

52 **Top 50 Gastropubs** Newcomer of the Year



The Swan

Wedmore, Somerset

Business background: Rob Greacen, a director of River Cottage, and two friends bought the freehold in spring 2011, making it the first in the Draco Pub Company. Following a £1.6m renovation, the pub reopened with a new kitchen and restaurant and six boutique bedrooms. Turnover in the first year was £700,000. Ex-River Cottage chef Tom Blake delivers good-quality food cooked in a simple style with everything freshly prepared, and fresh-baked bread available to take home.

Key successes: Events such as a pork and cider evening have been popular, as well as opening for breakfast, offering afternoon tea, selling bar snacks, and converting the skittle alley into a function room for both weddings and parties.

Plans for 2013: To develop a more frequent and varied programme of events, including musical and theatrical evenings, and maximise the potential of the Club Room.



The Assheton Arms

Downham, Lancashire

Business background: Owned and operated by Joycelyn Neve, the daughter of Chris Neve, one of Fleetwood's most prominent fish merchants and exporters, and chef/partner Anthony Shirley, the Assheton Arms is the second pub in their fledgling Seafood Pub Company. Leased from the Downham Estate, the pub was opened last Easter following extensive refurbishment (£350,000) and business has been very brisk, with covers averaging 900 a week.

Key successes: There have been wine dinners, wine and new dish tastings, a beer festival and a big Halloween party. Operating a 'pop-up pub', cooking signature dishes and offering takeaway food at the local Clitheroe Food Festival increased awareness of the outlet and its food offering. Twitter is used daily to promote events and daily specials, and matching wines (by the glass) with dishes has seen customers exploring the wine list and buying more expensive drinks.

Plans for 2013: To make the outside terrace larger to accommodate more diners, and to add quality bedrooms to the business by converting a house in the village.



The Eagle & Child

Ramsbottom, Lancashire

Business background: Glen Duckett and chef Eve Townson have taken a Thwaites pub with a bad reputation and transformed it into a thriving food-led pub in just over a year. Menus focus on Lancashire's food heritage, and classic local recipes and ingredients are given a modern twist, from black pudding Scotch egg to braised beef shin and oxtail suet pudding. A commitment to employ and train disadvantaged young people has proved a great success and been welcomed warmly within the local community.

Key successes: Offering seasonal events and food offers to boost trade, PR and general awareness, including wine dinners and menus to celebrate events like Bonfire Night and Burns' Night. The 'incredible edible beer garden' is much loved and used by the locals. Adding the function room for parties and training events has maximised capacity and broadened the customer base.

Plans for 2013: To add an outdoor kitchen with wood-fired oven and barbecue and expand the incredible edible beer garden. The pub will launch partnerships with local organisations to offer weekly packages. A smartphone app will be developed to promote the pub.



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