

RED KITE PR

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Reel good news from film festival

► CANNES might have been cancelled, but Seret, the British arm of the Israeli Film and Television Festival, has not. The UK festival, which runs from May 21 to May 30, is going completely "virtual" and will be "one of the first film festivals to be screened entirely online." Seret co-founders said that while it had been a "tough decision", the wide array of Israeli films,



Scene in *Golden Voices*

documentaries and dramas that they had decided to share with UK audiences "will be available on home screens, rather than in cinema."

Charles Forte began stalking London's streets until he found an empty shop in Upper Regent Street. With money raised from friends, relatives and a very reluctant father, he opened the Meadow Milk Bar. By 1938, he had five West End milk bars.

In 1947 Forte opened his first of several large London cafés at the old Lyons tearoom at Rainbow Corner in Shaftesbury Avenue.

His premises were always clean and modern. But there was another aspect to them. As the Methodist Recorder journal noted in August 1948: "Throughout the organisation, there is a clear anxiety to serve the customer in the fullest sense."

Albert Roux's Le Gavroche had won two stars from the Michelin Guide in 1974 and 1977. Diners entered through a door in Upper Brook Street, Mayfair, and descended to the dining room in the basement. With little natural light and certainly no views, all the focus would be on the food and service.

Albert employed Marco Pierre White, 21, who had made the journey from West Yorkshire with just £7.36 left in his pocket, a small box of books and a bag of clothes.

At Le Gavroche White learned that a kitchen could not be run without discipline. "Discipline is born out of fear," he wrote in his autobiography.

He opened his own restaurant in Wandsworth Common, called Harveys. He built a reputation as a fiery cook. Sitwell writes: "Chefs were dispatched as often as the menu changed, and there was White, the brooding, long-haired, moody rock star."

White set another generation of chefs on the road to success, each of them later merrily recounting tales of how they had survived his kitchen.

Today, the British food landscape is shaped by some of the men who learned under his unique style of mentoring: chefs such as Gordon Ramsay, Phil Howard, Bryn Williams and Jason Atherton.

People seek out restaurants as a place to meet, socialise, do business, romance a loved one, plot a coup. Being hungry is an assumed pre-requisite.

The future of dining out will doubtless mirror the present, writes Sitwell. There will be new food concepts, new cutlery, space-age environments, and new-fangled digital booking systems.

“But there will always be a place for simplicity. While some fantasise of merging science with ingredients, others will still have a dream about opening a little place with a small kitchen, a modest, seasonally changing menu, a functional wine list, cheerful staff, and the buzz of conversation and laughter. I’ll take a table for two in that one, please.”

- ***The Restaurant: The History of Eating Out.* By Simon and Schuster, £25**

Writer's retreat

William Sitwell's self-isolation book choice...

- ***A Town Called Alice*** by Nevil Shute: I've become obsessed with Shute and have been devouring his books in recent weeks. He makes heroes of ordinary people, tells beautiful love stories and envelopes you in his wily narrative that is always laced with the most extraordinary know-how of machines... read *An Old Captivity* but be wary of *On The Beach*, which is not a good idea if you're feeling gloomy.
- ***Any Human Heart*** by William Boyd. One of my favourite novels. It's the story of a life in which the narrative develops and changes in style as the narrator grows and changes. I think it's an enormously powerful story and just so vividly real.
- ***Jeeves (or Blandings Castle)*** by PG Wodehouse. I love PG Wodehouse. He has the power to transport the reader to a world of perpetual English summers, barmy characters and very, very funny moments.