

FEATURE // BARRY BRYSON



'I know that I'm just part of the food chain. So if I stop ordering from my suppliers, then that's a problem for them'

Acclaimed chef Barry Bryson was enjoying his busiest year before the pandemic cleared his order book. But like many in the hospitality industry, he soon found new ways to work including online and providing fine dining at home, writes Liv McMahon

A chef and business owner whose name you might typically associate with prestige catering, having catered for the likes of Louis Vuitton and Rolls-Royce, Barry Bryson has taken the challenge of making a little luxury go a long way this year in his stride.

"I'm very fortunate that before 2020, I worked in a part of the market that is deemed luxury," Barry Bryson explains to me as we reflect on the blur of the year gone by. "but I'm really aware, like everybody else, that this isn't the year to focus on luxury, but instead on sustenance and provision."

Having recently returned to the kitchen at Jupiter Artland's Cafe Party, where he was previously stationed between 2009-2013, it is clear that accessibility remains at the forefront of Barry's mind wherever he finds himself at the moment; the economic turmoil of this year reaffirming for him the importance of communicating with customers and facilitating the joy of cooking.

"One of the things that I've been really conscious of doing, whether it has been with the ready meals or with the brunch menu or with the cafe at Jupiter Artland, is to make it as accessible as pos-

sible for people. I can cook creatively, yes, but I am also cooking with the fact in mind that this is a difficult time for everybody. And I don't want to not acknowledge that in my kitchen."

Throughout the pandemic Barry turned to social media to fill the gaps left by the suspension of our normal, everyday lives. Instagram became a way for him to stay grounded and connected; bonding with users who likewise found cooking to be a source of comfort in a time of crisis. "I've had a much more interactive year than I probably ever had, which is strange considering it's been a year of isolation," he tells me. "I wake up every day feeling very fortunate. Not only that I'm still cooking, but that I still have a routine way of talking to customers."

The last few months have seen the chef explore new horizons in more ways than one. When restrictions began to gradually lift over summer and into autumn, Barry's focus shifted. "I've got great friends in the trade who are obviously facing the same problems as I am, so thought: 'How can we work together through this really complicated tier system?' This led him to collaborate with

later found myself staring at an empty diary and wondering what we were going to do." But in pivoting to provide at-home dinners to customers himself via door to door delivery, Barry was able to immerse himself in a new way of working.

"I'm a firm believer that

I can't explain how to do something to somebody else, unless I've done it myself," Barry says, adding "if I have an idea for a business or want somebody to do it with me, the best way for me to learn is to put myself out there. So I personally cooked and delivered all of it."

With Christmas fast

approaching and a new

year finally in sight, Barry is

optimistic about the future.

"I'm very proud of my fellow

chefs, restaurateurs, and everyone in hospitality, because they've really responded well

and their efforts have been phenomenal despite the lack of support."

At the same time, he recognises that even his own buoyant optimism has its limits:

"We have to be realistic

and think about how much longer we can all keep adapting like this? Most of us at the moment are running on 20 per cent of our annual turnover."

After a year which has, for



▲ A fine dining dish, above, from chef Barry Bryson, main, who has set up a dine at home business during the pandemic and collaborated with restaurants for pop-up nights when restrictions allowed

Greek restaurant Spitaki. "It's been amazing to find myself selling out four nights in a Greek restaurant on a tasting menu. It's something I would have never seen myself doing before this year."

From there, he went onto Jupiter Artland and Honeycomb & Co – teaming up with the Bruntsfield eaterie to provide a weekly fine dining at home winter menu.

"Basically, this has been

my year of connecting with lots of other businesses, not just to keep them going but also my suppliers too," Barry says. "At the end of the day, I know that I'm just part of the food chain. So if I stop ordering from my suppliers, then that's a problem for them, too."

It's easy to forget, he notes, in all the discussion of pubs and supermarkets, just how "devastating" the knock-on impact of empty restaurants and cafes has been for independent producers and suppliers in Scotland. "It's heartbreaking because the industry is designed for people to come in and to be introduced to those producers through our menus," he says.

With Christmas fast

approaching and a new

year finally in sight, Barry is

optimistic about the future.

"I'm very proud of my fellow

chefs, restaurateurs, and everyone in hospitality, because they've really responded well

and their efforts have been phenomenal despite the lack of support."

SAVE WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE
Subscription offers with 60% off*

- ◆ Six day subscription to *The Scotsman* from 71p a day
- ◆ Seven day subscription including *Scotland on Sunday* from 74p a day
- ◆ Weekend subscription to *The Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday* from 89p a day

Collect your daily copy of *The Scotsman* from your regular retail outlet, using pre-paid vouchers – there are some great savings too. Also includes access to our digital app on your smartphone or tablet device.

To subscribe or for more details visit: localsubplus.co.uk or call 0330 123 5950 and quote 386PA to claim discount.

Home delivery

Let the news come to you – with free delivery for six weeks. You can now have *The Scotsman* delivered direct to your door six days a week – and get the first six weeks at standard cover price with free delivery.

To subscribe or for more details visit: delivermynewspaper.co.uk

*Prices quoted are for new subscribers only paying by direct debit & apply for the first 3 months. Subsequent months save 20% off cover price.

See tomorrow's *Scotsman* for an interview with acclaimed restaurateur Carina Contini, plus a recipe card showing how to cook the perfect Turkey crown



"I think this year has brought out a lot of kindness in people. The goodwill of our customers really does carry us. So more of that, and thinking about other people a bit more than maybe we would usually, could potentially bring about some really positive change after quite a terrible year. Isn't that what Christmas is all about?"