



THE SUNDAY TIMES

TOP 100 RESTAURANTS

Starting a new business during a recession is never an easy task, as Tom van Zeller will attest. Nevertheless, two years after launching his eponymous restaurant, van Zeller is confident that he has overcome his financial teething troubles and is looking for new premises in central Harrogate so he can pursue his vision on a much bigger scale.

Crucially, he has managed to retain his focus on the kitchen. "It's important to keep the diner's palate entertained as they work their way through a plate of food," he says. "We aim to introduce at least one new item every week, and we don't want to repeat ourselves." Nor does he set his kitchen easy targets: one recent project was to produce pine-flavoured ice cream.

Despite his Dutch-sounding name, van Zeller is much a local boy, back in his native Yorkshire. A first kitchen job at Betty's, Harrogate's famous tea shop, was followed by stints with Raymond Blanc, Tom Aikens at Pied à Terre and Pierre Koffmann during the last days of La Tante Claire ("very disillusioning"). Van zeller then hit the road, cooking his way around Australia and working as an "illegal alien" in New York at the time of 9/11.

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Back in Harrogate, he was working at the Hotel du Vin when he realised that the kitchen was turning over more than £1m a year and selling more foie gras and lobster than steak – clear signs that there was a market for serious fine dining in the town. He persuaded David Moore, his old boss at Pied à Terre, to offer him financial backing and opened in 2009.

Van Zeller cooks to full houses on Fridays and Saturdays, and works hard to stimulate weekday trade with themed dinners.



3rd

BEST IN YORKSHIRE

79th

BEST IN THE UK

Diner's Verdict
Van Zeller serves up some "gorgeous" dishes at this "coolly decorated" but "intimate" town-centre two-year-old..
