



Lobster is the catch of the day

# FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

*The Isle of Man food and drink scene is flourishing – and offers many exciting opportunities for foodie entrepreneurs*

For its size – just 33 miles long by 13 miles wide – the Isle of Man boasts an impressive number of successful foodie enterprises, from distilleries to restaurants.

The first reason for this is the Isle of Man's unbeatable and unique location. The only entire nation to enjoy UNESCO World Biosphere status, the Island's farmers provide the delicious raw produce that many of the Island's food and drink entrepreneurs use as the foundation for their products. That's not to mention its 2,500 sq/m of seas and almost 100 miles of coast, home to the Island's world-class seafood, including the Manx national dish, Queenies – queen scallops caught in its waters. And it's not just fish: local start-up Isle of Man Salt Co harvests sea salt using solar energy for a 100 percent sustainable process.

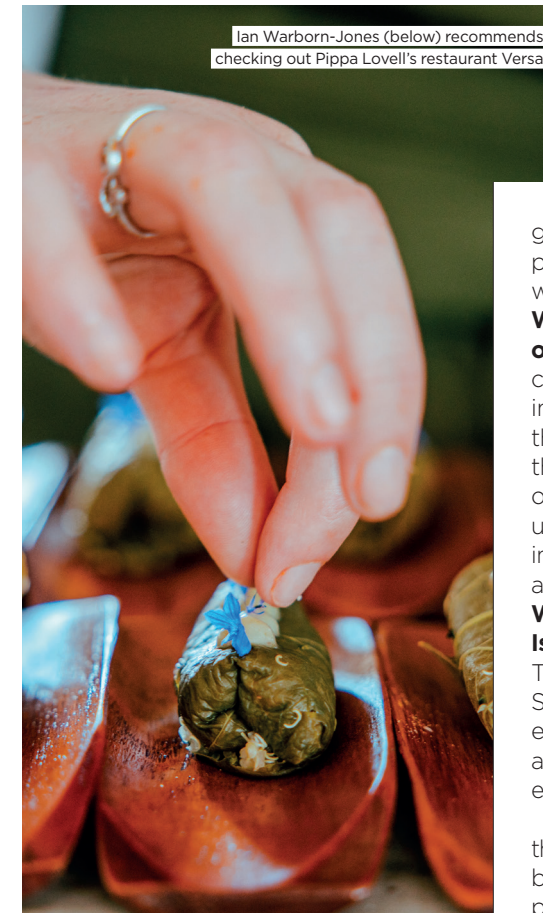
The second reason for why business is booming is down to the Isle of Man's supportive ecosystem for people looking to start, grow or relocate their business. From training



Queenies is a Manx national dish

and mentoring to grant and funding support, there are opportunities aplenty for foodie entrepreneurs. New companies can take advantage of the Micro Business Grant Scheme, designed to give start-ups the necessary financial support, training, and business acumen to get their business off the ground.

One startup that made use of this is Noa Bakehouse, now entering its 10th year of business. 'The great thing about the Isle of Man is there are various grant schemes ready for you,' explains its founder, Miles Petit. 'I soon realised that making bread was manufacturing goods and that qualified the business for up to 40 percent of the capital available to start operating.' The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture's 'Food Matters Scheme', meanwhile, offers businesses grants and assistance, plus local marketing support, meaning companies of all sizes have every chance of continued success.



Ian Warborn-Jones (below) recommends checking out Pippa Lovell's restaurant Versa

## MEET... IAN WARBORN-JONES

Co-founder of Outlier Distilling Company

**How long have you lived in the Isle of Man?** My wife and our (then only) child and I moved over in April 2017. We relocated for a number of reasons, but ultimately it was for a change of lifestyle.

**How would you describe the Island?** It's a fascinating place – the landscape changes with each mile. The people are friendly, approachable, and down to earth. The sense of community is the best I have ever experienced. The quality of the produce is world-class, and there are some superb restaurants that use it to the fullest.

**Tell us about your business?** My business partner Rick and I set up Outlier, a small craft distillery in November 2019. Our still equipment was built in 1994 and runs on wood; we burn off-cuts sourced from the sawmill in St Johns, so we garner all our operational heat from waste. It's about as good for the environment as one could hope.

We've released several small-batch spirits so far. The first was a locally foraged 45 percent wild-berry schnapps called Hedge Fund. Rick and I pres-

ganged a few friends and went out picking blackberries and elderberries which we then fermented and distilled. **What's the best-kept secret on the Isle of Man?** I think there are a lot of really cool things happening now, particularly in terms of food and drink. Of those that are still getting established, I'd say that Pippa Lovell's restaurant Versa is one that stands out. She's focused on using as much native, local and foraged ingredients as possible, and the result is a truly incredible menu.

**What opportunities has living in the Isle of Man given you and your family?** The opportunities here are manifold. Starting a business is encouraged, with easy access to government and the associated support. Everything's much easier to do here than the UK. We spend a lot more time outside than we used to with hikes up mountains, beach exploration and enjoying the plantations and nature reserves.

**Why would you recommend the Isle of Man?** The Island is a great place to live; there's good food, great pubs, friendly people, good schools, less traffic and pollution, clean air, breathtaking countryside, and you can be in Liverpool within 25 minutes and London City within an hour.



PHOTOS: LIAM GILMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

## FEAST ON THIS

A taste of Christmas, straight from the Isle of Man



**1 LEELA'S KITCHEN** Leela's Kitchen was started in 2011 by third-generation spice trader Kumar Menon, who named his business after his late grandmother. From garam masala to masala spiced tea, everything is freshly ground and packed on the Island, following family recipes. Spices from £2.50. [leelaskitchen.co.uk](http://leelaskitchen.co.uk)

**2 OUTLIER DISTILLING COMPANY** Perfect for chasing away the winter blues, this rum, produced using Manx ingredients and sustainable methods, is fermented and double distilled to give a malty-liquorice taste and finished with a charcoal filtered hit. Hoolie Manx White Rum, £34. [outlierdistilling.com](http://outlierdistilling.com)

**3 BERRIES** The first Christmas pudding maker in the world to be certified palm oil-free back in 2018, Berries produces a range of delicious treats for the festive season. Everything is baked in Port St Mary, and the brand has been recognised globally, including winning the highest accolade at The Great Taste Awards. Christmas pudding, £12. [berries.co.im](http://berries.co.im)

**4 FORAGING VINTNERS** From its seaside winery, Foraging Vintners makes exceptional non-grape-based sparkling wine using rhubarb, elderflower, apple and honey. Its Eltoora elderflower sparkling wine is light and effervescent with citrus and elderflower notes, and makes the ideal Christmas tippie with a difference. £117 for six bottles. [foragingvintners.com](http://foragingvintners.com)