

Oh Beehive

The face of the Beehive – Dominic Chapman – hosted the celebratory evening regional dinner for the Estrella Damm Top 50 Gastropubs and explained why he is happy to simply run one single great establishment

NICHOLAS ROBINSON REPORTS

The Beehive is surrounded by many other fellow Estrella Damm Top 50 Gastropubs listees, including the two Michelin-starred Hand & Flowers and the one Michelin-starred Coach, both owned by Tom Kerridge in Marlow.

But this Berkshire beauty, which faces a popular cricket ground in the quiet affluent village of White Waltham, is a unique gem, comparable to no other pub on the list.

At the helm of the Beehive is famed chef Dominic Chapman, no stranger to television having appeared on several cooking programmes, who opened the gastropub four years ago.

The pub is a true labour of love, with its elegant three-course dinners and simple interior. It is a gastropub equally ideal for a long, sun-drenched afternoon lounge in the garden as it is for a cosy, boozy winter night nestled in its traditional bar.

Chapman's dishes offer a simple elegance, but are packed full of punchy flavours that showcase the true skill



BUSY AS BEES
Dominic Chapman takes a break with a group of his Beehive staff



Dominic Chapman catches up with chef friends



Chefs from across the region gather at the Beehive



Seared Orkney scallops, celeriac purée and hazelnut vinaigrette



Dominic Chapman makes his signature mashed potatoes



TOP 50
GASTRO PUBS



the chef wields from his kitchen. On the night of his celebratory Estrella Damm Top 50 Gastropubs regional dinner, chefs and pub owners travelled for miles to sample Chapman's genius fare.

"The man under the chef's whites, who has appeared on shows including BBC2's *Great British Menu*, has also worked at Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck and is as passionate about the drink served at the pub as he is about the food.

Focusing on one outlet

Before opening the Beehive, he was also head chef at the nearby Royal Oak, Paley Street, which is when the pub gained a Michelin star.

Chapman has spearheaded a culinary mission to India to lead a major promotion of British food, working with some of the world's leading curry chefs in celebration of the enduring relationship between the two countries.

But now he is firmly focused on running the Beehive, having told *The Morning Advertiser* ahead of the regional dinner that "I'm done with having two

HONEYPOT PUB
The Beehive attracts visitors from far and wide

or four pubs; one pub that's really, really good is my focus for the simple reason that when you've got one pub, you can give your whole attention to that place".

It is clear Chapman intends to put much more effort into ensuring the gastropub continues to stand out for its great food offer as well as its drinks range. He is intent on maintaining the pub's importance as a local pub, as well as a dining venue that continues to attract diners from across the UK and, indeed, the world.

"The plans for the future are to continue to grow and get better," says Chapman. "We want to focus on our product and make sure all of our customers enjoy what we're doing and that there are plenty of customers coming through the door.

"That's why people come to the Beehive and they want to see Dominic Chapman. It's my business and it's my pub and they want to see me here. I love to talk to customers about what I'm doing, if they're having a good time

and they like what we do. We bounce off each other and, if my customers are happy, I'm happy."

He also believes that people's food education has been growing over the years, which he says derives from television shows that increasingly show a better quality of food.

"People love food and it's on TV every time they turn it on so people know what they're eating these days," he says.

"You can tune in on a Saturday morning and it's all food – that educates people about what's good and what they can get in the shops, which means when they eat out their expectations are higher and so it's raising the bar.

"Food education on TV is good, maybe sometimes they know a bit too much, but it can only be good for a passionate chef."

With the rise of the food-educated customer and Chapman's desire to ensure the Beehive continues to thrive, visitors will undoubtedly see the Beehive remain one of the eminent gastropubs in the area.



Rabbit and bacon pie with mashed potatoes



The excellent dessert uses blackberry trifle



Diners enjoy a sweet treat of petit fours



Dominic Chapman has been at the Beehive for four years