

'I love its peculiar charm'

Caroline Whitney, the chef/patron of 3Greens Restaurant at Elstree Aerodrome, takes time out from the kitchen to tell Louise McEvoy about catering for a royal wedding, her constantly changing aspirations, and Elstree's 'peculiar charm'

Tell the reader a bit about yourself.

I am married with three children and have lived in Watford for 15 years. My hobbies are gardening, reading and music.

Tell the reader briefly about your background as a chef.

Having trained at Slough College I went to work with the Roux Brothers in the West End. From there I joined the Savoy Group and worked at Claridges at the time of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. I later moved to The Berkeley in Knightsbridge and from there to run the Orient Express. I opened my own restaurant in Camden with my ex-husband and when he was offered a wonderful opportunity in Washington DC we moved to the USA where I did outside catering. We later returned home and I took on the running of two restaurants in the West End and organised directors' luncheons for major city firms.

What is the most important lesson you learned when training to be a chef?

The most important lesson I have learned is self-discipline. It enables me to work efficiently and quickly under pressure.

Have you cooked for anyone famous and, if so, who and where?

During my time in the West End and the USA I was privileged to work within brigades who cooked for numerous heads of state, ambassadors, celebrities and politicians, as well as our own royal family.

When you took over the 3Greens



Restaurant what was your vision for the place, and have you achieved it?

When we took the site we could see the potential and were fully aware of the work required to update it and raise the standards. I don't feel I have achieved my vision for 3Greens, since it changes almost daily – as I think it should. Constantly changing aspirations keep me interested and fend off complacency.

What sets the 3Greens Restaurant apart from other restaurants?

What set us apart are our unique location, tranquillity, regular guests, and my staff, who are always hard-working and fun to be around.

What is your favourite food and why?

My favourite food is Eggs Benedict, on Boxing Day morning with my family. It's a tradition.

What is your signature dish?

Our 3Greens soup is most popular amongst the pilots, but our signature dish is Mediterranean chicken – marinated chicken breasts, pan fried and served with roasted

Mediterranean vegetables.

What advice would you give to someone aspiring to be a chef?

Anyone aspiring to be a chef must be prepared for long hours of hard work. It is essential to find a place – any place – in a well-respected kitchen and, once there, to listen and learn. Formal qualifications are priceless, especially in today's industry.

What are your plans for the future?

My ambition is to constantly improve the standards of cuisine and service at 3Greens and to grow our business by raising its profile. All who experience a lazy morning or afternoon at Elstree fall in love with the place and I want more people to enjoy its peculiar charm.

On a day away from the kitchen, where in Hertfordshire would you most like to be and why?

When not in the kitchen I am most happy at home, probably pottering in my garden. I wouldn't want to be anywhere other than where I am now.

Where is your favourite view in Hertfordshire?

My favourite Hertfordshire view is early in the morning looking across the runway at Shenley Tower peering out above the tree line, with horses and rabbits scampering about below and kites, magpies and the occasional skylark in the air. The aerodrome has a surreal timelessness about it – especially early or late in the day – and being so exposed it has a wonderfully huge sky.

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