

Wine&Dine

the art of good living

December 2017

ISSUE #312

THE FESTIVE ISSUE

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POSTSCRIPT

SHARMAN'S TRAVELLING RESTAURANT

James Sharman, former Noma chef and protégé of Tom Aikens, takes the show on the road with his nomadic restaurant One Star House Party

WORDS MICHELE KOH MOROLLO PHOTOS ONE STAR HOUSE PARTY

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After cutting his teeth in the Michelin-starred kitchens of Noma in Copenhagen and Tom Aikens in London, 25-year-old British chef James Sharman decided to broaden his horizons with a culinary expedition that would have him creating 20 different menus in 20 pop-up restaurants across 20 different countries, all in 20 months.

From September 2016 to August 2018, with help from close friends rallied from the industry, Sharman created his nomadic pop-up restaurant One Star House Party, which tours the globe delivering outstanding food in a fun and unique setting. In each new place, Sharman develops a menu inspired by the cuisine of the country he is in. For instance, in India, he created a baked cheese dish inspired by the famous palak paneer found in many Indian restaurants. In Kenya, he jazzed up the traditional Kenyan staple of ugali—a gruel made with maize, millet or sorghum flour—with egg yolk fudge. And in China, he did a readapted congee dish with barley broth and scallops. Not only that, he also has carpenters and handymen friends on his team who help build or set up the space that becomes the One Star House Party restaurant in each location.

“Sometimes, the venues we choose are offered to us by friends or guests who have dined with us in other countries before. We create the furniture once we are at the destination, in the same impromptu way that we create our menus,” says Sharman. He met a furniture maker in Vietnam who so admired what Sharman and his team were doing that he offered to furnish their pop-up in Ho Chi Minh restaurant. In China, the furniture for his restaurant was built with bolts and bamboo.

“Each country presents different obstacles,” says Sharman. In Nepal, he had to find a way to transport groceries through a nine-day hike to Everest Base Camp in extreme temperatures. Whatever the challenges, he feels that they are well worth it for the rewards of developing new dishes and learning about new cuisines.

“The joy is in the cooking. The difficulty is in all the other stuff. Keeping a website going, processing transactions in dozens of currencies, marketing, logistics, transport, finding staff, sourcing equipment etcetera.”

Marketing and promotion for the restaurant relies heavily on social media, and



seats get snapped up fast. “In China, social media was more of a challenge as Facebook is off the table, so we needed to find Facebook’s Chinese equivalents so we could use them to reach out to potential diners,” says Sharman.

It seems that Sharman has already found his nomadic groove. So far, he has successfully opened One Star House Party in Beijing, Ho Chi Minh, Bangkok, Everest Base Camp in Nepal, Mumbai, Muscat and Nairobi. This is just the beginning though, as he and his team still have Mexico City, New York, Vancouver, Tasmania, Tokyo and Hong Kong to go.

At the end of each month, when he boards a flight to the next destination, Sharman says he is always grateful for all of the techniques, tips and tricks he’s picked up in the country that he’s visited. “I’ve learnt things I couldn’t have dreamed of discovering back in a traditional kitchen. The test of our success will be whether or not we can find a way to channel all this knowledge we’ve been gathering after the journey is over,” he says.

As of end 2017, One Star House Party has travelled through Asia, The Middle East and Africa. Next up is Europe then onwards to South America.

“The things we hold most dear are the experiences that shape our restaurant, and in turn us. The characters we have met on this journey all individually have an impact on our restaurant and help us to remember why we set out on this journey. We are on this mission to make dining less about the rules and the add-ons, and more about people and simple food cooked really well,” says Sharman. **WD**

Opposite page

Sharman’s floating restaurant in Kenya

Above

A culinary pop-up at Everest Base Camp