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Mission Kitchen welcomed
its first 30 members to the
Food Exchange in June



Editor's Message



I’ve joined the Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA) communications and marketing team in my 50th year and for more than half of my life, I’ve been a regular visitor to New Covent Garden Market (NCGM).

I first walked the market as a junior reporter at Fresh Produce Journal, when I was based in Market Towers (aka 1 Nine Elms Lane), which will soon be opened as a brand new Hyatt Hotel. As well as writing plenty of articles about NCGM and its fruit, veg and flower traders, I also spent a fair amount of time in the market’s various cafes and pubs over the course of the first 15 years of my career.

Since leaving FPJ, I have worked for several years on a consultancy basis for the Covent Garden Tenants Association and latterly with CGMA too and when the role I’ve just slotted into first popped up in April, I couldn’t resist the opportunity to come and work in an environment I have always enjoyed, to serve a market community that I know and admire. Of course, I don’t know everyone here, but over the next few months, I intend to put that right.

A lot has changed since those first forays into the market and I arrive at what I hope is the end of an extremely difficult period for everyone associated with the market. Many incredible things have been achieved through the pandemic. We can’t forget the monumental impact it has had on the food and flower supply chains and there are many challenges to overcome. In the last few weeks, driver and vehicle shortages and the ‘pingdemic’ have been national news, with subsequent product shortfalls, and there is still a distinct possibility of not only further Covid-induced disruption to trade, but also ongoing issues caused by the consequences of Brexit. However, since July 19th, the signs are that the hospitality industry is gradually getting back up to full speed and with so many Brits staycationing, hopefully that is excellent news for us all.

Much as we don’t want any more of this, the speed of thought, the charitable mindset, the flexibility and at times sheer blood, sweat and tears that have seen everyone come through the crisis of 2020-21 illustrate what market traders are all about. One thing I learned very early on about wholesale markets though is that the people who work in them are remarkably resilient. You have illustrated that once more in the last 16 months or so that London, the Greater London area and beyond cannot operate without New Covent Garden Market.

The experience and expertise of the traders at NCGM, and in fairness at other wholesale markets too, are characteristics that I have always admired. I am looking forward to being here at CGMA and working with tenants to help promote this great and iconic market.

Please get in touch with me if you have any feedback or would like to feature in future issues.

Tommy

Tommy Leighton,
CGMA Strategy, Partnerships and Communications Team



Mission accomplished: 30 members welcomed to Food Exchange

Mission Kitchen, an exciting 16,000sqft shared commercial kitchen and co-working space opened at the Food Exchange in June, with 30 Founding Member food businesses.

The site was launched as London’s first ‘light kitchen’ – designed in contrast to the rising number of ‘dark kitchens’ - built to address the challenges faced by growing food businesses from across the industry, and help entrepreneurs in the food sector rebuild after the most challenging 18 months in living memory. It offers food entrepreneurs flexible access to commercial kitchens and co-working space, acting as a supportive new platform where Londoners can come to cook, work, learn and grow together.

Inspired by co-working projects in other industries, Mission Kitchen will bring a curated selection of food entrepreneurs together under one roof to benefit from flexible and affordable access to state-of-the-art commercial kitchens, business mentoring and training

opportunities, and a collaborative community of food professionals all on the path to growing successful, consciously-run businesses.

All members underwent a rigorous three-month application process and were selected to reflect and strengthen the diversity of backgrounds in the food industry, as well as support new businesses with a social and environmental commitment to sustainability.

Charlie Gent, Co-founder Mission Kitchen, said: “We received over 200 membership applications, many of which came from new concepts launched in lockdown last year. That’s testament to the ingenuity and determination of entrepreneurs in the food industry. But now these ideas need space and support to grow, and it’s really hard for small businesses to find either in London. Mission Kitchen aims to change this for good, reducing the barriers to entry and making building a food business cheaper, simpler and more fun.”

Market blooms adorn Flower Flashes

The Flower Council of Holland and agency Fever Unlimited joined with New York floral artist Lewis Miller and London royal florist and long-standing friend of the market Simon Lycett in June, to create pop-up floral installations with 12,000 fresh flowers from New Covent Garden Flower Market.

Extravagant installations at Eros in Piccadilly Circus and red phone boxes in Soho were complemented by smaller installations at selected ‘unloved’ spots around the capital.

The flower flashes were part of Funnyhowflowersdothat.co.uk’s latest ‘We Need More Flowers’ campaign, which celebrates flowers and reminds us why we need more of them in our lives. NCGM Flower Market helped to bring to life Lewis’s vision of the classic Summer palette and spirit of the city. But these living sculptures weren’t just designed to be admired from afar. Passers-by were encouraged to pick the flowers and create their own takeaway bouquets.

Lewis said: “This is the first time I’ve created flower flashes outside my native New York and it’s a fascinating social experiment to see how Londoners react to them. I started back in 2000 to create moments of natural beauty in unexpected parts of the city. Getting the opportunity to ‘flash’ such an iconic landmark as Eros is a career highlight. “My flower flashes were designed to be as temporary and ephemeral as the blooms themselves.” he added. “The almost childlike excitement on people’s faces when they stop and connect with my work is immensely gratifying.



I kicked off Flower Flashes back in 2016 with a simple ambition; to juxtapose the purity, fragility and vibrant colour of flowers with the concrete, steel and gritty brutality of the urban environment...a fleeting calm mental oasis amidst the chaos."

Pictured above: Simon Lycett, Graeme Diplock of Zest Flowers and Lewis Miller

Eco-bikes add power to DDP's second delivery service

Direct Delivered Produce (DDP) Ltd has begun using a local eco-bike service for second deliveries and Director Paul Grimshaw (pictured right with one of the riders) believes they could be a bigger part of his service in years to come.

The bikes and their riders are supplied by 'Ecofleet', which offers a zero emission delivery service on cargo bikes into London and DDP was introduced by Cross River Partnership (CRP), a non-profit and impartial partnership organisation that aims to "work with its partners to address the grand challenges of our time and shape the London of tomorrow".

"They initially approached us with the idea of doing first deliveries, but we found that it would be more practical to use the bikes for second deliveries," said Paul. "There's more traffic on the road between 8am and 11am than during the hours we make our first deliveries and if our vehicles are stuck in traffic, they take longer, they are less efficient and they naturally create more emissions.

"With all the road and bridge and



road widening that has been going on in London recently, the eco-bikes have proved extremely effective. They can carry up to 40 kilos, take the quickest route available to our customers and there are zero emissions. We've not been using them more than a few times a week to date, but if we have made a mistake or one of our customers has forgotten to order we can put things right more efficiently and with less impact on the environment.

"They certainly haven't let us down so far," Paul added. "The drivers are all polite, they are careful with the produce and they keep track of everything they are doing.

"The majority of our customers are within a seven-mile radius of here, so it works well for them. I think it will become a more important service for us as traffic in London returns to full capacity. We are always trying to do things that will offset our carbon footprint and although we can't drastically change the way we deliver product at the moment, we're waiting for the technology to develop to allow us to do more."



Hub here to help you out

Market Times featured Life Force Hub CIC when it launched to support start-ups and small business owners within the Borough of Wandsworth. We caught up with founder Jason Maskell to find out how things are a year into his not-for-profit venture.

"The first year has been tough, we launched as we could see the problems heading our way due to the Covid pandemic and the way companies had to furlough staff and how this could lead to a rise in the unemployment levels," Jason told us. "The lockdown meant that a number of grants we were applying for to expand our range of projects, such as new business training courses and a new Newswire Service for local start-ups and small businesses were frozen.

"We are again applying for new grants and



talking with local businesses that wish to support us through our Partnership program."

Jason added that LFH is there for any NCGM businesses in need of support.

"This period has been so hard for so many; the additional stresses of running a business have been pushed to the limits and the wholesale and hospitality industry has been one of the hardest hit.

"Here at LFH we are always here to speak with all businesses based within the Borough of Wandsworth and able to offer a range of services that could help, from just being a sounding board to helping to plan the shoots of recovery by connecting mentors and business owners together.

"We also believe in bringing together people and business in the local area to support each other," he said.

Obituary

Billy Clark



It is our sad duty to report that Billy Clark, a stalwart of New Covent Garden Flower Market for more than 40 years, passed away in June, aged 73.

Billy started working at the old Covent Garden market in approximately 1970 on the pitching in gang, the group of men employed by CGMA to bring the goods into the flower market for all the different firms.

Another ex-market porter and Billy's friend since that time Michael Mole kindly shared his memories with us. "In the old market, the goods were pulled into the market manually by trolley and barrow, which was very hard work. Both Billy and I transferred across to the new market in 1974, where Billy was initially still employed on the pitching in gang, which was now using electric platform trolleys," said Michael. "He worked for the CGMA for a few years and then worked as a night porter for Newtons, Pratleys and various other firms."

Towards the end of his working life in New Covent Garden, Billy moved to Bristol, from where he commuted to work until he retired, eight years ago. "We remained in touch after he retired – he will be sadly missed and was my great friend for well over 40 years," said Michael. "Billy was a genuine, kind, considerate and quiet man; a proper gentleman who loved English history. As a young man he used to go as a volunteer on emergency archaeology digs in the City of London and that love of history continued all his life. As a young man, he was also quite involved in the Japanese art of Kendo."

Billy was married to Janice, who died 12 years ago. They had two girls, Victoria and Sarah, and three grandchildren Harry, Charlie and Hope. The condolences and best wishes of the entire market community go out to all of Billy's family, friends and former colleagues.

Kamal follows his desire with AA Produce

We shine a light on one of the market’s newest firms, which opened up during lockdown to serve London and the Home Counties with top-notch fruit and vegetables



Sasinthirathilipkumar Kalimuthu (Kamal to his many friends) has worked in various roles and for various companies at NCGM over the course of 20 years in the market. Having picked up so much valuable experience, he decided last year that the time was right to follow his dreams and set up his own business. AA Produce is now trading out of unit B53 and Kamal is a busy man, but he found the time to talk to us when we popped in to say hello.

“I had always had a desire to run a business from New Covent Garden Market, supplying fresh fruit and vegetables from around the globe to a wide range of customers,” he said. “Early in 2020, I began to give the option considerable thought and when the pandemic hit, several friends suggested that one of the best times to set up a new business venture is when times are challenging. So, in June 2020, I established AA Produce Ltd.”

Of course, “challenging times” hardly does justice to the trading conditions that the new business encountered in its first year.

“The entrepreneurial side of me said that the best way forward would be to establish a wide customer base,” said Kamal, explaining his approach to trading through the pandemic. “The rules and regulations around COVID-19 dictated which businesses would be open and which ones would have to shut. So, I focussed intently on businesses that were able to adjust to the restrictions, such as those with the capacity to serve food outside or those with either established or new take-away services, as well as supermarkets, village shops etc.

“What I’m finding with the re-opening up of the economy is that more and more businesses, such as those in the catering and hospitality sectors, are eager to purchase a comprehensive range of fresh fruit and vegetables from our market, so I’m very confident that my business will grow further.”

At the heart of Kamal’s business plan is to provide high-quality fresh produce at competitive prices and to offer a flexible and effective service to meet customer requirements. AA Produce supplies customers in London and Hertfordshire and sources a good proportion of its product from other suppliers in the market. “I aim to call upon other firms in the market more as I grow the business further - particularly for customers who have not purchased via the market before,” explained Kamal.



He likes to support charities as much as he can, and in addition to raising funds through running marathons, has worked closely with Mapledown School in Barnet. “Mapledown is an incredible school for special needs students where I have helped to train students to run and also supported the school in running business enterprise programmes,” Kamal said. “I’ve introduced them to new fruit and vegetables and helped the children to learn where in the world the products come from and also donated fresh produce for their winter soup kitchen and for the smoothie kitchen during the summer. The profits the school earns from these ventures goes towards extra curricular activities.”

Redevelopment Update: foundations for the future



Work is underway to lay the foundations for new Fruit and Vegetable Market buildings, as part of the ongoing redevelopment of New Covent Garden Market.

The new foundations must be laid with care, to avoid affecting the South West Storm Relief (SWSR) sewer, which was constructed nine metres below the market site almost a century ago. For the last few months, the construction team has been excavating and backfilling small sections of the foundations from the old buildings each day, to ensure there is enough weight over the sewer – unearthing some historical railway tracks along the way.

Piling began in June, which involves the insertion of concrete pillars to strengthen the ground before the new foundations are laid. The first steel columns were put in place in early August and the new buildings will take shape over the coming months.

Trial operations on Northern Line extension

Transport for London (TfL) has started trial operations on the new Northern Line Extension, to thoroughly test systems and procedures before the opening of the line this autumn.



Northern line trains are being run through new tunnels each weekend, so while you are at the market, there is a chance that you may hear trial emergency evacuations, which are being carried out to test safety procedures.

The new extension will cut journey times from Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea to the West End and the City, to less than 15 minutes.

Both new stations will be in Zone 1/2, so you will only pay for travel within Zone 1 if you travel from either station to central London.

Finalists announced for artwork on Flower Market façade

Three finalists have been announced in this year's Vitrine Art Commission, which will see a new artwork unveiled on the Nine Elms Lane façade of the Flower Market in October.

More than 140 artists submitted proposals for the commission, which recognises and promotes emerging artists and celebrates the fresh produce that can be found behind the 20-metre-long wall, at London's historic wholesale market.

The three finalists – Chioma Ince, Sade-Mia Sangar and Sian Fan – have all recently visited the Fruit and Vegetable Market and

the Flower Market to learn more about how the Market operates and the range of fresh produce on sale, ahead of submitting their final artwork proposals.

The Vitrine Art Commission is founded and funded by VINCI St. Modwen, the market's redevelopment partner, and delivered in collaboration with Art Night, London's all-night free contemporary art festival, and Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA).

The winner of last year's commission, 'Bloom!' by the BLKBRD Collective, will remain on display until the new artwork is installed on the facade of the Flower Market in October.



Pictured above: Sian Fan and Chioma Ince during their visit to the Market

CGMA sponsors spruce-up in Nine Elms

Some of the streets around New Covent Garden Market were spruced up with new plants from the Flower Market in July, as part of a community clean-up event sponsored by Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA).



Fuelled by breakfast from the Market Café, volunteers from the local community spent a day litter-picking and brightening up the area with new plants from Flower Market wholesaler, Evergreen Exterior Services Ltd.

Glenn Burnell, Community Engagement Coordinator at Wandsworth Council, said: "We're very grateful for CGMA's funding for the clean-up, which helped us to get the Nine Elms area looking its best ahead of the annual Happy Streets Festival.

"We've had lots of comments about how the flowers have brought summer cheer to the many gardens throughout the community."

Application sought for Sunday Market

CGMA has submitted a planning application for the Sunday Market, which would give it greater flexibility to move the market onto any hardstanding area of the site, should the need arise.



"This flexibility will be important as the redevelopment of New Covent Garden Market progresses, as it will enable us to continue operating the Sunday Market even when construction work means that some areas of the site become unavailable," said CGMA's Alex Dickson.

"Of course, the successful operation of the 'core' market (including the Fruit & Vegetable Market, the Flower Market, Railway Arch businesses and the Food Exchange) continues to be our priority," he added.

"We will keep everyone updated ahead of any change of location."

News in Brief



East Link Bridge: In July, work began to build scaffolding around the East Link Bridge to facilitate the removal of the glazing and asbestos insulating board, exactly the same as the Western Link Bridge. This work needs to be completed by October ahead of the full demolition.

Buyer's Walk celebrated with new artwork: A vibrant new artwork that celebrates the famous Buyer's Walk in the Fruit and Vegetable Market, will soon be installed on a new temporary pathway that runs across the market from Pascal Street to the Arch 42 railway tunnel, which is due to open later this year.

First-time public artist, Anna Nicolo was inspired to create Buyer's Walk following a visit to New Covent Garden Market last summer, where she learned about the heritage of the market and the key role that it plays in feeding and flowering London.

Meanwhile on the other side of the market, three laser-engraved boards were installed by the entrance to the Flower Market in June as part of the annual Wandsworth Arts Fringe. Twenty Citizens of the Climate boards were placed around the borough with QR codes that could be scanned to hear recordings of Wandsworth residents discussing climate change.

Work underway on the Apex site: Roadworks and drainage works have begun on the eastern end of the market site, where construction of the first residential building on the Apex development is scheduled to begin in mid-2022. A consultation is currently underway.

Our zero to landfill commitment

Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA) is committed to reducing its impact on the environment by continuing to improve the performance of its operations and by actively encouraging all businesses based at New Covent Garden Market to do the same.

This is an ongoing commitment, of course, and one of the most advanced of the various projects to this end is that the market operates a zero waste to landfill policy.

All food waste that is unfit for human consumption goes to anaerobic digestion (AD).

CGMA's Operations Manager Colin Corderoy said: "We work with recycling service DJB and through them, all of the organic food waste generated by the market's tenants is collected on a daily basis by a Surrey-based company called Bio Collectors, which operates one of the only AD sites in the UK certified by the British Gas Council to provide biogas directly into the National Grid."

In the last year, 200 tonnes of wrapped and unwrapped organic food waste was sent each month was sent to the AD plant on one of nine Bio Collectors vehicles that run on bio-gas generated from the anaerobic digestion process, explained Colin. "Bio Collectors has also invested in a self-contained compressed natural gas (CNG) refuelling station and a rolling replacement scheme, which will eventually see all food waste collections being fuelled by the energy from the food waste being collected," he added.



One of our core aims as a market community is to:

- Reduce waste and recycle where possible.
- Use renewable resources in preference to non-renewable.
- Use local and recycled materials where appropriate.
- Conduct our activities in a manner considerate to the environment.
- Avoid environmental incidents or pollution wherever possible.
- Minimise the impact of our activities on local and surrounding biodiversity.

"The existing fleet of CNG-fuelled collection vehicles has driven 157,405 miles in the last 12 reported months. This represents 36% of the total vehicle miles Bio Collectors drives per annum. Displacing 36% of vehicle miles fuelled by diesel is equivalent to avoiding a further 242 tonnes



of CO₂ emissions per annum. This figure will continue to increase as the fleet of vehicles continues to be upgraded to CNG vehicles."

The process also produces a nutrient rich fertiliser from food waste, called digestate, which is used in farming as a chemical free fertiliser. Food that is fit for human consumption is collected from the market by either City Harvest or Waste Not Want Not, a local charity. The market's tenants are really proud to support both of these organisations, which redistribute food to the most vulnerable in society either in the form of meals or food boxes.

"Of the market's non-food waste, in the last year, around 100 tonnes a month of co-mingled cardboard waste was baled up and sent to a mill, while 80 tonnes of pallets were collected each month and mostly placed into a pallet pool for tenants to re-use," Colin said. "Damaged pallets are chipped and sent for use as chicken bedding, amongst other things. Another 10 tonnes of plastic – bread crates, clear plastic, shrink wrap etc... is sent for recycling every month, as is

CGMA's role is to reduce the market's impact by:

- Educating and informing the market community about best practice and the impacts of activities on the environment.
- Working with contractors and suppliers to ensure the effective management of environmental impacts.
- Complying with all applicable environmental legislation, regulations, international protocols and industrial codes of practice.
- Ensuring that all facilities in the redeveloped market comply with the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) rating of 'very good'.

roughly five tonnes of waste office paper is also collected and recycled. From the market's cafes, around 2,000 litres a year of cooking oil is also collected and given to a biofuel producer.

"In all, around 52% of all of the market's waste is recycled – the residual waste (around 400 tonnes a month) is compacted and taken away by a waste operator, which uses advanced technology to pick out another 30% or so of that waste for recycling and the rest is incinerated, creating more energy," he said.

In the Flower Market, we are exploring methods to 'de-package' waste and send organic waste to compost. Plastic or paper wrapping is recycled. If there are surplus flowers in reasonable condition, which is rare because most are sold, they are given to a market-based charity called Floral Angels.

Floral Angels is run by a band of volunteers who create posies or jam-jar arrangements to distribute to local hospices, schools and other organisations. They also re-use flowers from one-off events such as weddings or corporate parties. CGMA ordinarily provides a 24-hour facility at the Flower Market for florists to return used flowers to Floral Angels, though that has been temporarily suspended due to COVID-19.

Pictured above: The means by which Bio Collectors collects, stores and recycles waste from New Covent Garden Market, helping us to fulfill our zero to landfill commitment

Allison Risebro and DDP plant trees to offset carbon emissions

Recognising the importance of environmental friendliness and sustainability, Stuart Allison and Paul Grimshaw tell us how an ongoing commitment to planting trees has already significantly reduced their carbon footprint.

“The health of the environment lays close to our hearts at Allison Risebro, as we need it to be right to ensure our customers get the best quality fruits and vegetables on offer,” said Stuart Allison. “Earlier this year, we planted 1,200 new trees and 400 shrubs on a parcel of land near Stickford in Lincolnshire, one of UK’s key growing regions for fresh produce such as carrots and potatoes.”

With this in mind, on the recommendation of specialists at The Woodland Trust, Allison Risebro this year planted a range of tree species: 150 Aspen; 100 Bird Cherry; 50 Crab Apple; 100 Field Maple; 50 Goat Willow; 200 Hornbeams; 250 Oak; 200 Silver Birch; and 100 Wild Cherry. Alongside the trees, Allison Risebro has also planted 400 shrubs to enhance the hedgerows: 100 Dogwood; 100 Hawthorn; 100 Hazel; and 100 Spindle.

“Long-living native species such as Oak and Maple are very effective at storing carbon dioxide,” said Stuart. “Of course, it doesn’t look much at the moment, but these will grow to be very large, so species such as Hazel, Blackthorn, Crab Apple and Goat Willow were recommended to us for the smaller spaces.

“As our trees grow, they will pull carbon dioxide in through their leaves and convert that into carbohydrates, which they in turn use to grow. For as long as our trees live, that carbon stays within them – they are acting as a natural ‘carbon sink’. It’s said a typical hardwood tree can absorb as much as 20 kilos of CO₂ per year. By the time it reaches 40 years old, each tree will have sequestered approximately one tonne of CO₂.”

A further 500 trees will be planted next year and Allison Risebro has an ongoing commitment to keep planting, with the proviso that none of the trees can be chopped down for a minimum of 30 years. “One tonne of CO₂ per tree might sound a lot,” Stuart said, “but according to figures released in 2020, on average, global human activity puts about 40 billion tonnes of CO₂ into the air each year. We can’t change the world on our own, but we do all need to do our bit.”

“We can’t change the world on our own, but we are aware that everyone needs to do their bit.”

Stuart not only planted the trees on behalf of his own business, but also “planted” the idea into the mind of Paul Grimshaw at DDP, who quickly followed suit.

“We used an online service, entering various pieces of information and it worked out what our carbon footprint was for the past 12 months for our vehicles. Bearing in mind that most of our journeys are relatively local, we have a smaller fleet compared to many, and the website calculated for us how many trees we should plant to offset our carbon footprint.

“I appreciate that it does not amount to Epping Forest, but it is a start and something we plan to continue. We have certainly received a really positive response from our customers,” said Paul.

If anyone would like more information, contact tommy.leighton@cgma.co.uk

Pictured: The trees planted by Allison Risebro are in their earliest stages of development in Lincolnshire, while DDP shows off the certificate for the first of the regular plantings it will be making



The crucial role of trees

Trees have a major role to play in taking in carbon dioxide – one of the most prominent greenhouse gases, according to The Woodland Trust. They do this through photosynthesis and here’s how. The leaves of growing trees absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen and locking up the carbon until the tree eventually dies and, decays, or is burnt. Some of the carbon from falling leaves enters the woodland soil and is stored there for the long term, making the entire woodland ecosystem an important carbon store.

Photosynthesis is powered by light and uses carbon dioxide and water to make glucose...

- Light hits the leaves.
- Carbon dioxide enters through the stomata on the underside of the leaves and water is transported to the leaves from the roots up the trunk.
- Chlorophyll, a green pigment in the chloroplast of leaves, sets off a reaction between the CO₂ and the water using energy from the light.
- The result is glucose, used by the trees to grow, and oxygen released back into the atmosphere as a waste product.
- The carbon atoms end up inside the glucose and become the building blocks that trees use to grow. It forms the trunk, branches, leaves and roots - a solid tower of carbon providing a lifeline to thousands of species.

“Native woods and trees are our allies in the fight against climate change. We need to find the space for them to grow and thrive, locking away carbon for generations to come and safeguarding our planet for the future,” says The Woodland Trust.





The beating heart of London's food scene

Cyrus Todiwala, famous for his trademark style of blending traditional Indian techniques and flavours with more unexpected ingredients, shares his thoughts on New Covent Garden Market

Cyrus Todiwala OBE DL was born and brought up in Bombay (now Mumbai) and graduated in hotel administration and food technology before rising to become corporate executive chef of the Taj Group in Goa. He moved to London to run the Namasté restaurant in the early 1990s, where he developed that trademark style. Today, he is proprietor and executive chef of the Café Spice Namasté group (Café Spice Namasté, Mr Todiwala's Kitchen 1&2 and Mr Todiwala's Petiscos).

Cyrus was one of the team involved in the NHS Better Food Programme chaired by Loyd Grossman. In June he was appointed Group Chef Ambassador for The Clink Charity, having been a long-time supporter of its work to reduce reoffending and previously chef ambassador for The Clink

Restaurant at HMP Brixton, frequently hosting masterclasses as part of the training received by the prisoner students.

He first came to New Covent Garden Market in 1983 and has been a regular visitor and customer over the years. As a member of the London Food Board though, he worked with Dame Rosie Boycott to develop a vision for food across the capital, which had markets at its heart.

We caught up with Cyrus recently and it was there that we started:

Your connection to our Market goes back several decades, but could you remind us about the work you were part of in 2009 to establish a roadmap for London's food supply chain?

"The vision was to enhance London's food scene, to make London more sustainable, and to help revive all of its many markets by making them busy and frequented once again. We were also exploring the possibilities of a greener London that produced more of its own food.

With the Olympics on the Horizon many initiatives and projects evolved to significantly increase the number of green spaces used for growing food in London and make food production more sustainable and environment-friendly. Capital Growth was also born, a project aimed at putting all the measures in place to ensure London has a healthy and resilient food system.

At the time, New Covent Garden Market was facing several challenges and many vendors were losing business, often through not having adequate access to the massive growth in the food business across London. It was clear that new life had to be brought into the market to maintain the iconic status it had built up over centuries of serving the city.

CGMA's CEO and Marketing Director were both involved and we laid a plan. We held several market events, from breakfasts, to talks to gatherings, and brought big names in to give the market a boost. New buyers were introduced to the traders using our contacts, cookery demos were done and so on and so forth.

In 2012, Her Majesty The Queen celebrated her Diamond Jubilee and I was given the honour of cooking the very first luncheon, which set the pace for the celebrations. That menu used a variety of vegetables donated by traders at NCGM and we fed 420 people. It was a great chance to tell the world that the market had provided the vegetables for such an historical occasion."

What does New Covent Garden Market mean to you and London?

"My first experience with the market was in 1983, when I worked for a few months at the Hilton Park Lane. I visited the market with the Executive Chef and was amazed at the produce. Coming from India, I could only yearn to see such amazing vegetables coming in daily from Rungis and around the world.

For me, New Covent Garden Market is simply the beating heart of London's fine food scene. To the many restaurants that believe in sourcing specialised and sometimes unusual fresh produce, this is the place to come to. To me, it has always been about checking on seasonality, fresh in-season produce, sourcing things you could not get elsewhere, amazing vendors with amazing connections.

“ For London, the market is a landmark, a real jewel in the crown of the capital and it needs to remain so. There is no other wholesale market so central to London.

It gave me great connections too and took my career in new directions. This is where I met Gregg Wallace and Charlie Hicks and that led to us doing a regular programme on BBC Radio Four called Veg Talk. It was an amazing programme – they blindfolded me and then pulled a combination of “strange” vegetables out of a bag that “this Indian bloke” had never seen! I was then supposed to cook these on a live programme with listeners asking me all sorts of questions and me doing my very best to promote the vegetable and where they could buy the product. That is how important the market was and I, as well as the listeners, were often in awe of what was available.

There was a time when if you wanted to eat a real 'greasy spoon' breakfast, New Covent Garden Market was the place to go and I have had some fabulous breakfasts there munching also on raw asparagus, fine beans carrots etc.

So, for London, the market is a landmark, a real jewel in the crown of the capital and it needs to remain so. There is no other wholesale market so central to London.

But Londoners still need to know more about it, talk about it, know what can be sourced from it and so on. More also needs to be done on a few things. I think the market could: a) be more accessible to more people, b) be more affordable to more restaurants, instead of often being labelled as exclusive, c) host more chef events, and d) get more involved with chefs like me to display more of the vast array of great British produce. It's good to be exclusive, but sometimes, it also pays to step down a bit from that prestigious perch to compete better with online sellers and other larger markets where things can be cheaper, but also of great quality.”

Thanks so much for those thoughts, Cyrus. Finally, what is your favourite thing about the market?

I'm going to give you three!

- 1) The ability of the market traders to source amazing produce from across the globe.
- 2) While you're buying that amazing produce, it's a working, running mad place to meet and greet, to make friends and to enjoy their company over a cuppa or a bite to eat.
- 3) It may have been moved from its original home and it may be being redeveloped again now, but it still retains its appeal for many and is still going strong. Best of all, it has the ability to keep reinventing itself to stay relevant and strong.



Pictured: Cyrus has been one of London's top Indian chefs since the early 1990s and here we see him in his natural habitat, where he continues to create great food for the people of the capital

British Flowers Week puts

Founded by New Covent Garden Market in 2013, British Flowers Week (BFW) is a week-long national celebration of all things British cut flowers, plants and foliage, including the people and businesses in the industry. It helps to promote New Covent Garden Flower Market and positions the market as the UK's leading voice in this sector. Rebecca Barrett, Covent Garden Market Authority's Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Communications runs us through what happened during BFW 2021 and talks about how the campaign has taken on a life of its own

This year was our ninth BFW and like every year it took place in June. With a target audience that includes UK florists, flower and foliage growers, as well as the full range of UK businesses and consumers the length and breadth of the country, BFW once more planted New Covent Garden Flower Market and domestically grown flowers, plants and foliage firmly into the nation's minds.

For the past four years, just prior to the start of the week, we have launched the campaign with an exhibition at the Garden Museum. This year, we had five florists – Cyrill Tronchet, Hazel Gardiner, JamJar Flowers, Simon Lycett and Tattie Rose – transformed the historic Grade 2* listed building on London's South Bank into an immersive floral wonderland filled with the scents and colours of beautiful British-grown blooms. Each florist created their own large-scale installation designed to a theme. Appropriately enough given world events of the last year, the theme for this year's exhibition was 'Healing'.



Royal endorsement

For the second consecutive year, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall supported the campaign and we were lucky enough to have her visit to open the exhibition, an occasion that was attended by Graeme Diplock of Zest Flowers, Peter Green from Smith and Green, Bryan Porter of Porters Foliage and Neil Birks of NB Flowers.

As well as supporting BFW, The Duchess is also the patron of the Floral Angels charity, based at the market, which recycles flowers used at weddings and events into smaller bouquets to send out to community organisations, such as care homes and hospices. Her presence created a buzz of media excitement and she featured across the national print and broadcast media, often in pieces that mentioned New Covent Garden Flower Market.

Workshops and windows

To engage both the industry and the public, across the week we hosted a series of 'virtual' floristry workshops, events and panel talks, which were well received.

We again ran a competition that asked people from across the country to decorate a window with British flowers, foliage or plants for passers-by to see. People took photos of their British Flowers Week windows and posted them on Instagram, entering the competition by using the #BritishFlowersWeek hashtag and also tagging @MarketFlowers. The entries were judged by Royal florist Shane Connolly, a huge advocate of British flowers, and Flower Market supplier Jo Munson.

The competition was entered by more than 200 people from all over the UK with prizes handed out in categories that covered all age groups, including children, as well as businesses from the world of horticulture and beyond.



Market in the spotlight



Measuring our success

Being the driving force behind BFW underlines our passion for flowers, puts our brand in the spotlight before, during and after the week and has a hugely positive impact on not only our commercial reputation, but also our positioning as the UK's leading flower market and authoritative voice in the cut flower industry.

We can't precisely measure the success of each BFW in terms of additional sales in the market, although one of our traders told me he struggled to meet demand during British Flowers Week, and that generally the market for British flowers everywhere has really taken off in the past few years. We evaluate our success by the high calibre and high-profile partners who support us in this national celebration; for example this year The British Hat Guild joined in and many famous milliners created windows adorned with hats covered in flowers from the market. Partners like this play an extremely important and cost-effective role in extending our potential reach and impact.

How British Flowers Week is reported in the media, and in particular whether or not New Covent Garden Market gets a mention in any media coverage is also crucial. Because what we started has taken on a life of its own, inevitably there will be some coverage that does not mention the market, but the cross-media coverage we received this year was very impressive and included TV, radio, national and local press and social media. Our evaluation shows that our activity had a reach of 2.1 billion people and we were mentioned in 60% of that coverage.



10th anniversary

2022 will be the 10th anniversary of BFW and planning will soon be underway to mark the milestone. We are hoping to be able to provide more face-to-face activities in the Market. We'll keep everyone informed – maybe your window will be a winner in 2022!

Four facts and a fake

The first point of contact for most people who call or visit Covent Garden Market Authority is Eve Kenna.

“I have been working for CGMA for 21 years,” says Eve. “I started as a temp (Girl Friday) and I have worked in every department, which put me in good stead. I really enjoy my job and the interaction with everyone. Most will remember me when I was working in Customer Service and going out every day meeting and greeting with tenants and customers. They were most enjoyable days. Hopefully I will be here another 20 years (lol)!”

As one of CGMA’s longest-serving employees, Eve has plenty of stories to tell about life working at New Covent Garden Market. But we’ll save those for another time! Instead, we asked her to share five personal facts with us, one of which is a deliberate falsehood. Can you guess the fake fact?

The answer is at the foot of the page.



One: I’ve met Her Majesty The Queen and Prince Charles and shook their hands. It was at the Lantern Festival, organised by former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, back in 2002. London schools joined in the creating of lanterns and walked them through London at night. Certain children were hand-picked to meet The Queen and Prince Charles and my daughter Emma was chosen, due to her charm! She was only nine, so I accompanied her. In turn, we went up to Her Majesty and Prince Charles, curtsied, and shook hands. I remember Emma saying how tiny The Queen was.

Two: I’ve walked with and stroked three lions. When we were on holiday in Mauritius, we went on an excursion where you could walk alongside and stroke the lions. We had the trainers beside us and I remember the lions were called Elsie, Fred and Sandy.

Three: I own a cat who was originally called ‘Tiffany’ but we changed it to ‘Tommy’ after two months. When we got the cat I was told it was a ‘she’ so I named it Tiffany after my favourite shop. After realising it was a boy, I had to slowly introduce a new name. We picked the name Tommy after a good friend.

Four: My plan for the future is to buy a VW Camper van with a friend and travel around the world, starting with New Zealand.

Five: When I was younger, I read ‘Life as a Nun’ and announced to my parents that I wanted to become a nun. Being from an Irish family, my mother was ecstatic.

Market Times – a sustainable future

In the interests of being both cost-effective and environment-friendly, this will be the last issue of Market Times that we post to subscribers outside the Market. You will still be able to pick up a copy when you’re at NCGM, at one of the cafes or from the CGMA office. We will continue to email our database and attach a PDF version when each issue is published. If you prefer not to receive Market Times, you can unsubscribe. If you are not on our mailing list, send your name and email details to press@cgma.co.uk. Thank you

Eve's fake fact: She really did meet The Queen, but sadly never had any dreams of becoming a nun. "My Mum would have loved it... and my Dad would have been in hysterics," she admits.