



● John Campbell (left) and his head chef Peter Eaton (right) plating up at the latest event

Pic: Chris Speller

## The 'one-off' gourmet feast now attracting a host of leading chefs

**W**HEN Clare Hargreaves first brought a gourmet chef to serve a feast for 100 in a village hall, she thought it would be a one-off.

But 18 months on from her first Feast With A Chef night, the Bristol-based food writer has established something of a Long Ashton institution.

Clare has now brought seven internationally-acclaimed chefs to the village hall at Keedwell Hill, Long Ashton – and has lined up a set of equally impressive guests for this year.

On Monday the hall hosted Michelin-starred chef John Campbell of the Woodspeen Restaurant and Cookery School, Berkshire – who cooked a spring-themed feast for more than 200 guests.

The five-course event tied in with Bristol's Food Connections festival – which will see more than 130 events held across the city between May 1 and 9.

Another feast is planned for June 19. Silla Bjerrum, co-founder of the Feng Sushi restaurant chain will cook for the Forever Fish Feast as part of Bristol's Big Green Week.

The event will have a focus on sustainable fishing, and suppliers will join Silla in talking to guests about the issues during the evening.

There are also plans for an event on September 19 as part of the Abergavenny Food Festival, and a Halloween feast in October.

This will mark the second anniversary of the event. It comes two years after Michelin-starred chef Michael Wignall of Pennyhill Park Hotel in Surrey cooked a gourmet feast for Halloween in 2013.

Clare had been holding her own pop-up restaurants in Kingsdown, Bristol, and was writing a piece on Michael when she first had the idea of



● Crowds enjoy the Winter Feast last November



● Clare Hargreaves Ingrid Kvale

holding a village hall feast. "I thought 'why don't I ask Michael to do the cooking?'" said Clare. "I thought it was going to be a one-off, but at the end of the night we got a standing ovation. To my own amazement, we are now able to run as a business."

Feasts have since featured chefs Emily Watkins, of the Kingham Plough in the Cotswolds, and Ramael Scully, head chef at Yotam Ottolenghi's Nopi restaurant in Soho.

"I make the most of the contacts I have made through my writing," said Clare. "I do a bit of arm twisting. It is a difficult thing to ask them to do."

"Doing this many covers in one go is a very, very tall order. But they have all been very brave and taken it on with the right spirit."

"One of the best things is that it breaks them out of the everyday routine of their restaurants. It is fantastic for them to have contact with people eating their food."

"Both parties love it. The guests can watch the spectacle of chefs doing their thing. It is so much more than having a meal in a restaurant."

Clare lives in Westbury Park, Bristol, but settled on Long Ashton's village hall because it boasted the ideal combination of factors for the feasts.

"I looked at lots of village halls around Bristol," said Clare. "They needed to allow us to serve alcohol, they needed to seat over 100 and needed to have a really good kitchen. Long Ashton ticked all the boxes."

"I always like doing events like this," said Woodspeen Restaurant chef John Campbell. "It promotes great food locally."

● Silla Bjerrum, founder and executive chef at the Feng Sushi chain, will cook for The Forever Fish Feast on June 19. The event is at Long Ashton village hall, Keedwell Hill, Long Ashton, and starts at 6.15pm. Tickets cost £36 for six courses, and can be purchased from [www.feastwithachef.co.uk](http://www.feastwithachef.co.uk)

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