



Catch of the day
Captain Leyton Hunnisett
lands a lobster. Right:
St Ouen sea fort



SMALL

ISLAND,

BIG

For an island that's just 46 square metres, Jersey has one heck of a culinary identity, with small batch suppliers and artisans flourishing alongside its famous potatoes. **Antonia Windsor** meets the movers, shakers and makers leading the food scene



FLAVOURS

Drive along Jersey's five-mile road in St Ouen, with surfers riding the breakers on one side and wild dunes on the other and you can, for a moment, imagine you are whizzing down a stretch of Highway 1 in California. Only, when I say 'whizzing', I really mean meandering, because the maximum speed limit on this chilled-out, most southerly Channel Island is 40mph. Driving in Jersey as often means pootling down a narrow 'green lane' (at 15mph), slow enough to pause, wind down your window, grab a bag of freshly dug Jersey Royals from a 'hedge-veg' stand and feed your folded Jersey pound note into the honesty box.

At just nine miles by five miles, Jersey has 350 miles of road, and the landscape seems to change at every bend. Wherever you are, you're never more than ten minutes from the sea. Every road, no matter how tiny, has a name and this is usually in Jersiaise, the local language that is counted among the fastest dying languages in the world. It's one of the things that gives the island its 'French' feel (it's closer to France than it is to England and was part of the Duchy of Normandy until it became British in 1204). Although be warned that not all road names are unique – you'll find a La Ruelle in St Mary, St Lawrence and St Ouen (three of the island's 12 parishes).

This idiosyncrasy was one of the challenges that Gabby Mason and her partner Leyton Hunnisett had to navigate when they established their fresh fish delivery company here during lockdown. "We were driving around the island getting completely lost because, even though we grew up here, there were roads we'd never been down", says Mason.

Mason had met Hunnisett a couple of summers before and it was love at first sight. They were both passionate about boats and the sea. Hunnisett had been away from the island captaining super yachts but was back working as a fisherman when Mason met him. "If he wasn't fishing for pleasure, he was fishing for fun," jokes Mason. When lockdown hit, Hunnisett lost the European market for his catch, which was when Mason turned to social media to help him.

What started as a Facebook post quickly became a thriving business. "One weekend we had 300 orders and learned that two people couldn't possibly deliver to all of them in two days," she says. "We roped in everyone we knew, but realised we had to find a spot to sell so people could come to us."

Jade-S Fisheries (named after their boat) was born, originally selling out of a pick-up truck and then a marquee in Grouville, the parish they both grew up in. 🐟

WHEREVER YOU ARE, YOU'RE NEVER MORE THAN TEN MINUTES FROM THE SEA

From sea to table
Oyster and mussel
beds off the coast
of Grouville





JADE-S FISHERIES PROUDLY ONLY SELLS LOCALLY CAUGHT FISH AND IS VOCAL ABOUT CHAMPIONING FISHING ON THE ISLAND



Moveable feast

From top: Jade-S Fisheries sells straight from its vintage van; St Ouen Beach; terrine at Longueville Manor



"At that point I didn't even know how to fillet a fish," laughs Mason, who has an MSc in geology and at the time was working in the economic department of the Government of Jersey. About a year and a half in, they invested in a restored vintage Citroën HY 1965 van and it is from this that they sell fish in three locations on the island: At Long Beach, Grouville, on Fridays, St Brelade's Parish Hall on Saturdays and St Ouen's Parish Hall on Sundays. They proudly only sell locally caught fish and, as some of the youngest members of the fishing community, are vocal about championing fishing on the island. "Most local fishmongers import fish, but we only import prawns, because prawns are not local here. But I will never import sea bass, because it would be taking away from a local fisherman," says Mason. Generally, they sell what they catch, which means they can never guarantee what's on the van. But you may find spider crab, lobster, scallops, sea bass, mackerel and perhaps grey and red mullet, bream, squid and cuttlefish.

Jersey has long been known as a foodie island, home to the Jersey Royal new potato, and the doe-eyed Jersey cow, and Jade-S Fisheries is one of a growing number of young suppliers and producers on the island that is revitalising the culinary scene. This is a place where you can enjoy old-fashioned dining experiences, such as the trolley groaning with 40 or 50 different cheeses that's wheeled around after dinner in the wood-panelled restaurant of Longueville Manor, as well as a more rustic French meal at wooden tables in the Cider Barn of artisan producer La Robeline.

And today you can also try more trend-led activities, such as creating your own gin. Alex Curtis is the only Jersey gin maker to produce "from grain to glass". At La Côte Distillery in St Helier, he turns barley into vodka before distilling it with botanicals to create gin. "Gin is usually only distilled once, it doesn't go through a purifying step," Alex explains. "If we bought our vodka, we'd have no control over its quality, and we're proud that our product is made entirely in Jersey."

Alex began distilling after he made a bet with a teacher at school that he'd spend no more than £100 on alcohol during his first year at university in Durham, where he studied maths and physics. After graduation in 2016, his enterprise moved to a garden shed in St Clement,

his home parish, and eventually to its current central St Helier base, where he created the island's first "gin lab". Here, they run gin-making workshops, and participants can create a recipe for their own gin after sniffing the jars of a range of botanicals. Everyone gets their own miniature copper still to distil their gin, and while it's working its magic, out come platters of ham and cheese, plus samples of the company's gins, which can only be bought in Jersey due to complicated export legislation. Customers leave with a full-sized bottle of their creation, and the distillery keeps the recipe on file for reorders.

"We've just bought a field so we can grow many of our own botanicals," says Curtis. "And it helps make the product more sustainable." Curtis is passionate about sustainable development on the island and is currently serving as Deputy of St Clement in the



FIVE UNMISSABLE JERSEY FOOD EXPERIENCES

Try a tasting menu

Don't miss Jersey's destination restaurant, Bohemia, which has retained its Michelin star for 20 consecutive years. Chef Callum Graham's signature tasting menus are like poetry on plates.

bohemiajersey.com/cem

Hunt for wild food

Join charismatic Kazz for a stomp around the grasslands and dunes that line the shore in St Ouen on the hunt for edible and medicinal plants.

wildadventuresjersey.com/foraging

Eat a bacon buttie on the sea wall

Since 1947, The Hungry Man beach shack on the harbour wall at Rozel has been serving up burgers and butties to locals and tourists alike. One of the few island shacks cooking up vegetarian bacon, it also does an excellent crab sandwich and homemade cakes.

thehungryman.je

Ogle an oyster

Don wellies and slosh down the beach for some low-water fishing with Jersey Walk Adventures. You'll explore the most extensive oyster beds in the British Isles before heading to the pub to sample half a dozen with a glass of wine or beer.

jerseywalkadventures.co.uk

Sample a crab curry

At new southeast Asian restaurant Phire, in St Helier, you can enjoy a delicious coconut spider crab curry that comes served in its shell, among other dishes cooked over traditional Japanese binchotan charcoal.

phire.je

island's government, where he sits on the Planning Committee. "It's important that we retain agricultural land on this island and that it doesn't all get turned over to housing," he says.

Another custodian of agricultural land contributing something new to the foodie scene is Matt Bartlett, who created the Jersey Fine Tea company in 2017 and now supplies artisan whole-leaf black, green and white tea to luxury hotels such as One and Only, Mandrake and Landmark. One of his tea gardens is in a field by the granite farmhouse he shares with his wife and three children. "After we'd restored the house, we turned our attention to the surrounding land," he explains. "Some of it was unproductive agricultural land and there was a general conversation on the island at the time about diversifying away from the Jersey Royal."

Having trained as a horticulturist, Bartlett had experimented with tea before with some success, so he turned the field over to tea plants and his first small batch was ready for drinking in 2020. "We originally bought the plants from all over, but now we've cultivated them, so they are uniquely adapted to Jersey's climate and soil," he says. Alongside the tea business, Bartlett and his wife have transformed some outbuildings into holiday lets called Tea Field Cottages, where you can wake up and walk among the tea as though you're in Sri Lanka rather than St Lawrence. Being self-catering, it's a great choice for foodies. You can buy a lobster or two from Gabby Mason, boil up that bag of Jersey Royals from the honesty box and uncork your Jersey Gin. Just take care in getting there. It's on a road called La Ruette. ■



British Airways flies direct daily to Jersey from London Heathrow and London Gatwick. ba.com/jersey



Sea view

The Hungry Man beach shack. Above: Jersey mackerel, cucumber, jalapeño and buttermilk sauce at Bohemia