



DANIEL WATKINS

Daniel's cooking is bold, simple and incredibly visual. Most recently Head Chef at St Leonards in Shoreditch, Daniel has a passion of cooking on fire and his cooking can be described as resourceful - he creatively works with produce to ensure there is as little waste as possible.

"For me, it is always about getting the most from the produce – which is why I work seasonally – and cooking with fire and exploring techniques around ferments, preserves and vinegars I am able to be creative."

Originally from Essex, Daniel started in kitchens from an early age; his mother was a pastry chef and cook, and through school he used to help her in the kitchens for extra cash. After high school Daniel spent time travelling through Greece for a few years, when he returned to the UK it was a decision between studying photography or cooking, and cooking won; Daniel trained at Barking and Dagenham College

His first job as a chef was at The Brewery on Chiswell Street, and he worked at various places in the City as well as staging at various restaurants in London before he lead the team at, The Anchor in Hullbridge, which gave him a space to develop his own style of cooking.



Creative Outlook

Although Daniel trained as a chef his eye on aesthetics and passion for photography are a continued part of his life and work. His approach to food and presentation reflects this as he sees cooking as a creative process. Daniel has developed a space on Instagram express his visual interests, combining both his loves – photography and food. Through this medium he’s also built a connection and community with others.

“Through Instagram I have had fun developing my own style of plating - thinking about simplicity and attention to detail. It has been really nice to inspire and connect with young chefs and every day I am learning something new and taking inspiration from others – that is one to the positives from today’s social media.”

Daniel has collaborated with a number ceramics including the up-and-coming designers from Kinn Collective and [Odd Standard](#), as well as Coasta Nova, Studio Matt and Staub.





Work + Life

One of the key factors to Daniel's food is about balance, creating interesting textures, a sense of bold flavours and a freshness to ensure that there is a journey within the dishes. This carries over into Daniel's life where he predominantly eats a plant-based diet and is an avid practitioner of yoga and meditation.

"As a chef I eat and taste everything and enjoy a huge range of foods but I have found in my downtime that my mind and body work better focusing on a plant-based diet. It's great to be able to have the balance between the two."

Daniel is also a passionate advocate for mental health, and has spoken out about various pressures in his life and work and how he has learnt to manage depression. It was the diagnosis of his young son, and then daughter, with autism that changed his approach to his own wellbeing.

"Both Macy and Freddy have autism, both are very different and have different needs, however both are very unique and absolutely amazing!" His family is one of his main inspirations.

Pot Roasted Cauliflower

This dish uses flavour profiles that are familiar in South East Asian cooking such as mee rubus, an Indonesia noodle dish with a thick umami gravy.

Blend chillies, galangal, turmeric, garlic, onion, miso, lime leaf, lemongrass and 120ml of oil into a smooth paste, heat a pan and add the paste, cook for 3 mins.

Add sweet potatoes, miso, coconut cream, chopped tomatoes and water, simmering until sweet potatoes are soft, then blend till smooth.

Whilst this is happening, roast your cauliflower with a touch of seasoning until tender.



XO Mushroom + BBQ Hispi Cabbage

Gently cook shallots, cinnamon, star anise, chillis and garlic; add shiitake, cook and soy sauce. Allow this to reduce for a few minutes and then remove the cinnamon and star anise, cook until the mushrooms have reduced and the mixture is has thickened. The final sauce should be quite chunky, but it does need some final polishing in blender or food processor.

Remove some of the larger outer leaves of the Hispi cabbage. Cut in half, drizzle with a little olive oil and season. Simply cook over a fire or in a skillet cook cut side down unit nicely caramelize – service with a splash of vinegar and plenty of the XO mushroom sauce!



Chawanmushi

This is a Japanese style egg custard dish. Mix eggs in a bowl very gently; in a sperate bowl mix dashi stock, soy sauce, cooking sake, warm chicken fat, salt and sugar. Add this to the egg, strain to make sure the mixture is perfectly smooth. Steam on a low heat until set. Finish the dish with crisp chicken skin, brown crab emulsion, fresh white crab and a little lemon juice.



Pipian Rojo

This is an incredible sauce to go with frilled vegetables or meat, it a classic Mexican sauce that adds heat to a meal.

Swat down the shallots and garlic, added dried quajillo chilles, ancho chilles, cinnamon, sweet paprika, cumin and dried oregano, add water and simmer until it has reduced by half, then blend and add toasted pumpkin and sesame seeds





[@chefdanielwatkins](#)

Agent: Frankie Reddin
frankie@anna-frankie.com