

London Marriott Hotel

IT'S THE COOLEST KITCHEN IN TOWN AND FORMS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE FOOD-FOCUSED LONDON MARRIOTT WEST INDIA QUAY HOTEL & EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS IN CANARY WHARF WHICH OPENED IN JUNE 2004

It has taken eight years to combine the vision of the developer – Marylebone Warwick Balfour – with that of Marriott Hotels & Resorts, contracted to run the site for 20 years, and kitchen designer Andrew McMillan FCSI of Cini-Little GB.

What has emerged is a stunning hotel boasting state-of-the-art for hotel restaurant kitchens in the UK – set in a thriving business and social community.

But when it was acquired in 1996, the Docklands site was derelict – the only thing that moved was litter. Deserted dockland wharves featured only rusting cranes and empty warehouses. There was no link with Canary Wharf 100 metres away across a dock; there was also bad road access.

"The first thing we had to do was a radar survey of the entire site as the area was heavily bombed in 1940," says MWB Director Brian Day.

Marriott's vision for the site took note of the large number of American companies in Canary Wharf and so incorporated four floors for its first executive apartments in the UK, above a 301-bed 5-star hotel with a substantial and innovative food offering – including a lower-ground-floor 'Halfpenny Dip' delicatessen and coffee shop.

General Manager Paul Downing was specially selected for his food & beverage background – he previously ran F&B for Marriott covering the whole of South East Asia. Among his first appointments were David Dent as Executive Chef – who was promptly dispatched to visit Marriott's around the world to update his international culinary experience.

Marriott's ideas "greatly enhanced the food operation," says Day and these included an oyster & champagne bar that doubles as a cold service counter for breakfast and 'The Curve' restaurant and open-view 'show kitchen'.

FCSI kitchen designer Andrew McMillan of Cini-Little GB took Marriott's desire for stylish 'front of house' theatre cooking and drawing from his years spent designing show kitchens in the Far East, created the highest of high-tech catering solutions.

Marriott wanted high powered lava rock griddles just a few feet from the nearest customer's table – but didn't want the customer covered in grease spats or choking on smoke.

Such is the volume of smoke and fumes from these grills that McMillan had to allow for extraction that would capture and contain a 600cfm/linear ft. effluence stream, within a 900mm working

height elevation.

Traditional solutions to theatre cooking involve stainless steel or glass canopies over the cooking area – to capture the smoke and steam. But steel canopies spoil the aesthetic look – they are ugly. Glass screens look better but quickly mist with condensate and need cleaning several times per day.

"I knew Cini-Little of old," says Day, "they advise Marriott internationally on all their hotels. They performed well in the past.

"Marriott produced a brief and draft menus, story-boards and photos of the type of dining experience they were after. It was then left to Cini-Little to come up with the equipment and layout, working alongside the interior designer, Richmond International.

McMillan's 'out of the box' solution for the front of house theatre kitchen and the high power lava rock chargrills in particular, was to use 'downdraught' ventilation. "Key in achieving the desired air quality, was the need to balance the face velocity of the ventilation, unit with the general restaurant air treatment."

Rather than extract the air upwards and out – which would require traditional steel or glass hoods (that the interior designer didn't want anyway), the effluent is directed across the top of the grills and down!

Installed by ventilation expert Halton Systems – in conjunction with kitchen installation specialist Hallmark Kitchens who installed the char grills and associated kitchen equipment – McMillan's downdraught solution combined with Halton's bespoke restaurant ventilation became a substantial chunk of the £1million cost in catering equipment.

"It was months in development," says Day. "We wanted the customers to be close to the action without being caught in it. The system is very clever – basically the pressure difference created by the ventilation ensures the flow of air is away from the customer.

"This was a case of stainless steel meets veneered paneling – where the two meet is not always amicable. We are very pleased with the end result. It's clear to me that Andrew could have designed the whole thing. When catering equipment is the dominant part of the layout, it makes sense to offer interior design as part of the design package."

