

Pardoe & Wood

# Ex-EAT duo open Pardoe & Wood sandwich bar in London

Georgina Wood, a former NPD Controller for Hazlewoods and more recently Head of Food at EAT, has opened a sandwich bar with Jenny Murphy, an area manager of five years' standing at EAT. Nellie Nichols went along to find out if this dream team is producing a dream product



Nellie Nichols



## Spring Breakfast

Hot cross buns	£1.80
Flat White made with Square Mile roasted "Spring Espresso" beans	£2.15
Apricot & honey yoghurt with pistachios	£2.55
Rhubarb & ginger yoghurt with coconut and almond granola	£3.00
Pomegranate yoghurt	£1.95
Free range scrambled egg, mushrooms & cheese, toasted muffin	£3.95
Scottish smoked salmon and free range scrambled egg, toasted muffin	£3.95
Vanilla porridge	from £1.50
Tropical fruit salad with mango, pineapple, coconut-coated banana, kiwi fruit, apple and pomegranate with a mango, coconut & lime shot	from £3.95
Apricot pastry	£1.95
Hot buttered toast with orange marmalade	£1.80

The City of London's skyline changed forever in July 2002 when approval was given to build the 600ft high Heron Tower, equal in height to London's then tallest building Tower 42.

Three years later in September 2005, before building work had even begun, another successful application was made to increase its height even further to 663 ft, topped by an additional 92 ft mast. By the end of 2009 the build had reached 44 floors and overtaken Tower 42.

In Spring 2011 Heron Tower will finally open. Utilising photovoltaic cells to generate renewable energy, it will provide nearly 450,000 square feet of commercial space, 20,000 of which will be retail and restaurants, a skyscraper built with a conscience.

But back down at ground level, this will sadly for many bode closing time and the relocation of one of my count-them-on-the-fingers-of-one-hand top five: Barney's Place in Houndsditch. Set up on a shoestring with a short pre-Heron Tower lease, the food here is simple, honest, seasonal and well, just voluptuous. But if you are, like me, a fan, never fear: talking to Barney last week, he tells me he is looking at new sites in Spitalfields and Soho.....

When I walk further down the passage past the building dust and through the darkness, the corridor opens into the sunlight of Houndsditch proper. Here the wise and clever have jumped on available leases, for this will soon become a very profitable avenue of eateries. There is Escale, then Kaati, both on my revisiting list and Doof & Knird, (Food and Drink backwards for those not sad enough to work it out) - an old Benjis site where happy hour between 3.0 and 4.0pm offers everything for £1.00, funnily enough not on my list.

Then here is Pardoe & Wood, the reason for my journey. Black, white, clean and uncomplicated, I and many others could be forgiven for mistaking this new sandwich bar, which has such a starkness, as being not a food outlet at all, but perhaps an Opticians.

But look a little closer and you will see quite the most clever bespoke joinery and attention to detail. From the inlaid compartments in the front counter that hold credit card machines and miniature hand-wrapped cellophane packets of marshmallows, to the 'bookshelves' containing bananas, here is some cute and clever design.

Years ago, when I worked at Hazlewoods, I met Georgina Wood, who struck me at the time as having a natural flair for good honest and uncomplicated food.

Having chalked up a food degree at Cardiff she went on to complete her management training at Betty's of Harrogate, before spending seven years at Greencore, working up to NPD Controller of three sites.



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George developed in true food terms, rather than getting entrenched within the never-ending constraints of manufacturing systems and mountainous paperwork. I had her marked as being more than capable of carving herself a good future and on she went to EAT as Head of Food.

George always wanted to open a place of her own. Having worked on both sides of the fence, all it needed was the right partner, who transpired to be Jenny Murphy, an area manager of five years' standing at EAT. Jenny brought different but invaluable experience to the partnership, particularly operational skills, having worked at both Starbucks and Cruush. They formed a great friendship and Pardoe & Wood was born.

Now, I might be one of the first to say opening a sandwich bar in the current climate is nothing short of madness. That even the successful have buttoned down the hatches for the time being and streamlined for survival. Being able to secure funds is trickier than ever and good sites with affordable rents are as rare as hen's teeth.

The focus may well have shifted, for the time being, towards value for money and speed of service. But then, without a doubt, predictability and boredom come creeping in so what to do? Energising menu changes create multiple issues with sourcing of ingredients and waste, not to mention being a gamble in the good sales stakes. But who wants to eat the same sandwiches day after day, if you're having one five days a week. So in a word, 'new' is always going to be good.



# NELLIE NICHOLS



So what is different about Pardoe & Wood? The girls tell me they have set out to fill a gap in the current market. They believe they can use and build on their joint experience to offer a more interesting, innovative product. They're emphatic they don't want to sell the same old, same old as everyone else.

So this manifests itself in puddings and soups made in-house, a delectable cake display, and sandwiches and salads that taste like they have been made with due care and attention - in my book that equates to love. And I can always taste food that's made with love because I think it tastes quite different.

The sandwich bags are white and folded down impeccably neatly, as if that in itself is someone's special job. Lined up like soldiers, they sit brightly on a black langar. The ingredients stand out against this monochrome framing, nothing is out of place. Again, the salads are nesting in white boxes with big viewing windows.

I try the Vietnamese rice noodles with chillies, spring onion, cabbage, coriander, mint and peanuts with a lemongrass and lime dressing. All good hearty stuff but I would like the peanuts roasted for extra colour and flavour in a dry pan for a moment or two.

The lemon and herb chicken salad is wonderful ... a whole host of spring veg are in there, from baby peas, baby carrots, beans, new

potatoes, slivers of radish and a free range egg with a basil chive and lemon dressing. George creates awesome dressings, each one a perfect match for its partner. Here is one of the luxuries of only having one shop, you can create wondrous food in small quantities, and it's getting successful that so often drives away the creativity.

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Ham and egg has never been a true favourite of mine, being a bit blokey, but it needs to be done to truly round off a range. This one is excellent though: well filled, bright and vibrant with vine ripened tomatoes and spinach, instead of the predictable lettuce leaves. There's deep thought in each and every one of these sandwiches.

Of the wraps, the goat's cheese, sweet potato and beetroot with chipotle chilli jam and walnuts is a very enjoyable roller coaster of flavours, and let's face it, wraps can be very dull, but not here. The alternative is lemon chicken with avocado, spring onions, pine nuts and parmesan.

There are many others I want desperately to try: the Japanese brown rice salad, with smoked salmon, avocado, soya beans and pea shoots; the now famous fish finger and sea salt crisp sandwich (already with a cult following); the many breakfast muffins, unlike others on the market, which are disappointingly under-filled, sitting proud and chubby with ingredients on the counter, waiting to be toasted.

The food is, without doubt, thought through, well designed and hits the spot. My concern though is the dearth of customer communication and marketing. There is little to tell me the brand values or slants towards the seasons. The walls are bare and the setting could be more inviting. Let's face it, there are enough hills to climb in building a brand without expecting your customers to do the guesswork. They like being informed and entertained and the sooner the girls cotton-on to this the better.

But customers are coming in numbers and one has recently commented: "I love Pardoe and Wood, they make brilliant, healthy food". I want to be one of the first to wish them the best of luck.

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**The above is based on her independent views**