



MINUTE ON THE CLOCK

THERESA ROBERTS



From a small, recently opened Covent Garden site, Jamaican-born Theresa Roberts is bringing fresh Jamaican patties, rum cake and Black River chocolate to the UK market. She spoke to *Hannah Thompson* about the perfect patty and her plans to expand

Why have you decided to launch Jamaica Patty Co?

I was born in Jamaica, but my parents left soon after I was born to seek a better life in England. My sister and I lived with our grandmother and came to London after eight years.

I travel regularly to my house in Jamaica and wanted to bring the things I enjoy eating there to London. Patties are a popular, easy introduction to Jamaican food, and have not been done in a branded way in the UK. The grab-and-go patty concept also captures the trend for fast-casual street food.

You brought in Jamaican chef Collin Brown to help create the product – how did that work?

The patties are made for us by M Newitt & Sons, a local butcher on Thame high street in Oxfordshire [also a supplier of Raymond Blanc's at Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons], but I've known Collin for a few years now and he was the natural choice to create the menu. Collin spent weeks in the UK with Newitts and me, perfecting the patties, and they are now delivered to the store and baked on-site.

Have the flavours been changed to suit London tastes?

It is important to me that the patties are like the homemade patties you would find in Jamaican households. However, we have added some Jamaican flavours, such as jerk chicken, saltfish and ackee, and curried goat. The goat is very popular, which shows that UK consumers are becoming more adventurous.

Who is your ideal customer?

The mainstream UK consumer. Our lunchtime trade comprises office workers, actors, theatre workers and tourists. The London and UK Jamaican community has really supported us – I never expected that level of custom from the diaspora!

You have quite a small menu – why is that?

We aim to do a few things and do them well. Our coffee, for example, is high-quality Jamaican Blue Mountain, imported in green bean form and roasted in the UK for freshness. Our juices are freshly-squeezed every day, or in the case of coconut water, drained from a whole, jellied coconut.

Your shop is small with a counter but not many chairs. Why?

We want to primarily function as a grab-and-go concept. We held out for a Covent Garden location for our flagship site because we wanted exceptional footfall from a varied mix of people.

The launch cost about £350,000. It was self-funded, but that was for the brand as well as the store. Our future openings will be cheaper.

What has been the biggest challenge?

Educating UK consumers about patties. I was genuinely surprised how few people in the UK knew anything about them, let alone had tasted them! We believe we have a great product that is different to anything else in the UK.

I dream of a JPC on 50 UK high streets. We think we could get to 15 outlets in London, and after that the South East and major UK cities. We have already been approached to see if we would franchise in continental Europe, which may be a possibility in a few years.

"I dream of a JPC on 50 UK high streets. We think we could get to 15 outlets in London, and after that the South East and major UK cities"

CAREER MOVES

ON THE MOVE? SEND YOUR DETAILS TO

careers@catererandhotelkeeper.co.uk



Serviced apartments brand Staycity has appointed **Michael Flaxman** (pictured) as non-executive

director. He brings nearly 30 years' experience with Accor. He is one of three new appointments for the fast-growing group, which include former Whitbread manager **Keith Freeman** as operating officer and **Anthony Carragher**, former investment officer for Irelandia, as chief commercial and development officer.

The House Spa at the Dormy House hotel, Worcestershire, has appointed **Charley Holland** as nail technician. With an NVQ in beauty therapy, Holland will combine the role with her existing job as an administrator for Cotswolds leisure company Farncombe Courses.

Ashdown Park Hotel & Country Club in Sussex has promoted **Richard Manktelow** to the role of conference and banqueting manager. Manktelow has worked at the hotel for eight years and won its Employee of the Year award in 2012.

MOVE OF THE WEEK DAMIAN GOOM



Damian Goom is the new general manager at the four-star Malmaison Birmingham

hotel. Having joined from De Vere Birmingham, Goom is now overseeing the hotel's refurbishment, including the bedrooms and bar, in line with the overall development of the local area.