



Refettorio *Felix*

at St Cuthbert's

Press Kit 2019



Background to St Cuthbert's Centre

For nearly 30 years, St Cuthbert's Centre has operated as a community hub, dedicated to improving the lives of marginalised, homeless and vulnerable people in West London. Over 60% of its guests are rough sleepers or homeless and over 50% have some degree of mental health issue, substance misuse issue or both (dual diagnosis). Many face social stigma, discrimination and live in a state of food poverty and financial insecurity.

St Cuthbert's operates under the mission 'proving the community cares', promoting dignity, community and well-being. In a safe and restorative environment, the Centre provides supportive and therapeutic services such as counselling advice, a mental health service, shower and laundry facilities, free clothing, daily free or subsidized lunch and teas and coffees for all who attend. The Centre also has a wide-ranging activity programme including computer skills and CV-building sessions, a culinary skills workshop, advice on employment and rehousing as well as reading groups, art classes and nutrition workshops.

Background to Refettorio Felix at St Cuthbert's

In June 2017 Refettorio Felix was launched at St Cuthbert's Centre in collaboration with Food For Soul, a non-profit organisation founded by world-renowned chef Massimo Bottura that fights food waste in support of social inclusion. They have created a new model of community dining room, known as a 'Refettorio', that now exist in Italy, Rio de Janeiro, London and Paris. Each unique project shares the common mandate of:

- 1) using surplus ingredients otherwise destined for landfill
- 2) serving high quality and nutritious dishes to vulnerable people

3) working with designers to transform an underused space

As part of the initial phase of the project, Food for Soul and St Cuthbert's partnered with the London Food Month festival and sourced funding to transform the Centre into an inspiring and inviting community dining room complete with a state-of-the-art professional kitchen. The pro bono renovation by [Studioilse](#) design studio challenged the stereotypical image of a soup kitchen by creating a welcoming communal space. The dining room and common areas are filled with light, art and plants, which brings dignity to the diners in a space where they feel at home.

Refettorio Felix at St Cuthbert's - How it Works

From Monday to Friday, the community dining room serves a three-course lunch to between 60-80 adults. The kitchen only uses surplus ingredients that would otherwise go to waste. Delivered three times weekly by UK-based charity [The Felix Project](#) and sourced from various producers and supermarkets such as *Waitrose*, *Hello Fresh* and *Paul*. Most of the produce is donated due to aesthetic reasons or because it is close to its sell-by date.

Volunteers serve lunch in a manner that encourages social inclusion, by bring meals to the table and initiating conversation. As a result, lunch service creates lasting relationships in the community. The guests can sit down and enjoy their meal together, stimulating conversation and exchange. Sustainability is an integral part of the Refettorio's design; for example, the table is set with only sustainable and reusable plates, cups and cutlery to ensure limited paper and plastic waste.

Guest Chefs

During its launch period in 2017, the Refettorio invited more than 30 guest chefs to cook for its guests. These included: Michel Roux Jr, Brett Graham, Monica Galetti, Jason Atherton, Daniel Boulud, Alain Ducasse and Clare Smyth (see [website](#) for full list). Since then, many chefs have volunteered to come back again so that the Refettorio has an ongoing programme of regular guest chefs. Each one applies their skills and knowledge to use the surplus ingredients in a new and innovative way, delivering a real sense of hospitality to the guests. In turn, the chefs return to their restaurants with a greater sense of responsibility to the community and to sustainability.

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Testimonials from guests

"I used to be homeless but not anymore. Coming here gets me out of the house. I suffer from OCD and hoarding and sometimes struggle to get to the kitchen sink." - Andrew, 45

"Everyone feels safe and at home here. Some people who I see at other centres being rowdy and sometimes aggressive come here and are quieter and more respectful." - Patrick, 62

"When I lost my job, I was so embarrassed to come here, When you are on your uppers, and someone comes and serves you food, it's good for the soul. It makes you feel like you're somebody. It gives you hope for the future." - Jackie, 54

"This is a unique experience for guests. Everyone says the same; fantastic food. People that are homeless appreciate these things - they feel valued, it gives hope that something will change." - Anonymous

Testimonials from guest chefs

“Coming into the kitchen at Refettorio Felix means you need to embrace the spirit of the project and not buy ingredients especially for the menu you want to create, as that could mean even more food wastage at the end of the day. -Guest Chef Brett Graham (The Ledbury)

“It’s always a joy to work with Cleo, Nassim and the whole team here. I’ve learned a lot and equally, I think they’ve learned a lot from having guest chefs in the kitchen. The first time I came, I didn’t really interact with the guests, but over time you start to build relationships. It’s beautiful really.” -Guest Chef Merlin Labron-Johnson (Portland, The Conduit)

Testimonials from volunteers

“Good cause, great people and great to see the chef’s creativity with food waste” -Angela Anson, dining room volunteer

“[He] came in and welled up in tears from sheer joy. This is the reason I love giving back; bringing a smile and happiness to people’s faces! -Neerali Tailor, regular dining room volunteer

“An incredibly humbling and uplifting experience” -Sandy Bernstein, dining room volunteer

Refettorio Felix’s Impact

- In 12 months, Refettorio Felix saves 18,000 kg of surplus food from going to the landfill.
- Each year, the centre serves 16,630 zero-waste meals to the homeless, isolated and hungry.
- 115 volunteers work in the kitchen and dining room every month.

Visibility

Refettorio Felix at St Cuthbert’s has received much media coverage since its launch, including:

Wilma Journal: [“Food for Life: Refettorio Felix”](#) (December, 2018)

South West Londoner: [“Cookery School for disadvantaged people in Earl’s Court offers great opportunities”](#) (November, 2018)

The Red Bulletin Innovator: [“Food for the Soul”](#) pg 73-78 (July, 2018)

Cereal Magazine: [“Refettorio Felix: Community Kitchen”](#) (Spring, 2018)

Waitrose Magazine: [“Food and Fellowship”](#) (December, 2017)

The Independent: [“Celebrity chefs are turning food thrown away by supermarkets into meals for homeless Londoners”](#) (June, 2017)

London Evening Standard: [“Massimo Bottura serves first lunch at community kitchen for Food Month”](#) (June, 2017)

Dezeen: [“Ilse Crawford creates dining space with ‘dignity’ for London Soup Kitchen.”](#) (June, 2017)

Telegraph: [“The Soup Kitchen gets a Michelin-star makeover”](#) (June, 2017)

The Guardian: [“Massimo Bottura and his global movement to feed the hungry”](#) (May, 2017)

Conde Nast Traveller: [“Now, UK’s top 30 chefs will turn ‘waste’ into wow”](#) (April, 2017)

Multimedia resources

Brave Bison- Mutha: [Turning Surplus Food into Meals for the Vulnerable](#)

Wonderhatch: [An Insider’s View of the Launch of Refettorio Felix with Food for Soul](#)

Thomas Reuters Foundation: [Food Waste Warriors](#)

OmVed Studios: [Merlin Lebron-Johnson visits Refettorio Felix](#)

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Social Media

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