

Peepul



## “FOCUS ON THE INGREDIENT”

Michelin-starred chef Gary Foulkes on his food philosophy, thirst for travel, and appetite for the best of the best, when it comes to produce

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It wasn't any kind of love story," chef Gary Foulkes assures me, on Valentine's Day no less. Thankfully it's how he got into cooking that we are discussing, rather than any amorous failure. The 40-year-old Michelin-starred chef confesses that it wasn't his grandmother's love for food or any other sentimental twaddle that led him to the kitchens, but his penance here than anything.

"I was 15, in school, and we had the chance to intern with different professionals to help figure out what we wanted to do as a career. I went to a hotel, spending a day in each department, and my last day was in the kitchen. I just loved it all, the energy, the people, and decided this is what I want to do, as much as anyone knows what they want to do at that age anyway," says Foulkes, who's in the Capital for a culinary collaboration with Setz, the fine dining restaurant in DLF Emporio.

This led to Foulkes apprenticing under legendary British chef Gary Rhodes from the age of 17. He would go on to hone his skills and polish his resume under a litany of leading luminaries of Britain, including chefs John Campbell, Richard Neat, and William Drabble at the Aubergine in Chelsea. Foulkes then moved to the renowned restaurant, The Square in Mayfair.

While working as the sous chef at The Square, Foulkes got married, and he and his wife decided to take a year off to travel around the world. "We realised that it was now or never. We were young, had no kids then, and wanted to see the world, so that's what we did," says Foulkes, whose one year sabbatical ended up being a three-year journey across the globe, which saw him and his wife travel from Europe to Asia, and then over the Pacific back to the UK via Mexico and the US.

"We didn't mean to be gone for three years, but you know how it is at the end of a vacation and you don't want to return to work," laughs Foulkes, adding, "However, those three years changed me as a chef and as a person, and even though the focus was on travelling, seeing how people around the world approach their meals, the foods they eat and the way that they cook them taught me as much as three years in the kitchen, and influence my cooking to this day."

Clearly his industry peers agreed as he rejoined The Square, which boasted of two Michelin stars, as the head chef, helping the restaurant retain its laurels. In 2016, Foulkes joined the Michelin-starred London restaurant, Angler, as Executive Head Chef, where he has since continued to work on refining his food mantra.

"I focus on the main ingredient, and then build the dish around it. As long as your ingredients are high-quality and you treat them right, you're going to get a good dish out," says Foulkes, who only uses seasonal produce to craft his ever-changing menus, which are still inspired by the techniques and traditions he learnt during his travels. "I would prefer to use as many local ingredients as well. But I'm not insistent on only getting stuff from around the corner, if you know what I mean. For instance, if I can get the best in-season peach from Italy, then I'm not going to use a British peach," he says.

After all, we are what we eat.

(From top to right) Foulkes' dishes like Burrata with Gazpacho, Monk Fish, and Yorkshire Rhubarb with Brilla Savrin Cream, focus on and are built around individual ingredients

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