

Chelsea's The Surprise pub appoints new head chef and plots expansion

[NEWSOPERATORSPUBS](#) by [JOSHUA WALTON](#) on 25TH APRIL 2023



Popular Chelsea gastro-pub The Surprise has appointed Ondrej Hula to lead the kitchen as its new head chef, with the venue being the first in a growing pub group that plans to open more sites this year.

Mr Hula is a self-confessed 'nose-to-tail' chef, with his first exposure to this style of cooking coming from his grandfather, who, in Prague, taught him everything from skinning and deboning deer, mutton, rabbit and fish, to turning every part of it into something delicious.

This early tuition has heavily influenced the experienced chef's style, and at the age of 24, he moved to London where he began a colourful and varied culinary journey across the capital city.

He started work in the Italian restaurant Est Est Est, where he stayed for two and a half years before moving to work at Sam Harrison's Balham brasserie Harrison's for a further three years.

In 2010, Mr Hula then moved to Bentley's Oyster Bar and Grill in Mayfair, where he trained under head chef Micheal Lynch, rising up the ranks from chef de partie to junior sous chef by the end of his time there.

The next step in his career was arguably the most influential as he started working at The White Onion in Wimbledon Village under the watchful eye of Frederic Duval, who introduced him to French-style cuisine, which, to this day, remains the dominant style in his cooking.

Two years on and he was appointed as head chef of The White Onion and subsequently gained 2AA Rosettes before moving on to take up his position at The Surprise, where he is currently leading a team of top chefs and creating menus full of well-presented British food with European influence.

Gathering ingredients from local suppliers, including fresh vegetables from Covent Garden Market; cured meats and cheeses from Harvey & Brockless in Battersea; meat from Walter Rose & Son; and fresh fish from Flying Fish, Mr Hula and his team produce daily specials still led by his 'nose to tail' style and a dedication to what is seasonally on offer.

Seasonal dishes include pan-fried Cornish cod with wild garlic pesto, samphire, smoked tomato butter and new potatoes; and gnocchi with oyster mushrooms, spinach, parmesan and red tomato pesto.

The new head chef's aim is to ensure that as much of the food is made in-house as possible, everything from the bread to the ice cream.

Inspired by the much-loved childhood classic, Alice in Wonderland, he combines the fantastical storyline with his understanding of different palettes to create wonderfully colourful and exciting plates of food.

The new pubs that the growing group behind The Surprise intends to open this year will align with the company's ethos of creating beautiful interiors carefully curated by British interior designers; a delicious, seasonal menu combined with an adventurous wine list; and a friendly, relaxed welcome from experienced team members.