

Fulfilling a life long ambition and becoming the village pub: Lajos and family at the Vine Tree Inn – D4

Lajos had always wanted to have a little business since he was a child. He had been a chef since he was 14, working in Budapest since he was 19 and then in a successful business in Cheltenham for 8 years. When he was living in Cheltenham he used to cycle round these lanes and villages,

I felt comfortable in them and liked the environment. I like these Cotswolds village pubs. I like village communities and the old character of them, so we were looking for a pub anywhere in the area and this pub came up on a 15-year lease. We drove through the woods to get to it and found it in a lovely setting and fell in love with it. I had never run a business before and was not familiar with leases or management or business, so I went with my heart.

They leased the pub, firstly in 2012 from a PubCo and then from the current freeholder, a private property owner who has other pubs but lives in London. They have 8 years left on the current lease. His wife ran the pub with him in the early days and now they have two children who were born here.

The pub has stunning views from its rear garden over the Stroud valleys and is a centre for the village football, cricket, table tennis, darts teams and the Revellers who perform a play every year and eat there every Friday. Local bikers use the pub 2-3 times a week for drinks and sometimes food and they have a lot of walkers many of whom return time and time again. It is a thriving village pub closely connected to the church who use the pub regularly for meetings. One of the villagers is a music teacher in Gloucester and twice a year he brings a whole band playing jazz. Their footfall is growing year by year and they get regulars from the local villages adjacent to Randwick and some from the nearest town - Stroud - which is growing because of the popularity of their food and ales.

Lajos keeps his menus short to maintain quality and because he uses all fresh food, for example the fish comes directly from Cornwall and south coastal waters. Customers can now pre-order fresh oysters. He sources everything locally with meat coming 'from the other side of the hill'. He does

not over prep and makes everything fresh and meals may take a little longer. There is just one chef – me – and a small team and sometimes we struggle but I would rather put up with challenging times in order to prepare everything fresh. I try to keep my meals simple. I include some Hungarian dishes such as goulash. I make all the desserts myself and try to teach my kitchen staff how to prepare them to keep them interested and involved which helps the speed of presentation, 'My chef never lets me down by not turning up'. Customers often mention that the meals are always the same consistent high quality. I pay more than usual for my meat so that the quality comes through into the product. I think this is crucial for our survival; to be known as a high-quality establishment.

Many of the customers value the local brewery Lajos has adopted, who produce very interesting and flavoursome ales - Tileys. 'I really like the brewer as a person and really like what he's doing, and I want to support him. I do not want to support big alcohol companies or anything big. They like Stroud and its connections with local produce and local businesses and want to support that. 'The other week I bought a Jacob Hogget from just over the hill and I buy my cheeses locally'.

He also studied wine for a year in Hungary and is a qualified sommelier and sells high quality Hungarian wines. 'I visited the vineyard and met the owner from whom I purchase them, and he is a lovely person who has a good reputation in Hungary. We converse regularly by email discussing his wines. I enjoy talking to customers about them and they have become popular with those that now drink wine here regularly'.

Lajos and his family have settled into the community easily,

It is a lovely community and a lovely place to bring up our children. My two children attend the school and nursery and parents have got to know us well. We have lots of friends in the village and many now are parents just like us. It is a wonderful green environment and has a lovely school.

This pub is Lajos and his family. He is the only chef and his values concerning local products are inimitable to the culture of the pub, as his family's commitment to the local village and environment. He is the pub when he offers his Hungarian pork and when he prioritises flavoursome ales from a local brewer who he respects. These publicans reflect a tradition of the village pub, which exists to support the people, the traditions of the village and local area.