

5 minutes with Lorraine Arnold, owner of Pier Point Bar & Restaurant, Torquay

Please give us an overview of your operation

Pier Point is situated on the picturesque waterside of Torquay, employing a team of over 50 in the summer. We are driven by Quality at all times and in all aspects of the business, motivated not just by profits but customer satisfaction. This is reflected in the number of awards already acquired and continue to strive for. Unique to Pier Point are our service buttons, allowing customers to call the waiter from their seat. Our team are at the core of the business, and this is reflected in our retention rate. Being coastal, we source local fish where possible, and have expanded our menu, to include more of these species, however Fish & Chips continues to outsell other items on the menu by circa 7-1. We continue to reduce our enviro impact wherever possible. We are passionate about the industry, and every serving of food carries our heart and soul.

What environmental and sustainability considerations do you make across all areas of your business and how is this information passed on to the customer?

We only use sustainably caught fish which means only using MSC Cod, Haddock & Plaice. We extended our range to include species landed locally in Brixham, this includes Hake, bass and Mackerel, and our suppliers are committed to only providing us with sustainably caught produce. They work with the MSC and NGO's, as well as the MCS. In using the Brixham landed fish, we believe this also reduces our carbon footprint in terms of milage to deliver. We also use local suppliers for our fresh vegetables and other products wherever possible. Our packaging is all either recyclable or biodegradable. We are working towards 100% no plastics, and I would say we are now at 98%. We have also installed a carboard baler, which is recycled. We also recycle our food waste and bottles separately from our general waste. Besides this, we are a member of the Sustainable Restaurant Association and are working continually on ways in which we can improve our impact. We have signed up for the Torbay Net Zero Workshop to help with our mission. our enviro considerations are regularly communicated via social media and our website. We passionately believe that this is an ongoing journey.

What measures have you got in place to ensure you protect the health and wellbeing of your team?

At Pier Point, the health and wellbeing of our team is paramount. We've implemented a comprehensive in-house training program, beginning with an induction for new team members. Tailored to their specific department and skill set, it equips each member with the necessary tools to excel in their roles. We engage external organisations, NFFF & KFE to provide specialised training. I personally conduct appraisals for every team member to ensure they feel valued, heard, and to address any specific needs that may arise during their journey at Pier Point. Regular breaks are encouraged, particularly in the fast-paced kitchen environment. Mindful of the evolving attitudes towards mental health, we actively promote

open dialogue about any challenges our team face. We take their wellbeing seriously, offering additional time off, shorter shifts, or simply a compassionate ear. Some team members serve as sole caregivers, and their work at Pier Point can provide a welcome respite from the demands of their home environments. We've partnered with Hospitality Action's Employee Assistance Programme, providing our team with access to specialised, confidential support 24/7. This includes personal counselling, debt management, addiction support, and various other resources. Our commitment is to ensure their holistic wellbeing is upheld throughout the year.

As a token of gratitude and to show just how valuable they are to us, we are thrilled to announce that we have signed up with Hospitality Action EAP (Employee Assistance Program). This fantastic initiative provides our team with access to specialist, independent, and confidential advice, support, and assistance. Hospitality Action's EAP supports industry professionals by offering a wide range of benefits, including personal counselling, legal guidance, addiction support, debt and money advice, parenting helpline, elder care helpline, and a whistle-blowing service. Whatever the problem, they are there to help 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. They also offer critical incident and trauma support. Our team members are the heart and soul of our organisation, and we believe that their mental and emotional well-being should be a top priority. By partnering with Hospitality Action EAP, we are reinforcing our commitment to creating a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages personal growth and happiness.

What steps have you taken to protect your profitability in a time of rising operational costs?

Whilst we have always had an eye on the GP, it has never been more prevalent than now, to do so. I have a monthly check - in with the accountant to assess the profit and loss and to look over the upcoming cashflow needs. Always paying above minimum wage, and with the national wage increase, we focused on reducing staff costs. We are on target to have reduced this by circa 20% this year. This was attained by encouraging the customers to order via the QR code or going to order directly at the bar, reducing the number of waiters needed to take orders. We increased prices at the beginning of the year, in order to continue to achieve our desired 70%GP We also negotiated and secured better prices by committing to purchasing higher volumes of items such as Fish & Oil. The managers are also encouraged to double check the costs of items before ordering and find alternatives if necessary. By re looking at our menu we also selected ingredients which can be used across several items and not just one dish, minimising waste. Our Gross Takings are up by circa 5%.

What measures have you taken to retain customers during the cost-of-living crisis, have any of these measures encouraged new customers?

When we first opened, I always worked to a GP of 75%. I have reduced this now to 70%, so prices didn't have to increase too much. Balancing the GP along with providing a wide-ranging price point has been the key. Adding extra items for the smaller budget has helped. We also

introduced our light bites and a Cake & Coffee deal, which has proved very popular. We provided a good choice of items for every budget. We introduced our meat free pan which has been very popular, and as with the Gluten Free range we do, increases revenue by being inclusive for the whole family. We are in the process of introducing loyalty cards, and are still in talks with our IT provider as to what is the most efficient way to execute this to fit the needs of the business. We have invisible chips for £2.50 100% of which goes to Rowcroft Hospice, one of our nominated charities. We had Albert from the Fisherman's Mission, our other nominated Charity, on National Fish & Chip Day giving out Free Fish & Chips to passers-by. All of which increases our profile in the community and in turn, leads to new business.

How do you engage with young diners and educate them on the benefits of eating sustainable seafood?

We are wholeheartedly committed to instilling a deep appreciation for sustainable seafood in young diners. Through a multi-faceted approach, we engage with them on various platforms, including social media, where we share captivating stories about the journey from sea to plate and the importance of sustainable seafood choices. We have designed a specially curated children's menu that not only features delicious and kid-friendly seafood options but also incorporates engaging fun facts about sustainability and the food we offer, sparking curiosity about the origins of their meals. Additionally, we actively participate in local initiatives like England's Seafood FEAST, where we collaborate with like-minded individuals and businesses to promote responsible dining choices and sustainable seafood practices. Furthermore, we invest in the talent of tomorrow by recruiting, training, and developing young team members, empowering them to become advocates for responsible dining. We also extend our educational outreach to the local college. As a part of our community support efforts, we proudly sponsor awards such as the Torbay Young Carers, recognising the exceptional contributions of young individuals who demonstrate extraordinary care and dedication in their roles. Through these endeavours, we strive to nurture a socially responsible and environmentally conscious generation of seafood enthusiasts.

What do you do to ensure you serve a high quality and consistent product from start to finish?

Staff training is the key here. We have an extensive training programme at Pier Point, across the board. We use NFFF training modules, as well as the school, and also KFE. We ensure all our team are equipped and are ready to face the public and are proud of the product they are selling/producing/serving. We insist on good quality raw ingredients from the outset, not only the Potatoes, Fish and oil, but also the alcohol we serve in the cocktails for example, or the coffee we serve. We do not accept 'cheaper' alternatives ever, despite the current economic crisis, which will pass. Our customers expect the best, and that is what we deliver. Our 'platers' are trained to spot if anything is not quite right with a product and will reject it. There is also a third 'line of defence' which is the waiter, who again, will reject a product deemed not good enough to serve. This principle has served me well over the last 5 and half years in the industry. I personally, also try a chip every day, and encourage the team to do so, to check on quality.

How do you train your team to deliver an exceptional customer experience and how do you measure your performance?

From the moment a customer comes through the door they are a VIP and are treated as such. The team know we are privileged that the customer has chosen to spend their money with us. Our training programme starts on day one with an induction. The team member progresses through each module at their own pace, so as not to overwhelm them but to nurture them. We use a variety of tools for our training and one of the most popular and effective methods is role play. By using improvisation, we can arm them with effective responses to a given situation. The team do a 'check back' on every customer, after receiving their food, to ensure they are satisfied or to enable anything to be rectified. Customer feedback is crucial, and we prompt them to leave their opinions via social media by providing them with the links when they leave. I employ a mystery shopper to attend the restaurant every month. This allows me to monitor if there are any shortfalls in what we are providing. Regular team meetings allow me to update the staff with the results of the visit and look at where we can improve.

What do you teach your team, so they are both confident and competent in the storage, preparation, serving of and answering queries regarding allergens and dietary requirements and how is this achieved?

As part of our training modules, there are is a Gluten section, which all of the team take. At my previous venue we were accredited by Coeliac UK, and so we have access to very detailed requirements to deliver Gluten Free products. All of the team are fully confident in delivering this and are aware of the seriousness of breaching the requirements. We provide the team with the correct colour coded tools, and a completely separate pan for frying, stickers and detailed menu labelling reassures and informs the customer. The 'platers' also communicate to the servers which fish is GF and it is usually presented separately to avoid any confusion. The introduction of a meat free pan has opened up a huge market for people with those dietary needs, and the team treat this in the same way as the GF and are confident in delivering the correct product. ALL of the team take the on line Allergen Test. With each new menu the matrix is updated and besides which, the information is relayed to the front of house to double down on the information. All the team know to ask if they are unsure.