



Marcus, Knightsbridge

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Meet the Chef

Interview with Marcus Wareing

One of Britain's most acclaimed (and busy!) chefs, Marcus Wareing wasn't one to sit on his Michelin-starred laurels during the challenging periods of the pandemic. He speaks exclusively to *Dream Escape* about his new TV series and future plans.

WORDS | KARYN NOBLE

RETAINING A MICHELIN STAR for 2022 at restaurant Marcus in London's Belgravia would be enough for most chefs, especially in these unpredictable times. But Marcus Wareing is not most chefs.

Having risen through the ranks from Commis Chef at the Savoy Hotel at age 18 through a stint with (the late) Albert Roux at Le Gavroche, then to 15 years working with Gordon Ramsay, Marcus Wareing became a household name, thanks not only to his much-awarded cooking skills but to his media

appearances, first on Gordon Ramsay's documentary *Boiling Point* (1999) then as a judge on *Great British Menu* (2006) and *MasterChef: The Professionals* (since 2014). His latest television outing, a 10-part series called *Tales from a Kitchen Garden* (2022), sees Marcus travelling around the British countryside in search of advice from some of the nation's best producers, with the aim of creating his own kitchen garden from scratch on a 65-acre smallholding in Sussex. We were lucky to get some precious moments with the celebrity chef, in what appears to be an increasingly busy schedule. →



“We have some wonderful ingredients in the British Isles, so it’s well worth sampling a few. I’m looking forward to the British asparagus season that will be with us in early summer...”



Pictured previous page: Marcus Wareing
Pictured clockwise from above: Chef’s Table, Marcus Belgravia; Burrata, black olive, rosemary milk bread, macadamia; Gâteau Opéra, peanut butter, banana, lime, rum; Dry-aged Galloway beef fillet, slow-cooked cheek, peanut XO, roasted cauliflower, runner beans



Marcus, congratulations on *Tales from a Kitchen Garden*, watching it was a wonderful form of escapism and it was lovely to see you so relaxed. Was filming hard work or was it a form of escapism for you too?
 Bit of both. It’s 100% dedication/commitment for a long period of time, though of course it was hugely enjoyable and [with] lots of driving.

Are there plans for a second series? And how much time are you able to spend on the smallholding at the

moment? You’ve created a lot of garden envy!
 I would love to be able to do a second series, I still have plenty of ideas. At the moment I manage to spend most weekends at the smallholding. I’m just enjoying spring, as everything starts to come up.
What was the most challenging moment for you in creating a kitchen garden from scratch?
 Really, it was knowing what to grow and when. All the advice I was ever given

was to plan a year in advance; sadly, I am not very patient. Luckily, we already had the shape of the garden and one greenhouse, so it was about planning and using the structure.
Your new book *Marcus’ Kitchen* (HarperCollins Publishers) was released in October 2021. Was Lockdown a productive time for you? How have you coped with the recent unsettling times?
 Lockdown was hugely unsettling, especially at the start in March 2020 →



when my restaurants had to close. I am not one to sit and do nothing so I did DIY around the house and garden. We stayed in London, which is where our main home is located. Also, I cooked every day and, as you mentioned, started the book.

“Michelin gives customers a standard – they know what level of service and food to expect, (which is) especially useful when travelling to another country... Our goal is to always deliver the best hospitality...”

You're a busy man with so many different projects now, how much time do you get to spend at Marcus restaurant at The Berkeley?

I have many things on the go at the moment, but Marcus is my office and still my core business. However, I have an extremely strong and talented team around me.

The challenges facing the restaurant industry have been brutal over the past few years. How have you managed to adapt to it on the run? Do you think we are turning a corner now? What lessons have you learnt?

My work and industry are continually evolving all the time, even before COVID. As a team, we thought on our feet and adapted as necessary. As many other restaurants did, we started selling food boxes, which were a huge success. I also took on lots more outside work. Probably *Tales From A Kitchen Garden* and 'Forward' with Compass [Marcus' new culinary apprenticeship programme that launched in



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Pictured clockwise from left: Marcus Wareing; Private Dining Room, Marcus Belgravia; Potato terrine, Delica pumpkin, bitter leaves, pickled baby onions, king oyster mushroom

August 2021] all came from Lockdown. Have we turned a corner? Yes, probably. It's still tough, and staffing is hard but we have plenty of business.

Congratulations on retaining your Michelin star for 2022. How do you feel about the power of Michelin in terms of defining your restaurant?

Thank you. Well, I guess Michelin gives customers a standard – they know what level of service and food to expect. Especially useful when travelling to another country. I am not sure it defines us; our goal is to always deliver the best hospitality and I think that goes hand in hand with Michelin.

Our *Dream Escape* readership are very well-travelled discerning diners. Can you encapsulate what they might expect from private dining at Marcus restaurant?

A bespoke event in a very smart five-star setting with fabulous food.

This is our summer edition, for international visitors or first-time visitors to your restaurant, is there a dish that you think encapsulates the British summer that they should try?

We don't have one particular dish every summer but we do use fresh seasonal ingredients at all times. We have some



wonderful ingredients in the British Isles, so it's well worth sampling a few. I'm looking forward to the British asparagus season that will be with us in early summer.

Finally, given the success of your TV show, what do you prefer now: chef's whites or wellies?

Surely I can wear my whites with my wellies!

Marcus Wareing's *Tales From a Kitchen Garden* is available now via BBC iPlayer. ©

[Find out more](#)



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Sue Morris, Head of Marketing

"Sitting on the chef's table in any fine restaurant is always going to be a treat but at Marcus at The Berkeley, this has got to be one of most memorable experiences I have enjoyed to date. His team were exceptional, true professionals, and looked after our table impeccably; his carefully crafted tasting menu was exquisite and to be invited into the kitchen afterward where Marcus showed us how to cook the perfect steak was priceless and a moment we will treasure forever. I only wish I could remember how to do it!"

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