

Chef

of the month



Allan 'Alfie' Little is chef proprietor of the newly refurbished River House restaurant on Greig Street, whose large windowed frontage offers views over the River Ness.

Born in Truro and brought up in the small Cornish port of Fowey, he has always had a great love for and respect of the sea, whether at a favourite pastime of sailing or cooking and eating the fruits of the waters.

At 18, Allan found himself on the Isle of Skye where he extended his stay when offered a job at Sconser Lodge, which in turn led to the position of Food and Beverage manager at the Cuillin Hills hotel. This was followed by, at 24, a transfer to the mainland as general manager of the former Cummings Hotel in Inverness.

Adrian Pieraccini employed him as manager of Riva and then seven years ago Allan acquired the River House which now specialises in locally sourced top quality beef, game, poultry and, of course, his beloved seafood.

River House is a past winner at the Inverness and Nairn Tourism Awards for Best Dining Out Experience and offers a competitively priced lunch and early evening menu as well as full dinner menu.

What made you want to be a chef?

My love of food and wishing to share this with others

Who has been the greatest influence on your culinary career?

Rick Stein, because of his enthusiasm and simple cooking methods

What made you think Inverness was ready for your style of cooking?

Customer feedback and requests for specific dishes have resulted in my current menu

What's the worst burn you've had in the kitchen?

Stupidly picking up a very hot pan straight from the oven -- not a clever thing to do!

Your best dish?

It would have to be between the Ross-shire fillet of beef and the freshly caught West Coast cod -- but I would go for the cod, pan roasted with a chickpea and courgette casoulte and a crispy pancetta snap

Your worst dish?

Definitely something no longer on the menu

What are the latest customer and cooking trends?

Many clients are now into healthy eating and cooking and this makes a lot of sense. However, a little bit of what you fancy cannot be bad, either.

What's your advice to a young chef?

Be prepared to work long hours and remained focused. A genuine interest in food is a great help.

What advice would you give to someone cooking a special meal at home?

Ensure you have all the ingredients before you start. But, most of all, keep it simple.

Where is your favourite place in the world to eat?

Back to my roots, to Cornwall, outdoors on a fine summer day, a glass of rose in hand, at the Old Quay House in Fowey. Nearer to home, the Applecross Inn in West Ross, with a pint and a bowl of steaming mussels.

Ending on a sweet note, what's the dessert you love to cook?

Classic bread and butter puffing with clotted cream. Sexy!