



BIOG

Daniel Smith, Chef Patron at The Ingham Swan, Norfolk

Award-Winning Restaurant with Rooms

Daniel is Norfolk born and bred and grew up in Caister-on-Sea, near Great Yarmouth. He knew he wanted to be a chef from the age of 12 and his first foray into the world of hospitality was a Saturday job at Great Yarmouth's Pleasure Beach turning candy-floss and selling ice-cream. However, he got his first taste of working in a real-life kitchen when he started as a kitchen hand at The Imperial Hotel on Great Yarmouth's sea front. Here, he got to experience the frenetic world of a busy professional kitchen, learning on the job alongside his school studies.

At 16 he went to Great Yarmouth College to undertake a three-year full-time qualification in general catering, carefully trying to balance his studies with his continued commitment to working at The Imperial where he was still putting in many hours. He was also gaining an insight into opportunities available outside of Norfolk with college trips to London as part of the course and as this neared completion he began to hand out his CV to top London restaurants in the hope of securing employment.

He was fortunate to get his first big break at the 2-star Michelin restaurant, Le Gavroche, where he joined the team at the tender age of 18 as a Commis Chef and then Chef de Partie. The hours were demanding, meaning little in the way of a life outside of the restaurant. He worked hard and was rewarded by working alongside many of the 'Le Roux' trained chefs.

After 15 months of hard graft Daniel decided to return to his roots in Norfolk and see what opportunities awaited him now that he had been blessed with a thorough immersion into the world of classic French haute cuisine. He stumbled across North Norfolk's Morston Hall which then was a relatively young and fledgling business and he joined the team as a Chef de Partie, later becoming Head Chef in 1999. Daniel enjoyed working alongside Galton Blackiston and the team at Morston Hall who were doing exciting things in the kitchen and "putting the place on the map" and that collective team effort was rewarded when they received a Michelin star when Daniel was aged just 23.

Daniel spent 5 years at Morston Hall before leaving in 2000 to become Head Chef at The Wildebeest Restaurant under the auspices of Animal Inns, who later went on to own The Mad Moose in Norwich's popular Golden Triangle area and the all-new Mackintosh's Canteen in central Norwich. It was at The Wildebeest that Daniel stepped up his work and saw the fruits of his labour earn the restaurant 2 AA rosettes for food. He also was the winner of the EDP Chef of the Year 2004. Daniel enjoyed a 10-year career with Animal Inns, becoming Executive Chef working across their portfolio of venues.

However, like many aspiring chefs, Daniel had always wanted to own his own restaurant. So with the support of family and friends and his wife Natalie whom he had married in 2009, he branched out in spring 2010 by leaving Animal Inns to start his own businesses. Daniel, along with school friend and business partner Greg Adjemian bought The Ingham Swan in his home county of Norfolk. Daniel says "We chose The Ingham Swan purely because it was a location that had not traditionally been covered by good food and we thought it could be well served by what I produce. I'm a local man, living just a few miles down the road, so it felt like the perfect location. At the time it was tied to Woodforde's Brewery - a local Norfolk brewery – though we have since bought the freehold. We also loved the aesthetic of the building and the overall feel of the place. It's got great character and history and offered us an opportunity for expansion through the stable building which in March 2014 saw us open four luxury bedrooms".

"Five years on in 2015 and I am pleased to say the business is going from strength to strength. We've built up a loyal customer base and have established ourselves in the market as a quality dining experience for which we have been rewarded with a Michelin Bib Gourmand in 2015 and 2 AA rosettes for food".

Investing in his team is really important to Daniel who is pleased to have built up a strong kitchen team around him. The Ingham Swan believes in investing in apprentices and always

has 3 young people learning on the job - usually aged between 17 and 19. When recruiting, they are looking for enterprising people who are keen to grow and develop with the business.

Daniel has always had a passion for food. Personally, he loves savoury and says he would choose savoury every time over sweet. The Ingham Swan is blessed to have a creative kitchen team including pastry chefs who enjoy nothing more than experimenting with desserts. Daniel loves Norfolk's rich largesse of produce, citing Cromer Crab as one of his favourite ingredients. He buys the best of what he can in season with much of that coming from within Norfolk and in some cases just a stone's throw from The Ingham Swan. Daniel praises the plethora of local suppliers offering such great quality ingredients, such as fish from Cley Smokehouse, Maris Piper potatoes from the village of Ingham and seasonal asparagus from nearby Rollesby.

Daniel also does the cooking at home and is just as content cooking up a storm on the BBQ as pulling together a fine meal for all the family to enjoy – like him, the family are all food lovers. So, what makes a memorable meal for Daniel? He says “A memorable meal doesn't have to be ‘posh’ – it really depends on what you are in the mood for, the circumstances and the environment. Personally I love to eat fresh Lowestoft-caught skate teamed with homemade chips. I also enjoy the saltmarsh lamb which brings back memories of my grandmother who used to cook mutton for me as a child”. His mum is an excellent cake-maker and Daniel also fondly remembers comfort food at home such as hearty stews. He loves socialising and entertaining when time permits.

He loves Norfolk for its stunning coastline and says there is nothing finer than being on the beach at Sea Palling heading towards Waxham which is as close to perfect as it comes. As a child he also enjoyed spending time in the Broads. Daniel enjoys spending quality time with the family but also has a penchant for adrenalin-filled motorsport. He is a keen motorcyclist and enjoys cars and track days. He also is a lover of modern art and has a personal collection which he continues to build for personal pleasure. His interests also extend to design and architecture.

The future is bright and both Daniel and Greg are keen to expand through ongoing investment into The Swan but also look to invest in a second venue to grow the business.

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