

A birthday feast to savour

The restaurant business is notoriously fickle, and for an establishment to reach its 20th birthday is extremely rare. So the fact that *The Last Wine Bar* in *George's Street* reaches that landmark, appropriately enough on *St George's Day*, is cause for celebration.

Run for all that time by James Sawrey-Cookson, and for most of it with his business partner and step-son Ecky Limon, *The Last* quickly became a Norwich institution. So much so, in fact, it's hard to imagine the city without it.

So how has it managed to survive and thrive for so long? James Sawrey-Cookson puts it down to a number of things. "It's vital that you are consistent, in the quality of the food, the service and the welcome that people receive," he says. "That doesn't mean you can't innovate and introduce new things, as long as people know you are not changing the basic formula."

That formula clearly works. *The Last* has an army of regulars, and securing a coveted Friday evening table means being organised and booking well ahead. To celebrate the anniversary, *The Last* recently held an online poll to determine the most popular dishes from its 20-year history.



Sautéed scallops & crispy pork belly with pea puree Serves 4

- ▶ **For the scallops:** 12 spotted scallops (1 gtt mine from *Howard's Fishmongers* in Norwich) drizzle of olive oil a couple of knobs of butter Maldon salt, and pepper
- ▶ **For the pork belly:** 500g boneless & rindless pork belly 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- ▶ **For the pea puree:** 250g frozen peas, defrosted 100ml chicken stock 50ml double cream knob of butter salt and pepper
- ▶ **For the pea puree:** In a saucepan bring the chicken stock, cream and butter to the boil, and the peas and simmer for 1-2 minutes. Drain the peas and reserve the cooking liquid. Blitz the peas in a food processor adding the cooking liquid a little at a time until a good puree is achieved; season.
- ▶ **When the pork is cold** cut around the outside to separate the edges off, then divide into four equal sized pieces. To crisp the pork belly, fry it in a warm frying pan fat side down until golden, then turn it over and place in a pre heated oven at 180C for 6-8 minutes.
- ▶ **While the pork is cooking**, start cooking the

- 1 leek, roughly chopped
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 stick of celery, roughly chopped
- 200ml chicken stock
- 100ml white wine
- little baby salad leaves for garnish

- ▶ **First cook the pork belly:** pre-heat the oven to 180C. Put all the vegetables into a roasting tray and lay the pork on top; pour in the wine and the chicken stock and season with salt and pepper. Cover with baking parchment and tin foil, put in the oven and cook for about 1-2 hours. The pork is ready when it's nice and soft, you can test it with a knife.
- ▶ **When the pork has finished cooking** take it out of the tray and remove all the vegetables that may be stuck to it. Using a clean baking tray, put a sheet of baking parchment on it and place the pork on top, now place another sheet of baking parchment on top of the pork and another baking



Braised lamb shank with diced root vegetables and red wine and rosemary jus Serves 2

- ▶ **For the lamb shank:** 4 lamb shanks drizzle of olive oil 2 carrots, roughly chopped 1 leek, roughly chopped 1 onion, roughly chopped 8 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped 3 sticks of celery, roughly chopped
- ▶ **Gently reheat the pea puree**, in a sauce pan, when it's hot everything is ready to plate - now try to make yours look like mine!

- ▶ **For the braised lamb shank with diced root vegetables and red wine and rosemary jus Serves 4**
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- ▶ **2 large sprigs of rosemary**
- ▶ **500ml chicken stock**
- ▶ **200ml red wine**
- ▶ **salt and pepper**
- ▶ **For the root vegetables:** 2 large carrots, cut into chunky dice 2 large parsnips, cut into chunky dice 1 Swede, cut into chunky dice 3 raw beetroot, washed and roasted (skins-on) in foil at 150C for 2-3 hours 1 celeriac, cut into chunky dice

Last team: Ecky Limon and James Sawrey-Cookson.



a couple knobs of butter a good drizzle of olive oil salt and pepper

For the sauce: all the cooking liquid from the lamb shanks some plain flour or cornflour for thickening

- ▶ **First cook the lamb shanks:** in a hot frying pan brown the shanks on all sides, then place them in a deep casserole dish. In the same pan brown all the vegetables and arrange them around the lamb shanks. Deglaze the frying pan using the wine and put that and the chicken stock in with the lamb as well. Now cover with foil and cook at 150C for about 2-3 hours, or until tender.
- ▶ **Now the roasted vegetables:** ideally for each different vegetable you will use a different baking tray. On each tray put the vegetables, and drizzle with oil, salt and pepper. Cook until tender - about 20-30 minutes at 180C.
- ▶ **To finish the dish, take the lamb shanks out of their cooking liquid and leave warm wrapped in foil.** Pour the liquid through a sieve removing all the vegetables, now you can reduce the sauce. It is thick consistency, thickening if necessary with the flour or cornflour. When the sauce is thick, simmer for a couple of minutes, and everything should now be ready.

Vanilla cheese cake with caramel sauce Serves 6

- ▶ **For the base:** 200g digestive biscuits 100g unsalted butter
- ▶ **For the cheesecake:** 300g cream cheese 300ml castor sugar 250g double sugar 1 vanilla pod
- ▶ **For the caramel sauce:** 250g castor sugar 100g butter 75 ml double cream



- ▶ **To make the base,** crush the biscuits into fine crumbs, melt the butter and mix with the biscuits and put into a loose bottom 8 or 10 inch cake ring lined with grease proof paper. Press the base so it's really well compacted, and then put in the fridge to set for 30 minutes.
- ▶ **While the base is setting** we can make the caramel sauce: in a saucepan put the sugar and a ounce of water, and put on a medium heat. We are making a caramel with the sugar, so be careful, as when the caramel is a nice golden colour it will be very, very hot. Cover your hand with a tea towel and gently place the butter in and the cream. It will boil very rapidly when they go in, then gently whisk until smooth. Keep warm, but not hot.
- ▶ **Now for the filling.** Put all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl and using an electric whisk, whisk until you have soft peaks. Put the cheesecake mix into the ring on top of the base and put into the fridge to set for 1-2 hours. Serve the cheesecake drizzled with the caramel sauce.

Picture: ANTONY KELLY