

D-R-A-F-T- NO.2

The Fat Duck - operation, and function.

Shelina Jaigirdar

Student id- 2235135

Introduction to Gastronomy BMGM4001

Dr Jayne A Griffith-Parry

One of the top 16 Michelin rated restaurants around the world in 2023, according to the Travel Triangle Blog is The Fat Duck. Michelin Guide states, "This iconic restaurant celebrated its 25-year anniversary in 2021 with the introduction of an Anthology Menu, exploring the most famous and fantastical dishes to have come from Heston Blumenthal's imagination."

The cost of dining here listed on the Fat Duck website is between £250-£375 per person depending on the menu and the day of the booking. It serves European, British, Contemporary, including special diets such as vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options.

The Fat Duck located in Bray, Berkshire, England, was established in 1995. It was renovated from a run-down pub, to offer the most charming dining ambiance. Although it originally served French bistro style food, it soon became well known for invention, and modern culinary developments. Blumenthal later said that "science had already begun at this early stage, as already on the menu were his triple-cooked chips, which were developed to stop the potato from going soft". The legendary, humble potato to Blumenthal was, "the first dish I ever created. It does have a special place in my heart."

There is a ratio of one kitchen staff member per customer. Open Tuesday to Saturday, The Fat Duck employs approximately **59** members of staff, working 44 covers on average, completing 10 services a week. Oli Williamson, talks about how, "Gone are the days of people coming in working 18 hours a day".

Four years since opening, the restaurant was awarded its first Michelin star in 1999. By 2000, techniques were being used such as cooking vegetables in mineral water because the calcium in tap water causes discolouration, and freezing cuttlefish to break down the molecules in them in order to increase their tenderness. It gained a further Michelin star in 2002 and was also named Restaurant of the Year by The Automobile Association. In 2004, the restaurant was awarded three Michelin stars, becoming one of three restaurants in the United Kingdom to hold that level of recognition alongside the Waterside Inn, also in Bray,

and Restaurant Gordon Ramsay in London. It was the fastest that a restaurant had gone from one to three stars in the UK.

25 years after its opening, The Fat Duck is as relevant as ever, and remains one of the most influential restaurants in the world. Voted The World's Best Restaurant in 2005. Heston Blumenthal won The Diners Club Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. The Fat Duck won the Highest New Entry Award in 2004 at No.2 according to theworlds50best.com.

The restaurant was "applauded for its immersive dining experience, the Vineyard in Newbury was admired for its glamour", in the Get reading, Berkshire live website. The following year the listing ranked the Fat Duck as the best restaurant in the world, At the first Front of House Awards in 2007, the restaurant won the awards for Overall Service and Front Desk of the Year.

Blumenthal uses psychology, explaining, "For example, eat sardine on toast sorbet for the first time, confusion will take place as the brain will expect a dessert and you will therefore be tasting more sweetness than actually exists." A major achievement, of his was using liquid nitrogen in the kitchen, originally, he used it to keep his green beans fresh and green. He then began using it to create other dishes, such as nitro-poached mousse and ice-cream. The restaurant is known for its many-course tasting menu. Dishes include palate cleansers made of vodka and green tea, frozen in liquid nitrogen, a snail porridge that was described by one food critic as "infamous". The mock turtle soup has an Alice in wonderland theme, where a fob watch formed of freeze-dried beef stock covered with gold leaf is dropped into a tea cup by a waiter, who pours a beef stock "tea" poured over it that dissolves the gold and the watch. A plate of ox tongue and vegetables is served alongside it to place into the soup. Dishes are served with sensory inputs, such as "Sounds of the Sea", a plate of seafood served with a seafood foam on top of a "beach" of tapioca, breadcrumbs and eel, includes an audio of crashing waves whilst they eat. Other additional sensory components include "the smell of the Black Forest" that accompanies a kirsch ice cream.

In 2008, Blumenthal published The Big Fat Duck Cookbook, following his BBC series 'Heston Blumenthal: In Search of Perfection'. His menu is developed by experimentation. The egg and bacon ice cream came about from investigating the principles of "flavour encapsulation". A research laboratory where Blumenthal and his team develop dishes is two doors away opposite the Hinds Head pub, which is also owned by himself. It was where the majority of the laboratory scenes for the television series Heston Blumenthal: In Search of Perfection were filmed. It is not the only Michelin three-star restaurant in Bray, the other is Michel Roux's restaurant the Waterside Inn.

On 27 February 2009, Blumenthal closed his restaurant temporarily after a number of customers reported feeling unwell at different times. A spokesman for the restaurant said "All this leads us to believe that it has not come from the restaurant and we expect to be given the all clear." On 6 March it was reported that 400 people had stated they had felt unwell after eating at the restaurant.

The restaurant reopened on 12 March 2009. The cause of the illness was later given by the Health Protection Agency as norovirus. The restaurant was criticised for its cleaning methods and its slow response to the incident. The Fat Duck had received negative publicity regarding health standards before, when food and safety officers in 2004 found "borderline"

levels of listeria in the foie gras and expressed concern that "no core temperatures of the meat are taken".

Fodor's describes the restaurant as "extraordinary" and "one of the best restaurants in the country". Frommer's gives the restaurant three stars, grading it as "exceptional".

In September 1996, Ben Rogers ate at the restaurant for The Independent before it had gained any Michelin stars or the awards it has today. Even so, he discovered that Blumenthal was cooking foie gras in sherry in order to give it a nutty flavour. He described the jambonneau of duck as "delicious", but also thought that another dish of monkfish was rubbery in texture. He described the menu itself as "awkwardly written, badly punctuated, and at points quite impenetrable". Following the first Michelin star, David Fingleton visited the restaurant for The Spectator, and said that the experience was "beyond reproach; unsullied pleasure from start to finish".

In 2001, Terry Durack reviewed the restaurant for The Independent. He expected tricks straight away and was surprised to find a bowl of normal green olives on the table as he arrived. He didn't think much of a mustard ice cream in a red cabbage gazpacho soup, but described the restaurant as "great" and gave it a score of seventeen out of twenty. Following the third Michelin star, Jan Moir of The Daily Telegraph visited the restaurant but disliked it, saying that "while many of the flavours are politely interesting, the relentless pappy textures of mousses and foams and creams and poached meats really begins to grate". She also thought the restaurant was overpriced, calling it "The Fat Profit".

Matthew Fort reviewed the restaurant for The Guardian in 2005, he said that "there is no doubt that the Fat Duck is a great restaurant and Heston Blumenthal the most original and remarkable chef this country has ever produced". A. A. Gill for The Times recommended that people should "eat here at least once to find out what is really going on in your mouth". Also in 2005, German food critic Wolfram Siebeck visited the restaurant and complained of the delays in service and of several of the dishes, described the mustard ice cream in a red cabbage gazpacho soup as a "fart of nothingness", while chef Nico Ladenis said of the restaurant, "Someone who makes egg and bacon ice cream is hailed a genius. If you vomit and make ice cream out of it, are you a star?" Tony Naylor of The Guardian enjoyed his trip to the restaurant in 2008, and afterwards criticised those who thought that spending £323.13 on a meal for two at lunchtime was too much.

In 2005, the restaurant was ranked 1st on the list of the World's 50 Best Restaurants. After spending 11 years on the list, it has dropped down to 73rd in the top 100. It has been ranked second best on numerous occasions. In 2012, it was ranked in thirteenth place. In 2010, it was named the Best UK Restaurant in the Quintessentially Awards, a scheme run by the Quintessentially Group.

In 2009, it was the only restaurant to be given a top score of ten out of ten in the Good Food Guide. The editor of the guide, Elizabeth Carter, explained, "It's extremely rare that a restaurant cooks perfectly on a consistent basis, but we've had so many superlative reports that we're delighted to recognize the Fat Duck as the best restaurant in Britain." It retained that top score through to the 2013 edition of the guide.

Another Michelin guide's editor, Rebecca Burr, said: "Our inspectors had many meals here during the course of the year and found the restaurant invigorated, rejuvenated and unquestionably worthy of being re-awarded our highest accolade."

Three of his favourite hand-picked experimental dishes on the menu he told the GQ, Australia's leading publication are, "meat fruit, sound of the sea and mock turtle soup". He considers himself a chef rather than a scientist, saying he "cooks intuitively" and uses, "science as a tool," Blumenthal holds honorary degrees from London, Bristol and Reading universities.

It lost its status as a three-starred restaurant in the 2016 guide due to renovation and temporarily relocating it with its team to Melbourne, Australia, preventing it from being open for assessment. During the six months, the restaurant was named the Fat Duck, after which it was renamed Dinner by Heston Blumenthal. This was the second restaurant with that name, and Blumenthal's first restaurant outside of Britain (and his sixth in total). It regained three stars the following year. The guide's editor, Rebecca Burr, said: "Our inspectors had many meals here during the course of the year and found the restaurant invigorated, rejuvenated and unquestionably worthy of being re-awarded our highest accolade."

The Fat Duck is regarded at the top alongside Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester and Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, both in London, and Michel Roux's Waterside Inn also in Bray, Berkshire, which have already had three stars. Blumenthal's Knightsbridge restaurant Dinner retained its two Michelin stars, along with Araki, Le Gavroche and The Ledbury.

From the Michelin Guide's point of view, it is an "Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey!". Trip advisor rating of the restaurant is 4.5. There are 2,234 reviews of which, the majority of them (1,733) are excellent, a diner reviewed it as a "bucket list experience", however a small percentage have rated it terrible or poor, due to being treated poorly and others experiencing disappointment. A diner has commented of their poor experience, "by the time we had finished all the courses we were quite bored of the 4-hour experience!!", "dishes came out every 20-30 mins".

This kind of experience might not be for everyone, but for some it could be an incredible culinary journey, something to at least try once in a life time.

References:-

MICHELIN Guide, T.official website (2023) *The official website, MICHELIN Guide*. Available at: <https://guide.michelin.com/gb/en> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Canteen, T.S. (2023) *"gone are the days of people coming in working 18 hours a day", The Staff Canteen*. The Staff Canteen. Available at: <https://www.thestaffcanteen.com/Featured-Chef/gone-are-the-days-of-people-coming-in-working-18-hours-a-day#/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

The fat duck, T.fat duck (2021) *The fat duck, The Fat Duck Group*. Available at: <https://www.thefatduckgroup.com/restaurants/the-fat-duck/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Gurnani, S. (2023) *You searched for Fat Duck, You searched for fat duck |*. Available at: <https://traveltriangle.com/blog/?s=fat+duck> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Hallihan, J. (2023) *The Science of Food, Dollop*. Available at: <https://dolloponline.com/article/the-science-of-food/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://winejournal.robertparker.com/heston-blumenthal-triple-cooked-chips-french-fries>, <https://winejournal.robertparker.com/heston-blumenthal-triple-cooked-chips-french-fries> (2023) *My signature dish: Heston Blumenthal's triple-cooked chips*, Robert Parker. Available at: <https://winejournal.robertparker.com/heston-blumenthal-triple-cooked-chips-french-fries> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://www.miele.com/brand/en/the-fat-ducks-heston-blumenthal-33835.htm>, <https://www.miele.com/brand/en/the-fat-ducks-heston-blumenthal-33835.htm> (2023) <https://www.miele.com/brand/en/the-fat-ducks-heston-blumenthal-33835.htm>, *The fat duck's Heston Blumenthal*. Available at: <https://www.miele.com/brand/en/the-fat-ducks-heston-blumenthal-33835.htm> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://www.theworlds50best.com/awards/best-of-the-best/the-fat-duck.html>, <https://www.theworlds50best.com/awards/best-of-the-best/the-fat-duck.html> (2023) *Best of the best: The fat duck, 50B*. Available at: <https://www.theworlds50best.com/awards/best-of-the-best/the-fat-duck.html> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://www.virginexperiencedays.co.uk/experience-blog/michelin-star-chefs>, <https://www.virginexperiencedays.co.uk/experience-blog/michelin-star-chefs> (2023) *The top 20 Michelin star chefs | virgin experience days*. Available at: <https://www.virginexperiencedays.co.uk/experience-blog/michelin-star-chefs> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

MICHELIN Guide, T.official website (2023) *The official website, MICHELIN Guide*. Available at: <https://guide.michelin.com/gb/en> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Oliver, R. (2022) *The full list of Michelin star restaurants in UK & ireland 2022*, Truly Experiences Blog. Available at: <https://trulyexperiences.com/blog/michelin-star-restaurants-uk-ireland/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

trip advisor fat duck menu, trip advisor T.fat duck menu (2023) *The Fat Duck, Bray on thames - updated 2023 restaurant reviews, Menu & Prices*, Tripadvisor. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Restaurant_Review-g528798-d1571626-Reviews-The_Fat_Duck-Bray_on_Thames_Berkshire_England.html (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Woodspeen, (I.T. and (Image: Jose Luis Lopez de Zubiria), <https://www.getreading.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/five-berkshire-restaurants-named-top-26030105> (2023) *Five Berkshire restaurants in top 100 list*, BerkshireLive. Available at: <https://www.getreading.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/five-berkshire-restaurants-named-top-26030105> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

Hallihan, J. (2023) *The Science of Food, Dollop*. Available at: <https://dolloponline.com/article/the-science-of-food/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://thebigfatundertaking.wordpress.com/2009/11/09/sardine-on-toast-sorbet-ballottine-of-mackerel-invertebrate/>,

<https://thebigfatundertaking.wordpress.com/2009/11/09/sardine-on-toast-sorbet-ballottine-of-mackerel-invertebrate/> (2010) 5. *sardine on toast sorbet*, *The Big Fat Undertaking*. Available at: <https://thebigfatundertaking.wordpress.com/2009/11/09/sardine-on-toast-sorbet-ballottine-of-mackerel-invertebrate/> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37543930>, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37543930> (2016) *Heston Blumenthal's the fat duck regains three Michelin stars*, *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37543930> (Accessed: February 11, 2023).