbridge "and I personally don't think there is any place for that when you are dining out today, whether you are in Cornwall, Kent or Knightsbridge."

This is the key to Outlaw and why his restaurant is so successful. Knightsbridge is proudly considered by its inhabitants as a London village. Just like in villages up and down the country, patrons are actually just "regulars" and Outlaw has plenty. People know each other, they meet up and eat with each other, recommending places to friends. When you walk into Outlaw's restaurant, regardless of whether you are in Knightsbridge or Cornwall, the warm service you'll receive will put you in mind of only the very best, and most quintessentially British of establishments.

### Nathan Outlaw's Everyday Seafood



Step forward all the people with no time, those who have time but would rather be doing something else, and those who only ever read the summary at the end. Now step forward all of you who love provocative statements such as "seafood is the best convenience food ever" and the assertion that Nathan is "determined to dispel the myth that fish is tricky to deal with" Good, now sit down. This won't take long, it's 3am, I'm due to fly to Kathmandu in 2 hours and I've only got 300 words to tell you how good this book is.

It opens with a couple of stunning shots of a dreamily good looking poached salmon, and a lobster seemingly suspended in a twirling universe of diced shallot, bay leaves, carrot and herbs, followed everybody's favourite cheeky chappie Jamie Oliver telling you how brilliant

his pal Nathan is. Nice one mate. Then it's Nathan's turn for an intro, claiming to feel pride and pleasure when someone cooks his recipes differently, and allegedly improving on them.

Stay with me, and take a breath. You are never going to read those two pages again in the entire time you own this book, and it gets immeasurably better from here on in. The next few pages deal with why you should eat fish and shellfish, buying and storing, fish prep, the best equipment and pairing wine with seafood, all done in the clearest, easy-to-read style that should be a model for all seafood books everywhere. Planning a fish Menu is condensed into one page. Brilliant, and a reward everyone mentioned in paragraph 1.

Next we are into the recipes, and the photography is outstanding. This isn't a book for complete cooking dunces, but most dishes barely cover the page, and a modicum of skill and application should see you producing something good enough to impress everyone from foodie friends to first time dates. The addition of a few dessert recipes at the end makes this a winner, and well worth the cover price. Highly recommended. DH

Get your copy of Nathan Outlaw's *Every Day Fish* from The Capital Hotel.

Photographs © Outlaws

