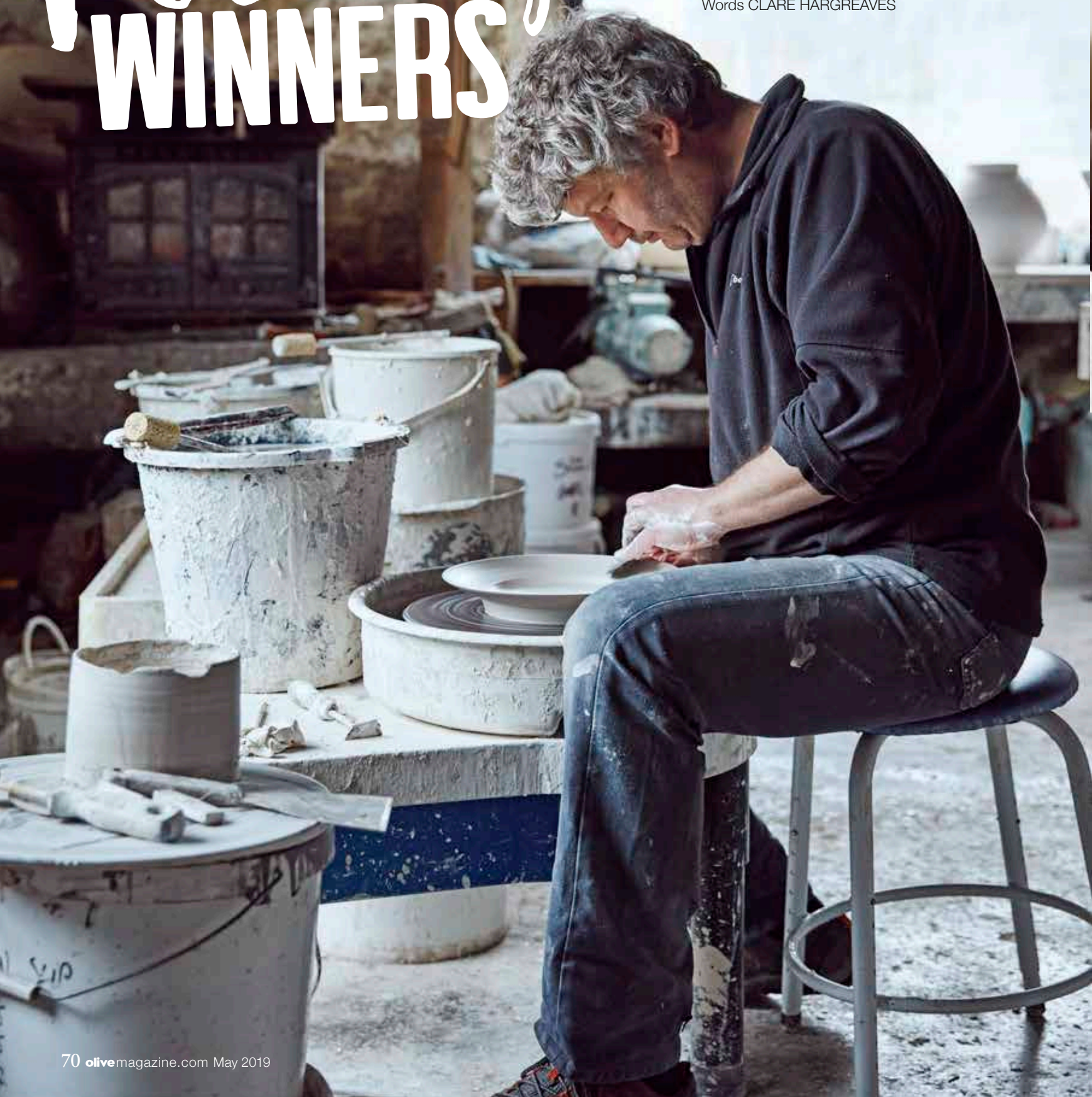


Pottery WINNERS

Ubiquitous white plates are out and hand-thrown pottery is in. Meet the chefs, and their ceramicists, who are making dinner more beautiful

Words CLARE HARGREAVES



EAT

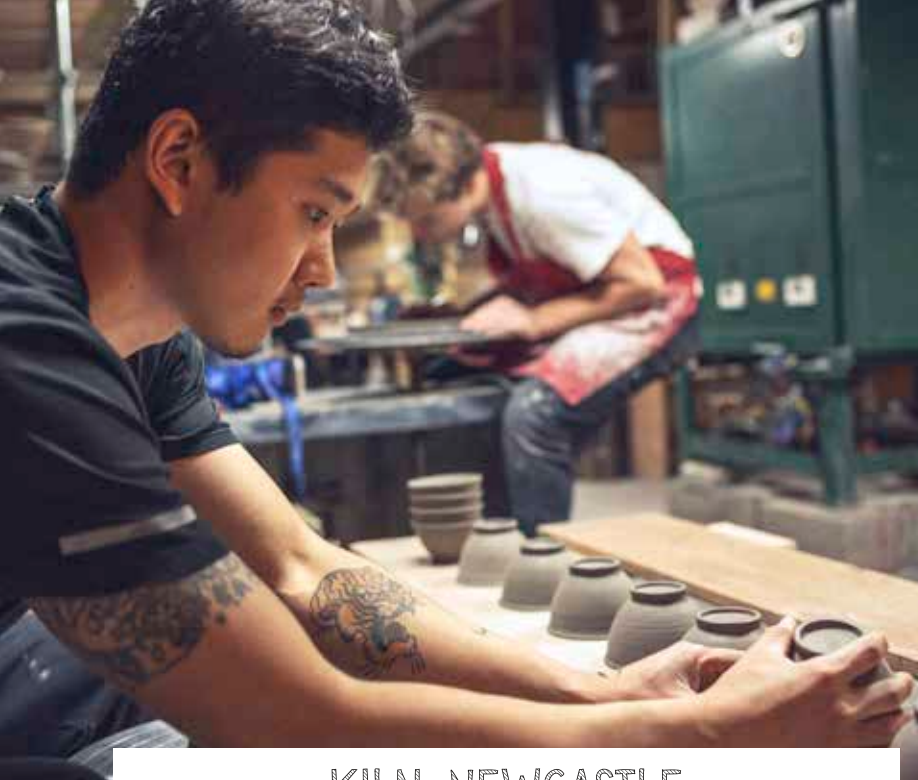
RESTAURANT NATHAN OUTLAW, PORT ISAAC, CORNWALL

Nathan Outlaw discovered the Japanese-style pottery of Cornwall-based Chris Prindl when a photographer brought some pieces to a photo shoot. Nathan fell in love with them, and asked Chris to design him an entire dinner service. “It’s lovely to know that no one else in the world has the same plates and bowls as us,” says Nathan, adding that they’re as important a part of the diner’s experience as the food, the sea view and the artwork on the walls. “The pottery is an extension of the food. It’s local, just like the fish. As with our food, people appreciate the work that’s gone into making them.”

Designing plates is a joint effort. “A lot of thought goes into colour and shape – the plates need to show off our food to best effect,” says Nathan. “I decide I’d like something for a particular dish or purpose, and Chris mulls it over and experiments. Then we check how practical the pieces are. For example, are the cup handles big enough to get your fingers through?” nathan-outlaw.com; prindlpottery.co.uk »

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALUN CALLENDER





KILN, NEWCASTLE

There's only a glass screen between Kiln's café and the 1265 Degrees North pottery studio, both owned by potter Richard Cullen. So not only can you watch Richard and fellow potter Jun Rhee throw pots as you eat homemade shakshuka, but if you like the one you're lunching out of, you can buy it on the way out.

The pottery started in 2014, first supplying chef Dave Coulson at local restaurant Peace & Loaf, who later commissioned its tableware for *Great British Menu* 2018. 1265's signature speckled white and oatmeal blue stoneware soon got spotted – it now supplies top restaurants including Restaurant Story, Forest Side and House of Tides.

But Richard and his partner Geffen Yoeli-Rimmer also wanted to make their pottery accessible. So they set up Kiln's café, offering simple, budget food on beautiful tableware. "The ceramics are high-end. We wanted to bring that level of craft to an everyday audience," says Geffen. kiln.cafe



THE FORDWICH ARMS, FORDWICH, KENT

There can't be many restaurants that boast bespoke pottery with a unique glaze named after them. "We knew we wanted something that nobody else was going to have," says Dan Smith, chef patron at Michelin-starred gastropub, The Fordwich Arms. "We were after tableware that didn't distract from the food, so Jan and Richard Chapman at nearby Canterbury Pottery came up with a neutral glaze that's a cross between oatmeal and grey. They christened it Fordwich White." The potters were equally creative with the shapes. "We effectively re-invented the plate," says Jan. Fish plates, for instance, are actually shallow dishes, with sides that rise up like waves. fordwicharms.co.uk; canterburypottery.com



CROCADON FARM, CORNWALL

Chef Dan Cox developed a taste for ceramics when he was executive chef at Simon Rogan's L'Enclume, during which time he sourced hand-crafted tableware from Chesterfield-based Paul Mossman for the restaurant. Dan decided to have a go at making pottery himself when he moved to Fera at Claridge's.

"I saw guys bringing in pots and thought, 'How hard can it be?'. I realised that making pots is an extension of cooking." He taught himself and installed a kiln in the garden of his London home. Soon his delicate cream-hued hand-pulled bowls were delivering oysters with fennel and anise hyssop to diners at Fera's chef's table.

Then, two years ago, Dan bought his own 120-acre farm in south-east Cornwall so that he could supply his own sheep, vegetables and beer for a 14-seater restaurant, due to open this summer. But it's not just Dan's food that derives from local soil: he also began crafting his own tableware out of Cornish clay.

"The two skills are surprisingly similar," says Dan. "I roll out clay with a rolling pin, which feels like rolling pastry. You could say the glazes are the egg wash." The resulting plates look like doughy flatbreads. Then there are black plates which he calls his "shattered plates" – their sides purposefully broken to give rough edges that look like torn black pastry or broken charcoal wafers.

Dan doesn't just put food on his plates, but in them, too: he'll use everything from dried seaweed to cow manure and celeriac to make ash that's then integrated into glazes. As with his cooking, it's about experimentation. One of his favourite ingredients is fig leaf, whose ash gives a wonderful ochre hue to his handmade coffee cups. He's used peas, too. "We had a crop of pea plants that got attacked by weavils, so we turned those into ash for a glaze. It was a good way of getting our revenge on the pests," smiles Dan. "We do the same with weeds, such as ragwort, nettles and dock." crocadon.farm »



WILSON'S, BRISTOL

Restaurateur Jan Ostle and ceramicist Simone Potter started their Bristol-based businesses at around the same time, and helped each other grow. "By chance, someone who works at Wilson's knew Simone, so we got in touch and asked her to make us six bowls, to use alongside our Ikea ones," says Jan. "We bought more and more, and now all our pottery is hers. It's elegant, yet homely. And its neutral colours mean it doesn't take away from the food."

Look more carefully, though, and you'll notice something different about the odd piece: small bands of gold on their rims, a Japanese repair technique known as kintsugi. In line with Japanese tradition, when plates get chipped they're repaired instead of discarded, and the repair is seen as part of its character. "It was too heart-breaking to throw away Simone's precious plates when they got chipped," says Jan. "Kintsugi means we can give them a new lease of life, and celebrate their imperfections." wilsonsrestaurant.co.uk; simonepotter.com

PHOTOGRAPH: ISSY CROKIER



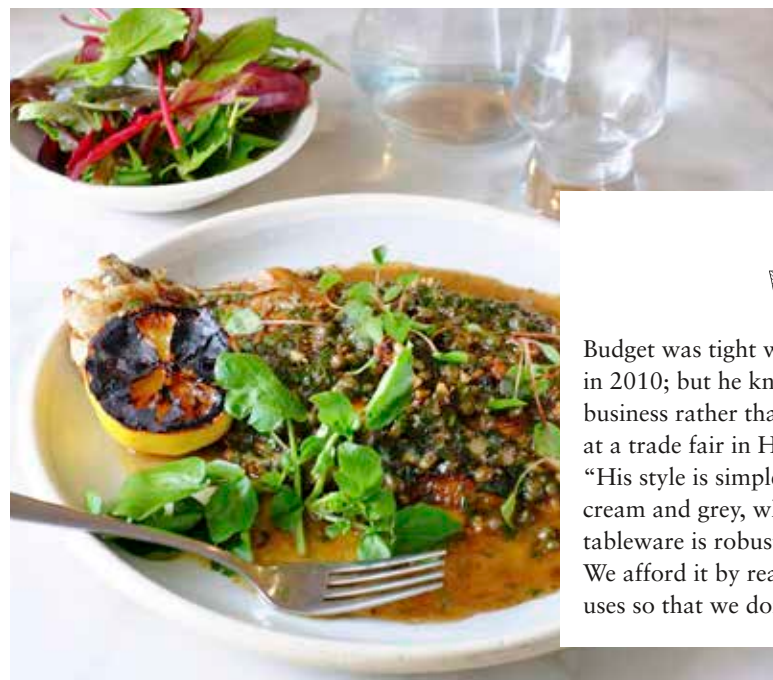
PHOTOGRAPH: ALIJA CULLENDER



THE FRENCH, MANCHESTER

If you watched *Great British Menu* 2016, you'll have spotted the original pottery that encapsulated chef Adam Reid's prize-winning apple dessert. Adam, chef-owner of The French, commissioned **Paul Mossman** to make it. "I knew I needed something that would make an impact, so I asked Paul if he could make a huge apple that I could put my dessert in," says Adam. "Then I told him it needed to be gold and have a map painted on the inside. And I'd need eight of them. Happily, he said yes."

While those golden apples, still used to serve the dessert today, were unashamedly showy, Adam's other tableware, most of it made by Paul, has a relaxed feel. "I wanted to tone down The French's belle époque glamour to make it more casual," says Adam. "The plates are a natural cotton white, which shows off my food, and they give the place a down-to-earth atmosphere. Diners really appreciate the fact that they are totally unique, just like the food, and that you won't find them anywhere else." the-french.co.uk; paulmossmanpottery.co.uk



BRIDGE COTTAGE BISTRO, WHITBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Budget was tight when chef Alex Perkins was about to open his tiny seaside café-bistro in 2010; but he knew he wanted handmade plates, plus he was keen to support a small business rather than a big company. He bumped into Kent-based potter **Dave Melville** at a trade fair in Harrogate and knew straight away that Dave's tableware was perfect. "His style is simple, natural and full of character," says Alex. "The colours are neutral cream and grey, which accentuates the freshness of the produce in our dishes. The tableware is robust, too – it still looks new, even though it gets used many times a day. We afford it by really thinking about what we need, and putting each piece to multiple uses so that we don't need lots." bridgecottagebistro.com; www.potteryman.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH: CLARE HARGREAVES



MOOR HALL, LANCASHIRE

Look carefully at the distinctive tableware at Moor Hall, Mark Birchall's country house restaurant-with-rooms, and you'll spot morsels of stone and shale set into the clay. Remarkably, the stones are from Moor Hall's grounds, worked into the bowls and plates by local ceramic artist **Sarah Jerath**. "I wanted tableware that linked to our surroundings and made us individual," says chef-patron Mark. "Before we opened, Sarah got in touch to say she'd like to work with us. When the place was still a building site she walked around collecting little pieces of stone, and horsetails, to press into her ceramics. I gave her my ideas and she took them away and came up with designs. Sarah hand-pinches her dishes rather than throwing them, so no two are the same. I love their texture and feel. They're wonderful to hold as you eat and you can really feel the passion and care that's gone into every dish." moorhall.com; sarahjerath.co.uk



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALUN CALLENDER & CLARE HARGREAVES



TEMPLE, BUDE, CORNWALL

Ethical local sourcing lies at the heart of this contemporary café-cum-clothes store in the heart of Bude. So, when the young team behind it were setting it up, they naturally wanted the tableware to be as local and artisan as the food served on it. They were keen to use the stoneware hand-thrown by **Rebecca Proctor** four miles away at Marhamchurch, using clay from nearby St Agnes. But such pottery doesn't come cheap, so was out of Temple's reach – until they hit on the idea of using seconds and end-of-line items. "Rebecca's bowls are nice and heavy, and have natural hand-mixed glazes that reflect the colours of our landscapes," says head chef Craig Tregonning. "Using seconds means we can afford them. I actually like their wonkiness and glaze defects. They give character." Temple also sells Rebecca's mugs in the restaurant's shop. templecornwall.com; rebeccaproctor.co.uk »





PERILLA, LONDON N1

If eating off studio pottery is cool again, it's largely thanks to **North Street Potters** in Clapham. It was set up by Naine Woodrow, who trained in Japan in 1978 and started making tableware for a handful of Japanese restaurants when she returned to London. Then, about a decade ago, high-end British restaurants started asking for it, too. "Studio pottery was back in fashion," says Naine. "Over the years we've supplied Le Gavroche, Fera at Claridge's, Coya Mayfair, Portland and The Dairy in Clapham. Recently, Soho House asked us to make them more than 1,000 plates."

One of her current clients is Stoke Newington's European restaurant Perilla, for whom she crafts tableware in a simple off-white satin finish with chocolate-coloured iron oxide rims. "Naine's bespoke plates provide a blank canvas, while at the same time giving each dish an identity," says head chef Ben Marks. "They're perfect for us. And it's great to work with a fellow craftsperson." perilladining.co.uk; northstreetpotters.com

