

FINSBURY PARK

Arts Building to welcome Walnut eatery

As a new restaurant comes to Finsbury Park's Art Building, **LIZ LOWE** meets the chef

Emma Duggan's chef's jacket has crossed London many times during her 25-year career. She's cooked for the theatrical set in a Covent Garden members' club and, as head chef of Gordon Ramsay's Foxtrot Oscar, given Chelsea residents something to soak up the Chablis. She's worked alongside top chefs, including Angela Hartnett and Oliver Peyton, in inspiring locations such as The Wallace Collection and Whitechapel Gallery.

Emma's first solo venture, Walnut, is a café and dining room set within John Jones Arts Building in Finsbury Park, opening in late April. It represents a homecoming in both location and style.

"Good, simple, seasonal," says Emma, "that's how I describe my food."

A long-time resident of North London, Emma lives a short distance from the site with her partner and her dog, Sid. Walking by one day, she noticed the previous café had closed, and was quick to make her pitch.

"We loved Emma's ideas," says Kate Jones of John Jones, "plus she has a brilliant background in hospitality and a strong connection to art, so the synergy was perfect for us."

Bespoke framers and art conservation specialists, John Jones has been based in the six-storey Arts Building since 2014. The eponymous founder built his reputation in the 1960s, framing the work of artists such as Francis Bacon and David Hockney. Situated next to Park Theatre and employing many working artists, it's a creative hub and emblematic of the regeneration of the Finsbury Park area, something Emma says she is excited to be part of.

John Jones wanted a "neighbourhood eatery, with a presence from morning to night". Open all week, Emma hopes Walnut will appeal to local residents and workers looking for quick, tasty breakfasts and fresh, healthy lunches to eat in or take away. A counter will be laden with an ever-changing salad selection, plus protein options such as savoury tarts and fish. £10 will



■ Chef Emma Duggan's eatery opens in late April

Pictures: JOHNATHAN LOVEKIN



get you a big plate of three salads and a tart, and hot sandwiches will be around £4.50.

In the evenings, the vibe will change as the 58-cover space becomes a cosy dining room, with a more traditional three course menu. Prices will range from £7- £8.50 for starters, £12 - £18 for mains and £6.50 - £7.50 for desserts. The food and wine will all be European and guided by seasonality.

"It'll be asparagus season when we open," says Emma. She's thinking hollandaise sauce and cured ham from a traditional brickhouse smokery in Suffolk. "I like the classics," she adds. Emma sources suppliers carefully, with an emphasis on sustainability. She supports small, independent

businesses in the UK "as much as is possible; after all we're in the same league as them!"

Front of house will be managed by Kate Higginbottom; previously at Bedford & Strand and

described by Emma as "just brilliant: staff love her, customers love her".

Walnut's open kitchen will be ready at the end of April; promising to serve up what Emma calls "just good comfort food - things

people want to eat".

Walnut, John Jones London, The Arts Building, Morris Place, N4 3JG

■ walnutdining.co.uk

DIRTY BONES SHOREDITCH

Dirty Bones Shoreditch is evidently a hit with the young millennial crowd - the place was rammed with parties of young 20-somethings when we went for Sunday brunch.

But as my three children testified, it can also be a big hit for families too.

The New York style diner in Bethnal Green Road has high ceilings, white distressed wooden panels and the impression of peeling white paint on the wall. You can imagine the heavy patterns and colours it might have had in its previous incarnation as an East End boozier a few decades ago - but its embossed wallpaper has now been painted white, there's plush purple velvet seating and the general feel now is elegant and spacious.

There's a loud buzz of chatter above the loud, funky soul and



hip-hop soundtrack. Weekend brunch is served from 10am until 4pm. With a mélange of my two favourite foods - guacamole and hollandaise sauce - the Shoreditch crumpets (£8.50) were a huge hit for me, and my kids were keen too. Other toppings include short rib and beetroot-cured salmon.

I almost didn't order the Mac Daddy burger (£11) when I realised it came with macaroni cheese. I wasn't too keen on the idea of pasta in my burger. But we thought we'd give it a whirl and it was pretty nice combination, with a barbecue rib thrown in for good measure.

Sides of fries with two fried eggs on top, wild mushrooms, Mac and cheese, and beans in a rib kind of sauce meant my kids were too stuffed to move when it came to leaving time.

Some of the millennials were probably making the most of the Boozy Brunch flight deal - where you choose four alcoholic drinks from a Lexy cocktail, Dirty Mary, spiked iced coffee or prosecco for £19.

My kids were more than happy with their Oreo milkshakes (£6).

dirty-bones.com
Emma Bartholomew

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