

FLAVOUR FUSION

Tom and Lucy Hurrell tell Lauren Fitchett about Asian street food spot Oishii Street Kitchen, its new home and their plans for expansion

Images: Joshua Patrick Photography



THE BUSINESS WAS LAUNCHED BY A GROUP OF FRIENDS - TWO COUPLES - BACK IN 2020

We do, as The Beatles so famously wrote, get by with a little help from our friends, a sentiment that has certainly had a hand in the success of street food set-up Oishii Street Kitchen. First launched in 2020 as a marriage between Moco Kitchen, run by long-time friends and couples Tom and Lucy Hurrell and Nina Gooda and Ed Stenner, and The Hen House Kitchen, owned by Sam Bianco, it has now blossomed into a successful standalone business.

The Asian flavours of Moco and the gnarly fried chicken of the Hen House were brought together and Oishii - Japanese for delicious - was born, with a menu of burgers, wings, bao buns and rice bowls influenced by flavours from around Japan, Korea and Thailand. It has used pub

residencies to build its reputation, moving into its first permanent home in Norwich earlier this year and looking to expand.

It was early on in the pandemic that the four friends behind Norfolk's Moco were approached by a cocktail bar keen to do something permanent, but with Moco and the café in the pipeline [the four opened a new café in November 2020], we knew it would be overwhelming and that it wouldn't be something we could do without bringing someone else on board," Hurrell says.

He reached out to Bianco (the pair had previously worked together as general managers for Byron Burger) and plans took shape, with fried chicken quickly agreed as the concept, with time spent living abroad inspiring the Asian influence. But while the

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launch may have run smoothly, the first few months of trading were more tumultuous, with a Covid lockdown

arriving two weeks after they started and limiting the business to takeaways.

"We were really lucky in that, through the power of Instagram, we managed to build a big following, and people were pretty desperate to eat good food," Hurrell says. "We had a lot of local support, and it helped we were coming off the back of Hen House and Moco."

The next few months gave the team the chance to hone the menu, explore dishes and get to grips with delivery. "With a residency, there's no initial outlay," Hurrell says. "You are paying

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barbecue glaze and kewpie slaw, remain popular. “It was important for the brand to name the burgers,” Hurrell says. “When we chose Godzilla,

we were thinking of cartoons and manga, a name that reflected the flavours.”


While the abundance of delivery options that sprang up during the pandemic may have lessened, Oishii is sticking with it. “We embraced delivery as a part of the business model from the start,” Hurrell explains. “If we want to expand and go to Cambridge, Bury or London, we have to embrace that but we do it on our own terms, with everything fresh. We’ve seen the mistakes people make in the past, and we have made our own.”

Between Oishii, Moco, the Hen House, café Connaught Kitchen and appearances at street food festivals, there isn’t much time to spare. There’s now a small Oishii team and, while the five are not trained chefs, each has put their background - from accounting to retail and managing restaurants - to good use. “We each have our own strengths,” Hurrell says. “It’s just our passion, we love it. We think about it at 2am. We always wanted to work for ourselves and we take strength from each other’s backgrounds.”

Looking forward, the team is eyeing expansion, initially in the east. “We want to expand Oishii and by the end of the year potentially have another site,” Hurrell says. “We’re looking outside of Norwich and like the idea of Bury St Edmunds, somewhere a bit closer so we can manage it and get it going to begin with. The menu works, it’s quick, it’s a good model and it’s all fresh.

“We would always want to work with local suppliers.” He points to Honest Burger as a positive example. “They have lots of sites but their sites are specific to the region and we would be keen to emulate that.”

As consumers become more aware of where their food comes from, locality is an asset. Oishii often tags local suppliers in its social media posts. “If you are a local brand cooking local food, people like that,” Hurrell says. “They want to support you. We have people come up to us and say, ‘We’re so glad you’re doing well’ or, ‘We’ve followed you from the start’.

“It’s been a great experience. Street food is fun - food became a lot less so for a while, but it’s fun again.” 



a percentage straight away, so you are running a business without getting in any sort of debt to start up.”

A second residency followed before, in late 2021, the five-strong team decided to open their own home when a new premises, owned by their meat supplier, became free. It opened its doors earlier this year, but while the surroundings have changed, Hurrell says Oishii still retains its street food feel.

“We wanted to cook street food but in a restaurant setting,” she says. “A food truck on steroids. Everything is pre-prepped that day or the day before, fresh and cooked to order. We wanted to keep the same format as a food truck and to keep our menu fairly simple, using amazing ingredients.

“We knew it needed to be quick -

there’s nothing worse than going to an event and lining up for food and waiting for ages. At Oishii we can serve our food in seven minutes.”

Rice bowls with char siu pork, popcorn katsu chicken and popcorn seitan sit alongside loaded fries with big flavours such as gochujang, miso and satay. Umami punches are dotted throughout the menu and celebrated in dishes such as the crackanese fries and wings, which are smothered in kewpie mayonnaise, miso glaze and spring onion.

However, Hurrell says they are best known for their burgers, and particularly their fried chicken. Original menu items like the Godzilla, a katsu fried chicken burger with pickled ginger and kewpie mayonnaise, and the Gangnam, with fried chicken, gochujang mayonnaise, Korean