



An artist's palate

Since January this year, culture vultures with palates as selective as their social calendars have followed their noses to Stratford's best kept secret. Tucked away in Theatre Square, Circus Eats is the restaurant at Stratford Circus, the forward-thinking arts centre in the heart of the cultural quarter.

Chef Kevin Richardson has been the driving force in the kitchen, blending a background in fine dining, a passion for food and a love of the arts to produce

feasts fit for families, friends and any other person who happens by. And as the centre: "welcomes people of any race, colour, creed, age group and physical ability," in Kevin's words – that's no mean feat. It's a far cry from fine dining for high flyers, but Kevin is thankful for that. "I'd much rather be here. You get much more buzz and variety here – I like seeing all the different people coming through the door."

Although composing music is Kevin's first love, he has worked in kitchens since the age of 16, funding his three

music degrees. He says: "It was just to pay the bills that I started working with food. I began as a waiter and worked my way up, becoming a restaurant manager and then a chef." But he confesses to being smitten by working with food: "I love eating! And I love the buzz around kitchens and restaurants – the kitchen's a unique work place."

Newham's diversity makes it a unique place too, so how does he cater for that? "I've been learning a lot more about international foods. One of my colleagues



> WORKING LIVES

getting more popular all the time.” Plans are afoot to create a lounge for parents so they can relax while their children are being entertained elsewhere.

By catering to such a variety of ages and backgrounds, Kevin has made the restaurant not only a trustworthy choice for parents but also a fresh option for anyone out and about in Stratford. Visitors can come to the arts centre or the restaurant, but Kevin’s vision is about the two working in conjunction. “It’s about bringing it all

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together – making it a bigger experience than just coming to see a show. Now the restaurant’s open till late, we can offer a whole evening’s entertainment. And when people eat here once, they come back for more. It helps that we change the menu every week, to keep people interested. It means the food’s fresher too, and everything’s made on the premises.”

With platform events for new artists on the horizon – so you can be entertained while you eat – and all this good food, what could be better? Kevin has one more card up his sleeve: “All of our dishes are less than £10 - eat here and beat the credit crunch!”

in the kitchen is Kenyan and I’ve been learning a lot from her. Mrs Iqbal, a local resident who works here too, has been teaching me all about Indian food. And all our meat is halal, unless we say otherwise.”

Just as Circus Eats offers cuisine to reflect Newham’s make-up, Stratford Circus aims to provide performing arts that reflect and attract all of our residents’ communities, and that are accessible and affordable. The centre quickly became known for its creativity and innovation

in the arts. Families enjoy the centre’s festivals, such as Stratford Circlets, a succession of exciting workshops and performances for children.

Circus Eats taps into this family market with a children’s menu, offering nutritious options at reasonable prices. Kevin explains: “We take the nutrition of children seriously. As we make all of the food on the premises we can guarantee what goes into it. And food on the children’s menu is baked, not fried.” But do our reputedly junk-obsessed youngsters like it? “Yep! It’s

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