

# 1 TABLE SERVICE

**MICK AND SARAH DORE MBII**  
THE ALEXANDRA, WIMBLEDON

One thing we never used to do much of was table service. But we had to, when we reopened with the restrictions in place. We have worked to refined this, while continuing to do more than we ever used to, and it has been beneficial for all us.

Pre-Covid, I was pretty much always behind the bar serving people, but I have had to get out there – and I have really enjoyed it! We have really embraced table service and will carry on with it. Customers can also order via the app, which represents 15% to 20% of our sales.

Lockdown was a really difficult time for all of us and I resolved that “if we ever reopened”, that I would never moan again when I got a busy shift!

Now, I relish it when we’re busy, because compared to being shut and watching Netflix it is awesome.



# 2 BUSIER DAYTIMES

**SEAN WHITE MBII**  
THE QUEENS HEAD, PINNER

We have had a lot more people come into the pub to work on their laptops, which lead to us investing more money in a serious upgrade of our Internet and IT. We’re seeing patterns changing, with more people coming in during the daytime, drinking coffees and soft drinks, and our profit margins are better because of that. More daytime trade has also meant we’ve had to have more staff on during the day to cope with it.

For the last eight years I have been haranguing the council to let us have benches at the front of our pub. It took a pandemic for them to change their mind and the benches have been out all summer. This has dramatically increased

our turnover and, in effect, created a new full-time job. There is a serious appetite for people to come back.



# TEN to ONE

## ‘What really useful lessons have you learned this summer?’

**MICHELLE PERRETT PUT THIS QUESTION TO 10 OF THIS YEAR’S LICENSEE OF THE YEAR 2021 SEMI-FINALISTS - FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ALL 15 ON PAGES 16-19**



### RETHINKING OLD WAYS OF WORKING

**GAVIN PRICE MBII**  
THE FOUNTAIN BAR,  
ABERFELDY, PERTH & KINROSS

We had a real rethink about using space within the business. In our outdoor area we have been pretty inventive

**3** and managed to extend, almost doubling, the space and providing some comfort for *alfresco* dining.

We had a refurbishment just before we reopened too, redesigning the bar to accommodate more seating, and we have made big open windows that have made it a lot more appealing.

We were forced to do things differently at the beginning of the summer because of the restrictions that were in place. A lot of things that we have put in place, are things that will last and improve the business.

There have also been stock shortages and that has taught us about learning to manage to get by. We have had to order from difference places too, as we have been busier than we have ever been.



### BEING MORE EFFICIENT

**JAMES BAINBRIDGE MBII**  
WHITE HART, WELWYN

**4** We don’t have any outside space, so it has been quite difficult for us. The lesson we learned was efficiency – making the most of what we have, with very limited functions and hotel occupancy still down. It was about working smarter.

The restaurant was one of the only places we could trade properly and we introduced a tasting menu with matching drinks, which was incredibly popular, and put our average spend up. It also kept a buzz going and got people back in. This has been such a success we are going to keep doing it.

We actually close the restaurant on Mondays and Tuesdays, just serving the bar in the evening and keeping the hotel open. This is to give all the teams more respite, as we have learnt this summer that our staffing levels are spot on, which means we’re short-staffed the minute anyone is off. Next summer, we are going to close for two weeks to give all the staff time off.





## 5 GOING GREEN

**DANIEL PILLEY MBII**  
NINE JARS, HAVERHILL, SUFFOLK

We have had a complete overhaul of the business and are working towards complete sustainability. From switching to sustainable energy to putting our takeaway products in sustainable containers. We also have outside ordering via QR codes.

Staffing is an issue for the whole industry, and we have found that by using the systems, we are able to bring in less skilled people and train them.

The biggest change is how everyone has really utilised any outdoor space. We have doubled the size of our seating area and covers outside and continue to see turnover on an upward trend. We also bought a horsebox, to go outside, which allows us to build both our take away business and passing trade.

## 6 NEW BOOKINGS SYSTEM

**VIKKI HUNT FBII**  
THE LODGE, NORTH TUDDENHAM, NORFOLK



We revised the way we take bookings over the summer, getting into a position where we could tell the customer what time they could come to us. We have limited tables because we have retained

social distancing and had to implement double sittings.

We have kept all our Covid-19 procedures in place and we have become known for this in the area. When people phone and book, we tell them that they will need a mask and they reply, 'that is why we are coming to you'. We are busier than we have ever been and we have never had a summer like it. The control of the bookings will continue, as every day we know if we're fully booked and if we can take walk-ins.

## 7 LISTENING IN

**EMMA COLE MBII**  
THE ROYAL OAK, WOLVERHAMPTON

Our biggest lesson is to spend more time listening to the customers. We now communicate with them much better, which helps us identify if there is anything that needs to be changed to make their experience more enjoyable.

A lot more people are sitting outside these days and we found that Monday to Friday they do so, even when it is raining. We took over half of our car park with marquees and we will keep them, going forward.



We've found out too that people are missing live music, so we will look to do more music and charity events in the future.

## 8 SIGNALS OF SUCCESS

**JOANNA WHALEY MBII**  
WIGAN CENTRAL, WIGAN

We introduced table service using wooden signals, so people can notify us when they are ready to be served. It was one of the best things we have introduced. Our bar is quite small, so the staff are happy to be out with the customers. We have also learned how loyal our customers are and how happy they are to be back at the pub. We are now looking to add more events, having started with our IPA-orientated beer festival over the summer Bank Holiday. We have also started collaborating with a local pie company, running tasting sessions every two weeks, which turns us into a restaurant for the night. It's been a sellout!



## 9 LEARNING FROM OTHERS

**ANNE MARIE MCCARTHY MBII**  
THE GREYHOUND HOTEL, CARSHALTON

Never wait for anything to happen – make it happen! We have learned to get out more to see what other pubs and restaurants are doing. We have also been meeting other operators to understand how they have been managing with Covid-19, and learn from them.

People are coming in more for food than drink, because they are fed up of cooking for themselves over the last two years. So, we have sourced different suppliers that would support and run events, such as our taster boards which are matched with wine and can be priced £20 to £25 a person. We are also going to be doing more food and drink events, such as educational product nights.



## 10 BEING FLEXIBLE

**RICHARD EDWARDS MBII**  
POTTERS ARMS,  
WINCHMORE HILL, BUCKS



This has always been a winter pub, because we have an amazing inglenook fireplace, but we now have a beautiful outside area and terrace bar, which we have invested in. We have got four huge parasols with heaters and will be using this area during the winter months.

We have attracted many new customers over the summer period, with people coming to us from the surrounding towns and villages. We also joined Just Eat in January, and we have sold over 1,000 bacon and breakfast rolls in the last few months. We opened ourselves up to so many new people and, at the end of lockdown, we have been twice as busy as we were pre-pandemic.

We are just trying to be flexible and meet consumer demands. Some people are at different stages, with some still wary and wanting to sit outside and avoid big groups. Our four bed and breakfast rooms have been busier. We plan to build three more, which is hopefully enough to get one of those brown tourist board signs.