

Now in its fourth year, Tom Shepherd's Michelin-starred restaurant Upstairs, remains a big destination-draw for foodies.

And it's not just for the 34-year-old's signature scallop dishes or his infamous Desperate Dan pie or Banana Dessert – both of which he served up on the TV programme Great British Menu in 2023.

Guests travel far and wide for Tom's taste-led menu which champions the best of British produce while weaving in bold, Asian-influenced flavours. Many are also enthusiastic about the 'relaxed but refined' vibe – an atmosphere Tom describes as "warm and welcoming without being stuffy." Overall the food is, in Tom's own words "a balance between precision and creativity" and served in a setting which manages to be both elegant and approachable.

There is definitely a celebrity clientele at Upstairs. It includes other chefs keen to see what they're currently up against, footballers and creatives. Tom's used to mixing with famous faces though, cooking regularly at Wembley for England

matches and at events such as Royal Ascot and the cricket at Edgbaston. He's keen to stress though that every guest at Upstairs is treated like a VIP.

In fact, Tom is very much a local man and keen to support his community.

"Supporting local businesses is absolutely fundamental to what we do at Upstairs," he stressed. "Having grown up in Sutton Coldfield, and now running a Michelin-starred restaurant in Lichfield, it's really important to me that we play a positive role in our community.

"Whether it's sourcing ingredients from Staffordshire farms, working with local artisans, or being an ambassador for local charity Kids' Village in Wychnor who are building a purpose-built holiday village for sick children and their families, we're proud to give back to the place that shaped me. It's about more than just business – it's about building something sustainable and meaningful in the area I call home."

With 37 covers, there is a real sense of intimacy and personality at Upstairs. The restaurant is small, which allows Tom to focus

on the finer details – not just in the food, but in the service and the atmosphere. He and his team are constantly evolving and pushing themselves creatively.

Upstairs (which is upstairs from his father's jewellery shop) opened its doors towards the end of 2021. Tom received his Michelin star just four months later – an experience he describes as "surreal."

Beyond the awards, the local support for Upstairs has been phenomenal. "The people of Lichfield and Staffordshire have really embraced us," said Tom. "To be the only starred restaurant in the county is something I'm incredibly proud of".

Tom thrives on the creative freedom involved in running his own restaurant.

"Every element of Upstairs reflects my vision, from the menu to the decor to the team culture," he said. "That's incredibly rewarding. But there's also the challenge and pressure of running a restaurant. I thrive on that, and it keeps us all striving to be better every day."

Not only does Tom run the restaurant and carry out consultancy work, but he and wife Charlotte have also started up Twofold

where the pair can indulge their experience in creating their own drinks.

"The launch of Twofold has been really exciting," said Tom. "We have a Banana Rum and a Thai Green Gin which are selling incredibly well. There's definitely scope to do more."

As for time off? It's rare, but it does still happen. "I love spending time with my wife and daughter Grace whenever I can – even simple things like going for a walk or having a quiet evening together are how I reset.

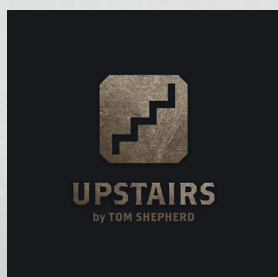
"I'm also into carp fishing and the gym, and I'll take the Porsche out for a long drive when I need some headspace. I do try to carve out a bit of downtime here and there and I've just come back from celebrating my birthday in Paris which was lovely."

And as for the future? He's currently looking for a second site for a more casual dining concept. Watch this space...



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Scallop Satay Recipe

Ingredients

- 4 hand-dived Scallops
- 50g unsalted butter, diced
- Half of 1 lemon
- Salt

Method: Prep the scallops, place on J-Cloth, in fridge until 30 minutes before cooking.

Get a non-stick pan hot, add a small amount of oil to the pan, season the top of the scallops, place seasoned side down in the pan and season the bottom also, caramelize until golden, add butter, and start basting, add a squeeze of lemon juice, turn scallop over and rest for 1 minute.

Satay sauce

- 3 shallots, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 deseeded chilli, sliced
- 40g peeled ginger, sliced
- 75g unsalted butter, diced
- 150g light soy sauce
- 400g peanut butter
- 800g coconut puree
- 150g vegetable stock

Method: Confit shallots, garlic, ginger and chilli in the butter, until completely soft. Set aside. Warm the soy, peanut butter, coconut puree and stock in a pan and place everything in a blender. Once finished, season and pass through a fine sieve – it doesn't have to be super smooth.

Pickled radish salad

- 1 red meat radish
- 1 blue meat radish
- 1 black radish
- Micro coriander
- 250g sugar
- 250g rice wine vinegar
- Salt

Method: Bring sugar and rice wine vinegar to boil, set aside to cool. Slice all 3 radishes to 1mm thickness and place in the pickle liquid once it's cooled for 1-2 hours, remove and make a slice from the centre of the black radish to the edge and fold over to make a cone shape. Slice the other 2 radishes directly in half and fold on top of the black radish to form a rose, top with micro coriander.

Dashi Gel

- 500ml water
- 12g instant dashi
- 40ml light soy sauce
- 20ml mirin
- 10ml rice wine vin
- 10ml dashi vinegar

Method: Add water to dashi powder, bring to boil, add remaining ingredients to a bowl and add dashi stock to the bowl too. Thicken with ultratex and place in vac pack machine so draw the air out, pass through a fine sieve and bottle.

Garnish: 15g white and 15g black sesame seeds - toasted in the oven at 160c for 5/6 mins. Add a splash of soy over the top and bake for a further 3/4 mins, until dry.

Drizzle over some coriander oil to finish – this is a bunch of fresh coriander blended with a pinch of salt and vegetable oil and pass through a J cloth.