



Russell and Danyella  
Pearce of Brodies

# RUSSELL'S HOB

He's cooked for Her Majesty The Queen, former US President Bill Clinton and the late comedian Bob Monkhouse, but opening his own town centre restaurant in Moffat with wife Danyella, has been a long-held dream come true for chef Russell Pearce. He tells **Anne Armstrong** about the story of Brodies

**Photography by Phil Rigby**

**I**t may have taken a while, but Russell and Danyella Pearce are finally fulfilling their dream of running their own restaurant. Red tape and recession were tricky hurdles along the way, but hard work and persistence has paid off for the couple, who opened Brodies in Moffat in April.

In a career which has seen him cook for the Queen and an American president, chef Russell took on his biggest challenge to date when he decided to go it alone.

“It took about five years of planning to open the restaurant; it was a long time coming,” he says.

“Initially there was a lot of red tape with the building and then back in 2008, just as we were about to go, the recession hit, and we had to slow things down. For a time at the end of 2009 and early 2010, I was thinking ‘do I just forget it?’”

But he didn’t give up, and Brodies is now making its mark in the Victorian spa town. Based just off Moffat’s High Street in Holm Street, Brodies is a chic coffee shop by day and stylish restaurant and wine bar in the evenings, with Russell in the kitchen and Danyella – known as Danny – regularly front of house. Within six weeks of opening, they were delighted to be awarded a coveted AA Rosette.

Russell, who grew up in Lincolnshire and always wanted to be a chef, says: “Initially we were planning to take over the whole Manse Furnishings building, but that would have created a 60-70 seater restaurant, which I now think would have been too big.

“We can seat up to 36 in the main restaurant and about 14 in the lounge area, which works really well. We really wanted to create a restaurant which offered quality food at affordable prices, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.”

Many people first got to know Russell’s cooking when he and Danny moved to Moffat in 2003, with sons Aaron and Alex, and took over the guest house, Bridge House, developing a restaurant there. The food side of the business soared and before long the seed was sown to sell Bridge House and open a town centre venue. While that took longer than expected, Russell was appointed head chef at Easterbrook Hall in Dumfries.

Catering for large numbers of people was something Russell was used to: before moving to Moffat he worked at the luxury hotel, spa and golf course Ridding Park in Harrogate. It was in his 12 years here that he cooked for the likes of the late comedian Bob Monkhouse and former American president Bill Clinton. But nothing could beat the day the Queen visited Dumfries & Galloway in July 2010, and Russell was asked to create a special menu for a civic luncheon at Easterbrook Hall.

“I loved my time at Easterbrook,” says



Russell in the kitchen at Brodies



Baked sweet Loch Arthur ricotta and blueberry compote



Restaurant manager Deborah MacBeth



Russell.

“Cooking for the Queen was nerve-wracking; but it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I’m now thinking of re-creating that menu for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee next year.”

At Brodies – named after William Brodie, sculptor of the Moffat Ram and the famous Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh – Russell’s emphasis is on quality and freshness, using local and seasonal produce where possible. During the day, there’s a coffee shop atmosphere with homemade scones, cakes, light lunches, and afternoon teas on offer.

In the evenings, the menu is packed with local produce, including hogget from Moffat’s Annanwater Organics – which has proved a top seller since it was introduced on the autumn menu – Moffat Water trout, locally-smoked haggis, Lockerbie cheddar and Loch Arthur ricotta cheese. And in a move which has also proved popular, quarter of the menu is dedicated to vegetarian dishes.

**R**ussell says: “We didn’t want to go for set menus; we feel that people are more money-conscious at the moment, but still want to dine out. People want value for money and quality. If that means they come in for a full meal or just a main course with us, that’s great. Or if they want a cocktail and a sweet in the lounge, or just a glass of wine, that’s fine. We want people to enjoy coming here, and come back often.

“I’ve always eaten vegetarian food, and I always feel that vegetarians get short-changed when they go out. I wanted do something different here and always offer at least three vegetarian courses, so that vegetarians have as much choice as meat eaters.”

With a small team which also includes restaurant manager Deborah MacBeth and Susan Barrow, who keeps Brodies gleaming, Russell and Danyella are pleased with the success of the restaurant so far – and are continually thinking of new ways to tempt customers.

An Early Doors menu is about to be launched, offering meals earlier in the evenings for those who might want to pop in on the way home from work, or on their way to an evening concert.

For the winter months, Russell is also thinking of hosting Kitchen Workshops; sessions where around four people at a time could go in and watch a demonstration, then cook and eat.

He and Danny are also looking forward to their first festive season at the restaurant. **D&G**

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