

Southwark BUSINESS TODAY

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THE ECLECTIC ENTREPRENEUR

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The eclectic entrepreneur

To say that Charles Tyler's career has been colourfully diverse would perhaps be an understatement.

A skilled entrepreneur who currently runs Paladar restaurant near Waterloo in London, he has an eclectic background in photography, publishing, travel, aviation and hospitality, and worked in places as far flung as Malaysia and Latin America. It's the latter influence that colours his current venture, Paladar, which serves creative Latin American cuisine to customers who come from all over the world.

"Pre-Covid, about 25% of our business during the summer months was from international visitors," says Charles. "Our restaurant is experiential. When we were forced to close our doors last year due to COVID, we operated a takeaway service but it didn't really work. At Paladar we want to showcase the best of Latin America - from the food, wines, cocktails, art, music and hospitality. It is a total dining experience, that you can't really replicate with a takeaway service."

As with most hospitality businesses, COVID hit Charles and Paladar hard. Fortunately, he was able to access government support in the form of grants and the furlough scheme - a lifeline that has enabled the business to continue trading today. Outdoor seating in the garden has also been a blessing.

Charles says: "We've had to do things a little differently as a result of the pandemic. We've put social distancing measures in place and upgraded our reservations and EPOS technology and also gone cashless."

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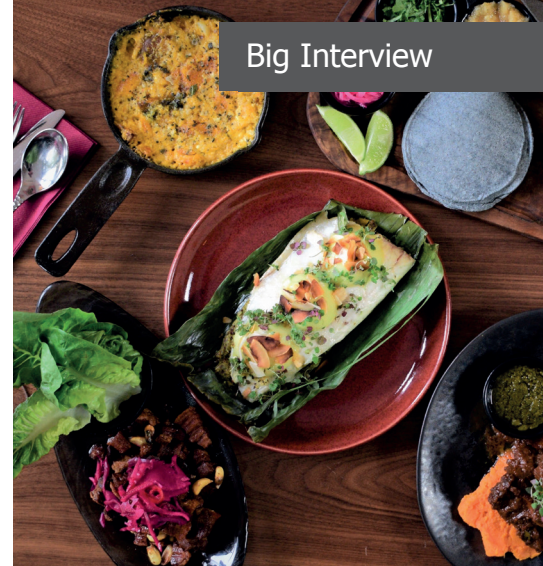
to deal with it. We're fortunate in that we're in a great location with good transport links in a vibrant area of London. I'm pretty optimistic about the future."

Charles has always displayed a positive attitude throughout an eclectic career which started when he branched into publishing after completing a master's degree in psychology and philosophy at Oxford University. With a keen interest in the aviation industry, he became editor of Airlines International and Airport World magazines. He carved a niche in travel, tourism and aviation industry journalism, supported by his skills in photography, and spent several years working in Malaysia. While there, he opened a restaurant with a friend, which "became very popular", and he used this experience to eventually open Champor-Champor restaurant near London Bridge station.

"I sold it 11 years later and embarked on a Latin American travel venture with a friend, which took off well and from which I discovered amazing experiences, wines and the diversity the region. Sadly, we found we couldn't really work together so we decided to split and my friend bought me out."

Charles then saw a gap in the market for a Latin American restaurant in London and established Paladar four years ago. As with most ventures that Charles has undertaken, it has been a success.

He says: "Our mission is to showcase the best of Latin American culture and cuisine in the heart of London. I think that we do it well and the customers have responded. Hopefully we're now through the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and we can get back to some sort of normality."



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The Inside Story: Charles Tyler



◆ Favourite food?

I'm a great fan of creative, non-traditional cuisine. I'm not necessarily talking about fine-dining molecular gastronomy, but anything that presents food in a new light, with interesting or unexpected combinations.

◆ Favourite tipple?

I'm very much into my wine, rather than spirits and cocktails. I like to be surprised – so rather than overpriced French Claret or Burgundy, I prefer to seek out less well-known regions and grape varieties.

◆ Favourite holiday?

Probably the most memorable ten days of my life was my trip to the Galapagos Islands. The wildlife is just extraordinary; the animals just pose for you – a photographer's dream! My other really fun trip was two weeks in Cuba with nine other friends.

◆ Describe your family life?

Family life takes a bit of a back seat at the moment. I have seen very little of my family due to COVID restrictions, but hopefully that will change this summer!

◆ How do you spend your downtime?

I'm generally quite a go-go sort of person and probably don't give myself enough downtime. This last year, of course, has forced me to slow down a bit and reflect on life and what I really want to achieve in the next few years.

◆ What are your key strengths as a manager?

I like to take a very inclusive and democratic approach to management. I think it's important to be a leader rather than a manager (a term I never really liked very much) and lead by example rather than sitting behind a desk giving instructions.

◆ And your limitations?

I can be too soft and not take decisive action when action needs to be taken.

◆ Best thing about doing business in the borough?

I've been living in Southwark for about 20 years now – and this is my second restaurant in the borough. It's a large and diverse borough, which I find fascinating: from the hip-and-happening areas around London Bridge and Bermondsey, to the sometimes troubled, but up-and-coming zones around Peckham and the leafy lands of Dulwich – there's something for everyone.

◆ Famous person you'd most like to spend dinner with?

I'd love to have dinner with Sir David Attenborough. At heart I've always been very environmentally conscious and have been concerned about the fragility of the planet. It might be interesting to invite Greta Thunberg to join us for coffee afterwards.

◆ Most interesting fact about yourself?

I have a degree in psychology and philosophy, which many people find slightly bizarre!