

Jamie Raftery

The Holistic Chef

Biography & Story



Jamie Raftery

Born and raised in west Ireland. Jamie is a very passionate, creative, enthusiastic, humble and determined man. Grafting his way from a 15 year old pot washer to cooking on the toughest section in world number 1 restaurant The French Laundry 10 years later is testament to his will and strength of character. He has an unshakable desire and commitment to achieve his goals and dreams. Jamie's mission as The Holistic Chef is to educate, inspire and empower people to live a healthier and happier life by choosing more nutritious foods on a daily basis. His mantras are 'let food be thy medicine' and 'our health is our greatest wealth'

Career path 1999 - 2015

Jamie's first venture into the hospitality industry was at the tender age of 15, when he took a job as a pot washer in the Skeffington Arms in Galway to gain some experience to get into culinary collage. After completing the 2 year course at culinary college he landed his first chef position at the Rock Glen Country House with Chef G Nazri in Clifden, Ireland. Jamie then cooked at a ski chalet in the French Alps for 2 seasons where he met Ian Webber, former Head Chef at Gidleigh Park in Devon, with whom he went on to train with in Lyme Regis.

Jamie then secured a position at the 2 Michelin starred Gidleigh Park Hotel where he spent 3 formative years honing his skills across all sections of the kitchen, learning and developing his craft from renowned super chef Michael Caines. Jamie also assisted with the launch of Abode hotels in Glasgow, Manchester and Exeter. Michael then recommended Jamie to chef Thomas Keller of the prestigious 'French Laundry' in the Napa Valley, California. It was his dream come true to work alongside Thomas Keller and his team for an incredible 18 months, as well as having the privilege of being invited to be one of the sous chefs with the French Laundry's "dream team" at the Harrods pop-up in 2011.

Jamie was then headhunted by Kit Chapman to take over the reigns at the iconic Castle Hotel in Taunton, he commanded his first brigade of 20 and took the team through a turbulent time of national economic recession. From here, Jamie ventured to the Cotswolds to take over the reigns at Lower Slaughter Manor, which was part of the Brownsword Hotel group and with the support and expertise of Michael Caines once again. Jamie had two phenomenal years here, winning 3AA Rosettes after only 1 year in charge and he was also awarded the coveted and prestigious 'Acorn Award' which recognises the future stars of the hospitality industry.

Jamie has been very fortunate to have trained with such an amazing variety of inspiring mentors throughout his career, including Michael Caines, Gordon Ramsay, after winning the Ramsay scholarship in 2007, Rasmus Kofoed, the gold, silver and bronze Bocuse d'or culinary super-hero from Denmark, Marcus Wareing, Heston Blumenthal, Corey Lee, Clare Clarke and Angela Hartnett.

A Holistic Story

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The helter - skelter over four years, of being Head Chef at The Castle Hotel, Taunton, U.K. and The Lower Slaughter Manor, Cheltenham, U.K. , attempting to bring those locales up to the Michelin level standard in which I had trained (with Thomas Keller. The French Laundry, Napa Valley, California, with Gordon Ramsay at three of his restaurants and with Michael Caines. leading Chef of south - west England), allowed very little time to reflect - meditate on the philosophic essence of food and nutrition.

However, the benefits of such busyness were considerable, honing leadership skills, staff recruitment, training and motivation, complying with all stipulated protocols, and in - depth learning of business - commercial aspects involved in operating such enterprises. All of these nicely complemented my existing and deepening menu development and cookery competence and so were the ideal 'well rounding' input to my late 20's and early 30's career.

From an early age, I had an abiding interest in, and appreciation of vital aspects of nature's cornucopia, born and raised as I was in west Ireland, right beside a botanically - and wildlife - rich ecosystem, comprising of a pristine raised moorland with adjoining Turlough (drying lake characteristic of limestone regions). Here I often foraged for wild mushrooms of varied kinds, edible wild plants and flowers, knowing all the nooks and crannies where such were readily to be found. Greenland white - fronted geese were our Winter neighbours, while grouse, deer, rabbit and pheasant were abundant. Coming from such a multi - species habitat, I suppose that, re food, localism, freshness, seasonality and naturalness, were 'in my blood', were second nature to me.

Accordingly it was a coincidence, or perhaps more than coincidence, that I was imbued with the culinary ethos of recent Best - In - The - World Restaurants - restaurateurs such as Denmark's 'Geranium' (Rasmus Koefoed with whom I worked in 2014) and

'Noma'. I took to such nature - foraging orientations 'like a duck to water'. This was my metier.

My personal profession - centered passion so took a quantum leap, aided and abetted both by nutritional science studies which I undertook in tandem with this holistic focus and by exposure to the ancient art and practice of fermentation, during a north Thailand month of Thai boxing, yoga and meditation. Our trillions of inner microbia, probiotically governing gut, heart and brain, are the ultimate arbiters of what is 'good food'!

With awards, scholarships, collaborations with globally - respected chefs and the whole gamut of 'fine dining' expertise under my belt, this holistic preoccupation and conviction imparted a whole renewing energy boost and novel engagement - directions to me: for example; partnering a Yoga Sutra Centre providing nutritional underpinning to spiritual growth; partnering and co - directing Masterclasses with a fermentation scientist, demonstrating both the practical and theoretical dimensions to attendees; production and distribution of raw energy boosts to Crossfit Centres (I am an avid advocate and proponent of 'mens sana in corpore sano'.... 'healthy mind in healthy body' as per the Crossfit perspective and weltanschauung).

While this evolution was not a volte face/about turn, it did represent a turning point, in that the effects of food, mentally as well as physically, on the psyche and on the Soma, and how food can counteract and be antidote to, 'diseases of civilization', gradually overshadowed my prior concern with display factors and presentational flourishes, creative and all that it had been.

On my projected journey ahead in the field of international holistic cuisine consultancy, and in cooperating with a range of individuals and organisations on similar and parallel trajectories, my story thus far is the balanced bedrock and motive force which will fuel and energize the journey.

To conclude and by way of epilogue, I would declare that no step of the way would have been possible without the gift of rich mentoring encounters with outstanding chefs and practitioners, who gave generously of their time and expertise. In turn, I am determined to pass my knowledge on to others in like manner, eternally grateful to be able to do so.