

Entrepreneurs: The chef at Emilia's Crafted Pasta following his heart to make pasta a healthy business

For the casual chef, [pasta](#) is a thing we can do ourselves. No professional needed. If we go out for a meal, pasta is not what we order – we can get that at home.

Andrew Macleod is trying to change that with Emilia's Crafted Pasta, [restaurants](#) in [St Katharine Docks](#), [Aldgate](#) and a third coming in Canary Wharf next year.

Padella in Borough Market is part of the same move, to make pasta, if not a delicacy, then at least food worthy of proper respect.

Macleod, just 30, sets it up like this: "People want to go out for a steak, or a pizza. They don't want to go for pasta.. Essentially these dishes we are about to eat it would take you hours to do at home. In the same way that Honest Burgers came and said, we want to show people what a burger is. We want to do pasta as good as it can be done."

He spent a year travelling in Italy to see how the experts do it first.

Certainly, the Aldgate restaurant feels fresh. They haven't wasted money on ornaments; it's about the food.

Macleod grew up opposite Grenfell Tower in West London with a Russian Mum and a Scottish Dad.

Mum is plainly important here, insisting the family eat healthily.

“Mother believes people are getting more and more ill because they are eating GM foods. She comes in to the restaurants to sample the food,” which plainly has to pass the Mom test.

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But hang on, pasta is calorie heavy carbs, of which we are supposed to be eating less, no?

“If you make it freshly and in the right way, it digests properly. When we started, we thought, if you were to eat this every day, what would happen? I did just that for three years, I didn’t get fat, I got healthier.”

Macleod is a maths nerd.

After university he turned down an offer to work on Wall Street. “A week before I was meant to go, I said I wasn’t going. My Dad said, do what you want, follow your heart. My Mum was tearing her hair out.”

The family feel continued through the pandemic, he claims.

“Even in the second world war, restaurants didn’t have to close. And we’ve never had a lot of money behind us, we are quite tight. Furlough built a family. We took the government money and topped up. Managers all started at the lowest rung, so we’re quite tight knit.”

What about supply chain issues? “We source a huge amount of stuff from Italy. Every item we place that used to take a week

to arrive now takes five weeks, it's a juggling game, it has been a nightmare."

Macleod says his seed funding came partly from mates who saw him do poker games at college and had faith.

"A couple of guys invested because they had seen me run poker, but they were far from sure this would work. Most people thought we would fail."

He opened at St Katharine's Dock with £100,000.

"Everyone said to open a restaurant you need at least half a million quid."

How big a chain could Emilie's become? And don't bigger chains tend to go bad quickly? "We grow only when we think we can increase the quality. We won't grow unless we have strong foundations."

What happens if an investor comes in and wants the prices to go up and quality to go down?

"We just wouldn't get involved with someone like that. Restaurants are personal experiences in a way Pret isn't. That's what a lot of private equity guys have got wrong. We have had approaches, but we're like, we're ok thanks. We would only go with a partner that shares our values."

"I think things are changing in our favour. I think private equity is realising it is not about pump and dump. Consumers are savvy and it is not like they don't have choices."

At around £15 for a fresh made pasta dish and a drink, the price range is mid-market, affordable.

And the food? The food is terrific. Try it.