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# Letters



## The secret life of mushrooms

by Tim Hayward

Tim Hayward writes that the ability of mushrooms to transmit information between trees does not amount to “trees talking to one another”. But earlier this month, scientists at the University of West England discovered that the electrical impulses fungi employ to communicate internally are intricate enough to resemble words. And, who knows, maybe it doesn’t end there. Certainly not for John Cage – an ardent mycologist – who believed that if you played a Beethoven quartet to a fly agaric, it became a prime edible (don’t try this at home). Killian O’Donnell, *Co Galway, Ireland*

Tim Hayward’s fascinating article on fungi omits what must surely be its earliest historical mention, namely the Old Testament description of the food eaten by the children of Israel in the Sinai desert after fleeing Egypt, thought to have taken place in the 13th century BCE. The word man, transliterated via the Greek Septuagint as manna, occurs in Exodus 16:31. The foodstuff, which appeared at dawn as a film covering the ground “like hoar-frost”, is given an excellent review, with its taste compared to “wafers made with honey”. It evidently satisfied people’s hunger, one of the many complaints of the desert wanderers. But the composition of this nourishment seems to have been misunderstood by later writers. Psalm 78:24 says, “And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.” Hence the totally inaccurate phrase: manna from heaven. Ruth Rothenberg, *London, UK*

I love how rogue the FT sometimes goes on weekends. It was an interesting read, I have my suspicions on whether Tim was sober the entire time it was being written... Josho *via FT.com*

## The Franciscan helping the Vatican take on AI

by Madhumita Murgia

Thank you for this article. I am uplifted and energised. It is deep and resonant and I will have to read it again and again. Translations *via FT.com*

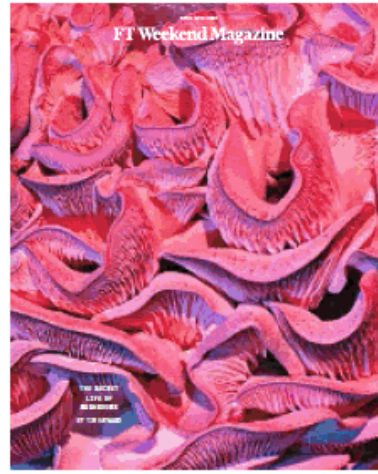
The irony of having religion – the biggest cause of conflict and abuse of power – warning us about the dangers of AI. BigAdes *via FT.com*

## Essay: our paltry morality

by Dan Brooks

Social media is what it is by design. Instead of democracy, we got bigotry, tribalism, opinion bubbles, information overload, anxiety, demobilisation, memes, the selfie and OnlyFans. Good content there is, but it’s buried under tonnes of gibberish, useless posts, clickbait and paywalls. The noise is simply too big. In social media, moderate words are non-existent, they quickly drift to the fringes pushed out by the more punchy (polemic) discourse. Hence, the excessive moralisation. Big Tech knows that only polemic content generates the rates of engagement they require to keep the marketing machine pumping billions. Bruegel\_The\_Elder *via FT.com*

↔ Bruegel\_The\_Elder  
If only we didn’t have social media. Then we’d all live in a perfect world, free of genocide, racism, bigotry,



▲ APRIL 16/17  
Why the future is fungi

poverty, war, environmental despoliation and wealth inequality. Just like we did from 10,000 BC to 2004 AD. jfkfc *via FT.com*

One might argue that acquiring “knowledge” in front of a million other eyeballs, in brains that evolved to seek status and public approval, is the very worst way to acquire knowledge of how to live. We really only learn this one-on-one, talking to trusted friends and being able to explore possible courses of action without being labelled a racist, sexist, etc. The current public-shaming environment is extremely unhealthy. We are primed to conform to our “tribe”. Woe betide those who tell the truth. They will likely be burned like witches of old. The “bad people” weren’t the witches, they were the witch-burners, weren’t they? SimonJB *via FT.com*

## Thank you, Honey & Co

I’ve never written in before but thought I should put pen to paper (finger to keyboard). I’m not sure how long Honey & Co have been writing their recipes for the magazine, but whenever I read them I’m amazed at how fresh both the words and recipes are, every single time. Itamar’s words are always beautiful, Sarit’s recipes are brilliant (I’ve made a few – the oxtail from a couple of months ago is a favourite) and the photography is always lovely. I started buying the FT Weekend to get their recipes (and for a few other things in the magazine) and then that’s why I subscribed. Nice one, team. Melissa, *London, UK*

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# Intellect

*Undercover Economist*

## TIM HARFORD

The distinctly tangible value of the intangible

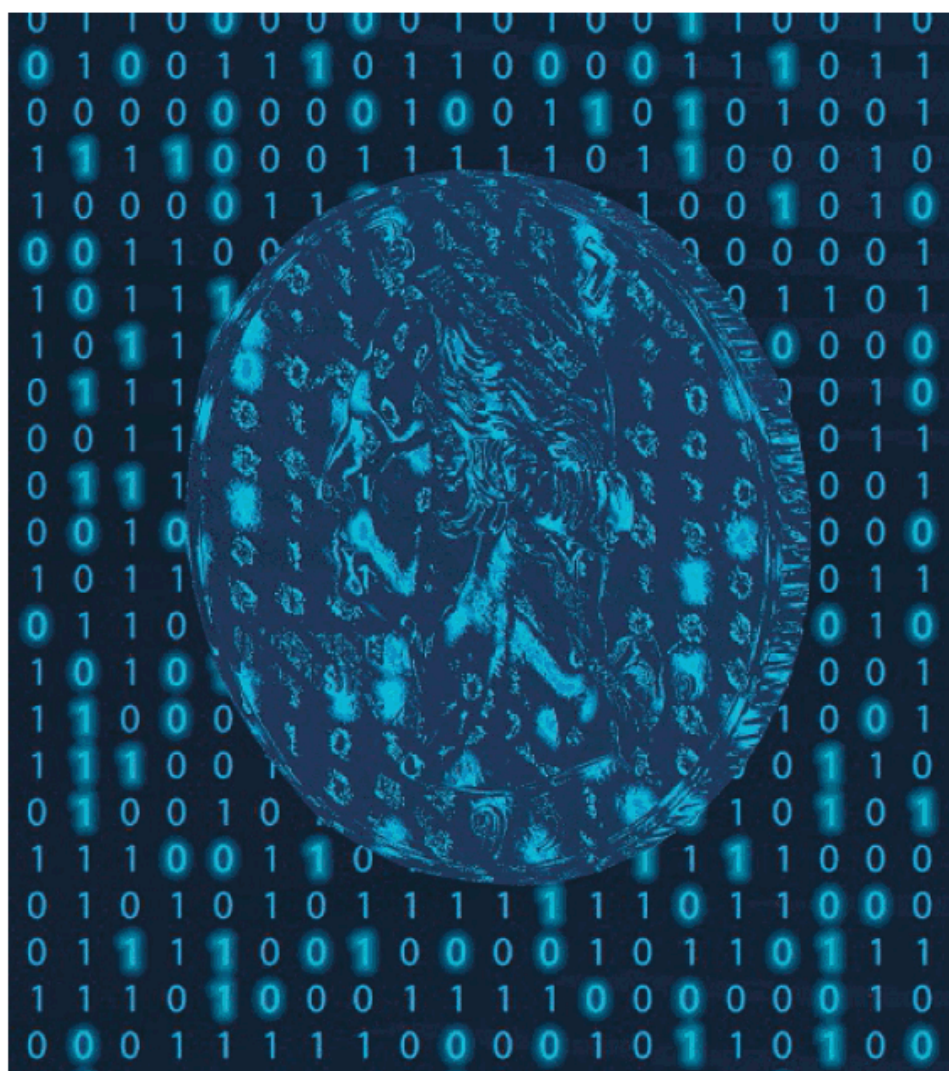
After two decades of digital titans hogging the limelight, the physical economy has spent the past two years reasserting itself. From the supply of toilet paper to the price of wheat, shortages of personal protective equipment in early 2020 and columns of Russian tanks in early 2022, it's become obvious that the economy doesn't depend on tweets and dogecoin but on the kind of honest everyday stuff you can drop on your foot.

That, at least, is the new conventional wisdom. Alongside that conventional wisdom go lamentations of decline: why don't we in the UK make anything any more? Didn't the Chinese show us all how it was done that time they built a Covid hospital in a week?

There is some truth in this cry of despair, but also a great deal of confusion. Look more closely at the events of the past two years and the intangible economy seems more important than ever.

Consider Covid. The successes and failures of the Chinese response had little to do with their ability to manufacture PPE or build a hospital in a few days. They were all about the capacity - or sometimes incapacity - to identify the virus, trace contacts and lock down population centres. The same was true elsewhere. Shortages of oxygen or equipment were sometimes a problem but not as great a problem as the shortage of effective contact-tracing systems, testing capacity or expert medical staff.

High-quality statistics were another essential asset, acting as the pandemic equivalent of radar. Without reliable statistics, we ►



◀ were taking hugely consequential decisions by groping in the dark. As this data improved – from the infection survey conducted by the UK’s Office for National Statistics to the RECOVERY trial that has ruled out poor treatments and identified effective ones – our responses have been far better targeted.

The most obvious success was the rapid development and production of vaccines. A vaccine programme is not purely intangible. Vaccines require vials, needles, deep freezers and complex supply chains. But the importance of intangible assets is central and absolute: no know-how, no vaccine.

There is more to these intangible assets than the information contained in an mRNA molecule. Developing vaccines required years of earlier research. Proving they worked required rapid, large-scale clinical trials. Ensuring doses were produced quickly required risk-sharing – in particular, government commitments to buy lots of doses before it was clear they would work.

Perhaps the most underrated intangible asset in this rollout was trust. Hong Kong has suffered a catastrophic wave of Covid not because it lacks vaccines – it has plenty – but because the elderly residents who most needed the vaccine were the least likely to trust it. Two thirds of the over-eighties were unvaccinated when Hong Kong’s Omicron wave began in February.

**T**aken as a whole, the experience of Covid is a reminder of how essential intangible factors can be, whether it’s the expertise in the heads of medical professionals, data in spreadsheets and databases, life-saving clinical trials, the policy environment surrounding the development of vaccines, or simply trust (or mistrust) of what is being offered.

So let’s look at the war in Ukraine. Tangible physical factors are inescapable here, from boots on the ground to bullets in the bodies of unarmed civilians. Europe nervously contemplates its gas supply, while north Africa braces itself for the consequence of interruption to Ukraine’s wheat harvest: unaffordable bread.

But if tangible assets were all that mattered, Vladimir Putin would already be consolidating a quick victory. “Quantity has a quality of its own,” as Stalin never actually said, but quality has a quality of its own, too.

The early success of Ukrainian resistance has been built on intangible or partially tangible advantages: better tactics, vastly more motivated troops and anti-tank weapons that incorporate some of the latest western technology. President Zelensky’s rhetorical gifts have delivered him the sympathy of western public opinion and thus of western governments. That sympathy has manifested itself most obviously in vice-like financial sanctions. Ripping the Russian central bank out of the world economy is perhaps the ultimate example of intangible warfare.

Clearly, there is much more to a flourishing society than mere stuff. In a new book, *Restarting the Future: How to Fix the Intangible Economy*, Jonathan Haskel and Stian Westlake argue that not only is the intangible economy more important than ever, but we have failed to reckon with that fact, and thus failed to develop the right institutions and policies. That failure goes a long way to explaining some of the disappointments of the modern world – low growth, inequality, corporate power, fragility in the face of shocks and growing concerns about inauthentic “bullshit jobs”.

“Intangibles” is a word with an expansive meaning, covering everything from the software in a javelin missile to the soft power of a charismatic president. But that does not make the idea vacuous; it explains why fixing the intangible economy is such a subtle challenge.

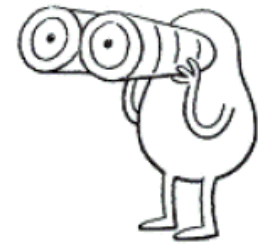
So the pendulum has not swung back to the physical economy as much as the conventional wisdom might have you believe. The 21st century has been the century of the intangible economy, and little has happened in the past two years to suggest otherwise. **FT**

.....  
*Tim Harford’s latest book is “How to Make the World Add Up”*

Notes from the Cutting Edge

**RYAN McMORROW AND GLORIA LI**

The robot dog seemed cute until I realised it was a cop



**Preserved Egg** roams Shanghai’s empty streets with a megaphone strapped to its back. The robot dog is about the size of a terrier and barks orders to residents: stay inside, wash your hands, check your temperature. On some nights, when city officials have ordered mandatory midnight Covid testing, Preserved Egg – the name is reference to the famous Chinese dish – marches down apartment corridors, rousing inhabitants and calling them downstairs for throat swabs. Shanghai is a few weeks into a strict lockdown President Xi Jinping introduced as part of a zero-Covid policy. Lockdown in this city of 25mn people has cut the normal city din and let the sounds of surveillance drones buzzing overhead cut through.

Wang Yushuo, a young employee at Chinese drone company DJI, controls the dog remotely as a volunteer for his community’s residents’ committee, a “self-governing grassroots organisation”. He says the dog makes three or four patrols a day depending on battery life. “It’s very efficient,” he says. “The virus is everywhere outside. We’re trying to avoid any close contact.”

Not everyone is so enthusiastic. In central Shanghai, 33-year-old Pei started keeping the curtains drawn in her sixth-floor flat after spotting a drone as she smoked on her balcony. “It was fluttering nearby so I waved at it,” she says. “It paused for a second, then flew away.”

Shanghai is among the most heavily surveilled cities in the world, but with cameras pointed at empty streets, drones and robots offer authorities a closer view of citizens’ homes. The Communist party is pushing for more spending on such tools.

At times the machines are quite helpful. At a few college campuses and makeshift quarantine camps, self-driving carts and robots ferry

food to people stuck in their rooms. In Kangcheng, an apartment complex hailed by government officials as a model of pandemic preparation, Chinese tech giant Meituan’s driverless carts deliver food.

The lockdown was imposed with little warning, making food a concern for millions. Most markets are closed and those that remain open have trouble accessing supplies as the city is partly quarantined from the rest of China. Residents swipe on delivery apps to try to snatch new food as soon as it becomes available. Some even set their alarms for 6am to start shopping when stores update their stock of fruit and vegetables. Some young engineers are even writing code to automate the process. One programmer trapped in northern Shanghai wrote a program to monitor Meituan’s app on two phones and a computer


24 hours a day. “We’ve been locked in for half a month and this is all they’ve given us,” he says, showing a shopping bag provided by the city which contains seven potatoes, seven onions, four tomatoes, three radishes, a cabbage and a piece of meat. “We have six people here. This little bit of food, it’s not close to enough.”

It’s becoming obvious drones can be used in other ways. A day after a small protest broke out over food in the suburb of Jiuting, a police drone flew in to admonish residents. Shen, a migrant worker who lives in the area, was woken from a nap by its loud robotic voice. “Don’t stir up trouble or gather illegally, or you’ll be handled according to the law,” he says it blared as it hovered overhead. “The pandemic is out of control... now here comes a drone to educate us on the law?” **FT**

‘Food prices are out of control... now here comes a drone to educate us on the law?’

.....  
*Ryan McMorrow is the FT’s China technology reporter. Gloria Li is south China researcher for the FT. Additional reporting by Xueqiao Wang*





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Untitled, 2021. Location: Gold Coast Castle

## GALLERY

*Photograph and words by*

**CAMPBELL ADDY**

I came across these boys in Cape Coast in Ghana when I went back there in 2021. The backdrop is one of the “slave castles” where slaves were held; behind me is the ocean where the slave ships would have taken everyone.

This is not a posed picture. We were just talking and hanging out. I asked them what they wanted to be and they told me dancers. I said, “OK, cool, let’s dance.” I don’t even remember taking the picture, but when I got the roll back, I thought, “Wow, this is a fashion image.”

In a way, it encapsulates my journey in photography and as

a person – being British and of Ghanaian heritage, going to visit this historic place. These boys are unapologetically black and powerful. There’s a word my grandma used to say: *boga*, meaning super-cool. These boys are *boga*.

As a fashion photographer, it’s such an important picture for me because a lot of my fashion work is so often staged. This is instinctive and honest. **FT**

As told to Emma Bowkett. “Feeling Seen: The Photographs of Campbell Addy” is published by Prestel

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World View

# SIMON KUPER

The brain rot common to the far right and far left



**O**ne oddity of the Ukrainian war has been watching far-right leaders such as Marine Le Pen, Matteo Salvini and Nigel Farage scramble back from their adoration of Vladimir Putin, while their far-left peers tone down the excoriations of Nato. It must have felt similar watching Hitler's appeasers reinvent themselves in autumn 1939. Today's far right and far left share an outlook: hatred of one's own nation, at least in its current incarnation, and the search for a better foreign country to love.

George Orwell saw this first. In May 1945, in his essay "Notes on Nationalism", he defined "transferred nationalism": people displacing their nationalist loyalties to another country. The Corsican Napoleon and the Austrian Hitler were case studies. Orwell wrote that in his day, the phenomenon was strongest among western leftwing intellectuals, whose transfer of loyalty was "usually to Russia".

The fashionable objects of transferred nationalism change over time. It always helps to know little about the adored country, so that it can be safely idealised. In the 1960s and 1970s, the far left worshipped Cuba, Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam and Mao's China. Meanwhile, on the American right, writes Canadian author Jeet Heer, the journal *National Review* "ran ads for tourist agencies offering trips" to apartheid South Africa and fascist Spain and Portugal. Later, the US right adopted Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel, while leftists such as Jeremy Corbyn chose Palestine and embraced what has been called "Khomeinism", after the late Iranian ayatollah.

Almost any political movement will occasionally be tempted to reject its own country. Some

of my fellow British Remainers did this after the Brexit vote, often transferring their nationalism to Angela Merkel's Germany. At other times, one's own country becomes impossible to love: Nazi Germany, and perhaps Putin's Russia. But for today's far right and far left, disgust at one's own nation is the standard condition.

For the far left, this typically boils down to the notion of original sin. One's home country's past crimes - colonialism, slavery, genocide - prefigure whatever it is doing today. The far-left American thinker Noam Chomsky, for instance, condemns Putin's invasion but spreads blame to the US, adding: "The US has a long record of undermining and destroying democracy. Do I have to run through it? Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, on and on." For Chomsky, his own country can never learn from its sins and improve.

By contrast, far-right nationalists who despise their own nations focus on betrayal. They believe that the real country has been sneakily replaced by a fake country full of immigrants and "woke" customs. Recall Trump's warning to the marchers on the Capitol, on January 6 2021: "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country any more." In this view, modernity equals destruction. The British philosopher Roger Scruton - "the greatest modern conservative thinker", according to Boris Johnson - wrote in a "funeral oration" for his own country: "The old England for which our parents fought has been reduced to isolated pockets between the motorways."

The nativist promise is that the betrayal can be reversed, that one day it will be bright, sunny 1955

again. But for now, if politically correct globalists are erasing one's nation, then nativists need to find another country to love - a country that has remained pure, white and martial, where nobody is allowed to oppose the Leader, and where men are still men, and women mere women.

For years, the chief beneficiary of transferred nationalism, as in Orwell's time, was Russia. After Trump became president, most US Republicans who expressed a view considered Russia a friendly nation. Or look at the photograph on Le Pen's original campaign leaflets of her shaking hands with Putin: Make France Great Again morphs into Make France Russia. Moscow encouraged such feelings with monetary benefits. Le Pen's party took loans from Russia worth €11mn, inevitably entering a relationship of obligation.

Now that Putinphilia has become at least temporarily embarrassing, the far right needs a new pet nation.

The US right's trendsetting Conservative Political Action Conference meets in Budapest in May with a keynote speech from nativist Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban.

But perhaps the most prominent nationalist now assailing his own country, destroying his people's peaceful, unheroic, modestly prosperous lives, is Putin himself. As *The Economist* noted: "He says he loves the motherland, but his actions suggest the opposite." It's like romantic love for a real, flawed person: the actual modern country never lives up to the nationalist ideal. **FT**

.....  
simon.kuper@ft.com @KuperSimon

Now that Putinphilia has become at least temporarily embarrassing, the far right needs a new pet nation



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# GILLIAN TETT

The war comes to the symphony hall



Three weeks ago, a month after Russia launched its invasion, a Ukrainian composer named Yuri Shevchenko died of pneumonia, aged 68. He was trapped in a basement in Kyiv as the city was preparing for a possible siege. His passing might have escaped my notice had I not witnessed a striking tribute that recently took place in New York. During the premiere of a new Philip Glass symphony at Carnegie Hall, Canada's National Arts Centre orchestra played a haunting piece composed by Shevchenko, loosely based on the Ukrainian national anthem.

"It's called 'We Do Exist'," Alexander Shelley, the conductor, told the audience. He explained that he had decided to perform it before Shevchenko's death, although it was now a posthumous tribute. That might have been moving enough. But as the melody soared, there was also an implied question hanging over the evening: what to do with Russian music, given the horrors raging in Ukraine?

After all, Russian compositions and performers are an integral part of the classical music world. So much so that when Shelley created the programme around the new Glass symphony - commissioned to honour the memory of Peter Jennings, the Canadian-American broadcaster - it seemed entirely natural to include some sweeping Russian compositions. But in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there have been calls for a musical boycott. Many western institutions have asked Russian artists to denounce the war or distance themselves from Vladimir Putin. Some of those who refused, such as the Russian conductor Valery Gergiev and opera singer Anna Netrebko, have been dropped from playbills.

Some orchestras have gone even further by cancelling performances of Russian music in

general. The Cardiff Philharmonic recently removed Tchaikovsky from its programme; Putin responded to this and similar cancellations by complaining that no longer playing works by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich and Rachmaninov is a form of "cancel culture". Other orchestras have continued to play Russian music, arguing that it is pointless to censure pieces written long ago. But the questions remain. Does it make sense to ban all things Russian? Or is this a step too far?

Personally, I feel torn: I want to signal my support for Ukraine, but banning music written long before Putin was born strikes me as odd. "It is not easy to know what to do," Shelley confessed shortly before the Glass event. That evening, his "solution" was to include Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony on the programme beside Shevchenko's piece.

At first blush, it might seem excessively PC to balance a Ukrainian work with one by the famous Russian composer. But, as Shelley explained, the reality is more complex. Shostakovich wrote the Ninth Symphony in 1945, on a commission from Josef Stalin. The Soviet leader wanted a triumphant musical celebration of communist power. The symphony that Shostakovich delivered, however, was dark, sarcastic and melancholic. So much so that Stalin's goons later suppressed it.

Eighty years on, this twist is sometimes forgotten. Thus, to some, Shostakovich might invoke a sense of Russian pride. However, for Shelley, that particular symphony is a symbol of protest against a repressive regime - and playing it is a type of tribute to the idea of rebellion. To underscore the point, the Canadian orchestra also played the Violin Concerto by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, the Jewish-Austrian

composer who fled the Nazis and refused to write music until they were vanquished. Incidentally, the only piece free from any war symbolism that night was the symphony from Glass, which "came off as quirky, mischievous, but not necessarily public and open", as the New York Classical Review observed.

What should we conclude from this concert? One obvious point is that the invasion of Ukraine has seeped into the cultural landscape faster than any other geopolitical event that most of us have ever witnessed. Another is that music is a complex tool in politics, its meaning depending on context as much as anything. Melodies that evoke nationalist pride to one set of ears can evoke entirely different emotions to another. And that leads to a third point: there can be hope in ambiguity.

Today, debates over the meaning of performing the works of Ukrainian composers such as Shevchenko, versus those of Russian artists may seem divisive. They don't have to be. During the cold war, western and Russian audiences alike relished Tchaikovsky's music, for example. His melodies created bridges, not barriers. It may be difficult to imagine this happening any time soon. But music is not quite as fickle as politics - and creativity need not necessarily be a zero-sum game.

So as I left Carnegie Hall that night, I was glad to have been introduced to Shevchenko's work, as a display of Ukrainian pride. I was also delighted to have heard the sardonic, defiant Shostakovich. If nothing else, it shows that there is so much to celebrate about Russia's creative legacy. We should not let Putin sully that, especially now. **FT**

[gillian.tett@ft.com](mailto:gillian.tett@ft.com) [@gilliantett](https://twitter.com/gilliantett)

During the cold war, western and Russian audiences alike relished Tchaikovsky's music



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## DISPATCH

from

### LVIV

The hunt for meaning,  
identity and borscht  
in war-weary Ukraine

By Wendell Steavenson

**L**viv, the old Habsburg city in the relatively peaceful west of Ukraine, has become a kind of Casablanca, a hub for diplomats, journalists, refugees and foreign volunteer fighters. In the first days of the war, restaurants closed. But soon many began to reopen, and almost all those that did split their operations between cooking meals for refugees and serving regular customers.

By the time I meet Ievgen Klopotenko at the end of March, people have got so used to the air-raid sirens they ignore them. We meet at his pop-up bistro Inshi, which has been open for about a week. He and his team at his main restaurant in Kyiv had been cooking 1,000 meals a day for volunteers and soldiers. Inshi is partly intended as an outpost to employ some of his staff who have left for the relative safety of Lviv.

Klopotenko's hair is razored on one side and stands up in a curly shock on the other. Like most Ukrainians in the second month of the war, he is pale and tired, with circles under his eyes. We sit down at a table with a pot of tea. A customer wants a selfie, and he obliges before apologising, "It's just because I'm famous, you know." After winning Ukraine's *MasterChef* in 2015, hosting several TV shows and writing best-selling cookbooks, Klopotenko, 35, is probably Ukraine's best-known chef. He has a bouncy enthusiasm, a pell-mell kind of energy and a talent for publicity. People like to call him Ukraine's Jamie Oliver.

Klopotenko has also been over the past several years a dedicated champion of Ukrainian ingredients and cuisine, but he is perhaps most famous for his explorations into all things borscht. In 2020, he made a YouTube series, filming different people making borscht all over the country, and he has spearheaded the campaign to have borscht recognised by Unesco as part of Ukraine's national heritage.

"I understood that what unites us is borscht. Presidents and governors had been looking for something to unite Ukrainians, but I saw that we were many different people. We cooked different borschts but, at the same time, it was the same borscht." For Klopotenko, borscht



Chef Ievgen Klopotenko checking on borscht in the kitchen of Inshi, his pop-up restaurant in Lviv, where refugees eat for free





**'We are going back to the roots of why people cook, to feed people, to save lives'**

Ievgen Klopotenko

is not just a national dish. It is a symbol of the very Ukrainian identity Russia is violently trying to erase.

**Klopotenko was born in 1986** "in the USSR" and grew up in Kyiv. In his twenties he travelled, working as a lifeguard in Wisconsin, discovering pasta and parmesan in Italy, flipping fries at a McDonald's in Germany. Between travels, he worked stints in many different restaurants in Kyiv. Back in the 2000s, the fare was often staid, he says, with menus stuck in a Soviet hangover of cutlets, mashed potato and the ubiquitous Russian salad - potato and carrot and peas bound with mayonnaise.

Klopotenko won *MasterChef* just after the Maidan revolution that toppled President Yanukovich, who had come to be seen as pro-Russian. Ukrainians were embracing the idea of a new European-looking identity. When he was presented with the trophy the judge asked him, "What next?" Klopotenko answered highly exuberant, almost without thinking, "I will change the food culture in Ukraine."

How to do this? Klopotenko realised he had to rediscover his country's lost cultural history and traditions. On the back of his new fame, he made a TV show called *Odyssey*, in which he links Ukrainian writers, composers and artists with culinary tradition. "Food is the DNA of my nation," says Klopotenko. "I wanted to understand my DNA. I wanted to discover who I am."

One episode focused on the 19th-century poet Taras Shevchenko, who had eaten borscht with carp, another Igor Sikorsky, the helicopter designer, who had loved potato and buckwheat pie. The show ran for three seasons and featured more than 60 cultural figures.

"Seventy-five years of the USSR changed our memories," Klopotenko tells me. "I would ask people, tell me five Ukrainian dishes, and no one could. I was almost crying." The most common answer: "borscht and *salo*", salted pork fat. The 20th century brought Ukraine a terrible toll of wars, hunger, Holocaust and repression; food became a matter of mere survival. Under the Soviets, standardisation reproduced the same dishes in canteens from Riga ►



◀ to Vladivostok. “I understood that we had lost our traditions and that we had to recover them,” he says. Borscht was universal, and it was the country’s most famous dish. So, to resurrect Ukrainian food, he started with borscht.

**The first time I ate proper Ukrainian borscht** was March 1 2022. I had crossed the border the day before, four days after the war had begun. I found myself in the unimposing town of Lyuboml, near the Belarus border. It was cold and grey, the shops mostly shuttered. Mid-afternoon, hungry, I stopped at a small roadside restaurant. It was empty and looked closed, but a table was kindly laid for us and tea and borscht brought. A group of about eight women, cheerful and chattering, came in, pushed several

Volunteers serving food and hot drinks to newly arrived displaced Ukrainians at Lviv’s central train station

tables together and began to roll out dough to make *vareniki*, potato-filled dumplings, to feed the volunteers manning the new sandbagged checkpoints on all the roads.

I had always thought of borscht as a kind of beetroot soup. It is not. It’s thick, rich, complicated; sweet and sour and salty and tangy, bright with dill, creamy with a dollop of *smetana*, sour cream. I ate it in greedy spoonfuls, warmed, heartened, enlivened, restored. It was more than a bowl of soup. It was an embrace.

The main idea of borscht, Klopotenko explains to me later, is fairly simple: a stock, either meat or vegetable, to which is added beetroot – grated, cubed, pickled, fermented, juiced – it doesn’t matter. “This is the base and then to this is mixed everything you have in the garden,” usually some combination of pota-

toes, carrots and cabbage, often tomatoes or tomato paste, beans and red peppers. Borscht is not quite a soup and not quite a stew. Like goulash or ragu or cassoulet or jambalaya, it defies categorisation, is subject to myriad variations and yet, somehow, remains distinctively, recognisably borscht.

There are endless permutations: red borscht made with beetroot, green borscht made with sorrel or nettles, yellow borscht made with sugar beet or rutabaga. Stewed pears and prunes are added in Lviv, cep mushrooms in the Carpathian mountains where hunters use boar’s blood as a thickener. Borscht can be made with duck or goose or smoked veal bones, with fish stock made from carp or chunks of sardines that were once a cheap staple of Soviet shelves. In Odesa, Jewish families

ALKIS KONSTANTINIDIS/REUTERS; DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

make borscht with chicken stock, not pork. The Crimean Tartars are Muslim and use lamb; in some places in the south of Ukraine they make it with tomatoes and peppers and think the idea of borscht made with beetroot is a bit funny. You can add really anything you want, smoked sausage or sauerkraut, kvass or beer, paprika or a dash of horseradish. "Ukraine is a country that has always been open to many different peoples and influences," says Klopotenko. Anything could be mixed into borscht: "Why not bananas?"

In one episode of Klopotenko's 2020 YouTube series on borscht, *The Secret Ingredient*, he filmed a Ukrainian army unit on the Donbas front that was fond of adding powdered salted fat for extra body. In another, he went to Chernobyl and made borscht with the head cook of the power station, who stirred in parsley and a little butter at the end.

In in the north, near the border with Belarus, he interviewed an old, widowed beekeeper. "He made his borscht in a very simple way," Klopotenko tells me, "by placing whole beets in a pot of water inside his wood-burning stove." It made a thin pink stock to which he added everything else he had: cabbage, parsley, sauerkraut, a few potatoes and a spoonful of honey. The beekeeper began to cry as he made this soup. "He was ill. He was alone. There were no neighbours for 10km. He said to me, 'I think this is the last thing I will do in my life.'"

On his travels, Klopotenko found that variations in borscht were not as regional as he had once imagined, but more individual. There's a maxim that every Ukrainian's favourite borscht is their mother's or their grandmother's. When a Ukrainian couple marries, Klopotenko says, only half-joking, borscht represents the first hurdle of matrimonial compromise. One person might prefer chicken stock, another might dislike sauerkraut. Individual preferences and their configurations are infinite. They come together and become something new - an almost-perfect metaphor for an emergent Ukrainian identity.

**Borscht is delicious, I agree, but why, when it was also popular in Lithuania and Poland and Hungary and, yes, Russia - as well as clearly**

### **When a Ukrainian couple marries, Klopotenko says, only half-joking, borscht represents the first hurdle of matrimonial compromise**

having deep Ashkenazi Jewish roots - is it so important that it be Ukrainian?"

Marianna Dushar has a Fulbright scholarship to study food history and sociology in the Ukrainian diaspora in the US and is working on a doctorate. She is writing a book about borscht with her friend Aurora Ogorodnyk, a food writer and researcher who also works for Ukraine's largest supermarket chain.

We meet at a restaurant in the centre of Lviv. The chef brings a dish of *tsvikli*, a beetroot purée sharpened with vinegar and horseradish, that Dushar says was almost certainly a precursor of borscht. "It's an old dish found from the time of the earliest recipe books, in the 16th century, with roots in Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish cuisines." The origin of

the word borscht is thought to be Yiddish. But as Ogorodnyk explains, there is also a case to be made that it comes from the Slavic word for hogweed, from which some early forms of this dish were made.

"So where does borscht come from?" I ask.

"We cannot make an iron-clad argument that Ukraine is the motherland of borscht," Ogorodnyk says with academic care, "because it exists all over." What they have done is to map many of the early references to borscht found in memoirs and travelogues going back to the 15th century. They found that their early "borscht map" roughly corresponds with the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth of the 16th and 17th centuries, which covered a broad swath of what is now the Baltic states, western Belarus, western Ukraine and eastern Poland. "Very fascinatingly," says Dushar, "this also overlays with the Pale of Settlement," the area where the Jews of the Russian empire were permitted to live, despite being often excluded from cities and subject to pogroms.

Borscht was spread to Russia by successive waves of migrants. For example, by Cossacks forced to leave Ukraine, in the time of Catherine the Great, who settled near St Petersburg, and by Ukrainian intelligentsia who studied in Russian cities and merchants who travelled to Russia. "Over time, borscht became part of Russian cuisine," says Dushar. "It changed and evolved. You can see it appears often with different names, like Moscow Borscht."

Dushar and Ogorodnyk describe how borscht is embedded into Ukrainian literature, songs and proverbs. "Don't over-borscht" means don't overdo something. Many families gather for a special Sunday borscht; borscht served on Christmas Eve is always meatless, because it is traditionally a fast day and often served with *vushka*, little dumplings stuffed with mushrooms or prunes or herring. "Borscht is made for weddings," says Dushar, "and for funerals and baptisms and other church rituals. It accompanies Ukrainians through their lives."

"Does it matter if it is Ukrainian rather than Russian?" I ask.

"Yes, it matters," replies Dushar. She points out that even in old


Russian culinary literature, borscht is usually referred to as being from Ukraine, "even though they call it *malo Russ* - lesser Russia".

"For many decades, even centuries, we were invisible," Dushar tells me. "The world couldn't see us behind the huge grey shadow of Russia. No one recognised that Ukraine has its own culture. And now, when we have everyone's attention, every step we take to help Ukraine to become more visible is important. Borscht is bright, and it's the right dish to put at the forefront of this effort."

Klopotenko's efforts to have Ukrainian borscht recognised by Unesco were, in part, a reaction to a tweet from the Russian foreign ministry in 2019 that described borscht as one of Russia's "most famous and beloved dishes". This seemed to reinforce the commonly held impression outside Ukraine that borscht is a Russian thing - an extension of Russian hegemony. For Klopotenko, the question of the Ukrainianness of borscht was "the same question of why we are at war". The Russian claim to borscht was just another example of cultural appropriation.

At the beginning of April, the Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova called Ukraine's apparent refusal to "share" borscht an illustration of its "xenophobia, Nazism, extremism in all its forms". Borscht as proxy.

At Inshi, Klopotenko's borscht was a thick mix of molten meat and beetroot and vegetables, with the addition of smoked *smetana* that wafted a gently charred taste at the back of the throat. He tells me that, before the war, he aspired to see his restaurant in Kyiv on the list of the World Best 50 restaurants. Now this ambition has fallen away. "We are going back to the roots of why people cook, to feed people, to save lives."

As we talk, an old woman comes up to thank Klopotenko. She says she has just come from Mariupol and shakes her head with all the sadness and horror of the war, then squeezes his hands with tears in her eyes. The restaurant, he explains when she leaves, has two menus, one for regular paying customers and another free one for everybody else. 

.....  
*Wendell Steavenson writes about food and other things*

SUCCESSION

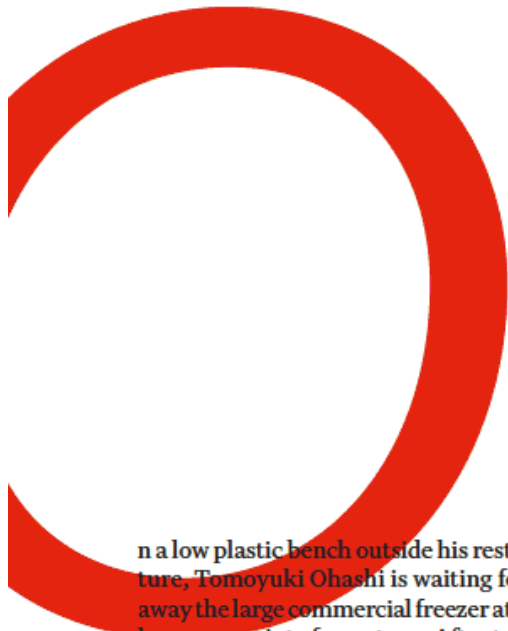


STORIES



*JAPAN BUILT THE  
WORLD'S THIRD-  
LARGEST ECONOMY  
ON CRAFTSMANSHIP,  
HARD WORK AND  
FAMILY ENTERPRISE.  
A SHORTAGE OF HEIRS  
NOW THREATENS TO  
END THIS LEGACY*

*BY LEO LEWIS, ERI SUGIURA  
AND ANTONI SLODKOWSKI  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GO ITAMI*



n a low plastic bench outside his restaurant in Kanagawa prefecture, Tomoyuki Ohashi is waiting for a lorry to arrive and take away the large commercial freezer at the back of the kitchen. It is, he says, a point of no return. After taking over the business from his father more than 35 years ago, Ohashi has served his last bowl of raw tuna on rice.

As he prepares to leave for the final time, he wonders whether he should bother his son, an office worker in nearby Yokohama with no apparent interest in the family business, and ask for help dismantling the large sign that advertises the restaurant along the main road. "It's a difficult conversation," he says. The past few years have been punctuated by rows between father, son and daughter-in-law.

Ohashi, 74, is part of the generation that built Japan into the world's third-largest economy. Now, in retirement, it is about to reshape the country once again. His restaurant is one of tens of thousands of businesses that will close down this year because there is no successor to take the reins. Some will be bought by outsiders, some will find an individual from outside the family. Most, like his, will simply vanish.

According to recent government figures, the single biggest cohort of business owners in Japan are 69-year-olds. Demographics have long posed huge challenges to the country's rapidly shrinking and ageing population. But the national shortage of heirs was largely overlooked. Two years of pandemic restrictions have deepened the sense of urgency. Many owners in their mid-seventies have chosen to accelerate plans to either hand over control or watch their cherished firms disappear.

As a consequence, Japan faces what some fear could be the most extensive evaporation of know-how and institutional memory in modern history. The effect on the country will, Ohashi fears, be huge since so much of Japan's culture is embedded in its businesses and the skills they have amassed between them. The idea that the country could somehow allow all this to disappear, and that the process may even alienate parents from children, is a source of national sorrow.

Seen from one angle, the crisis is a consequence of Japan's success. Decades of stellar postwar economic growth helped create a large, university-educated workforce. These younger generations have been a source of enormous pride to their parents, but in a culture that has long emphasised filial piety and family cohesion, their determination to turn their backs on the family business has brought disappointment too. Many children of baby boomers have moved into cities and have no interest in taking over the small factories or repair shops started by their parents in their now-depopulating home towns.

More than 40,000 small firms a year are in need of a successor, government data shows. As angst over the issue grows, high-profile dramas have played out in public. When furniture-giant founder Katsuhisa Otsuka tried to oust his daughter Kumiko from the company's board in 2015, he said at a press conference



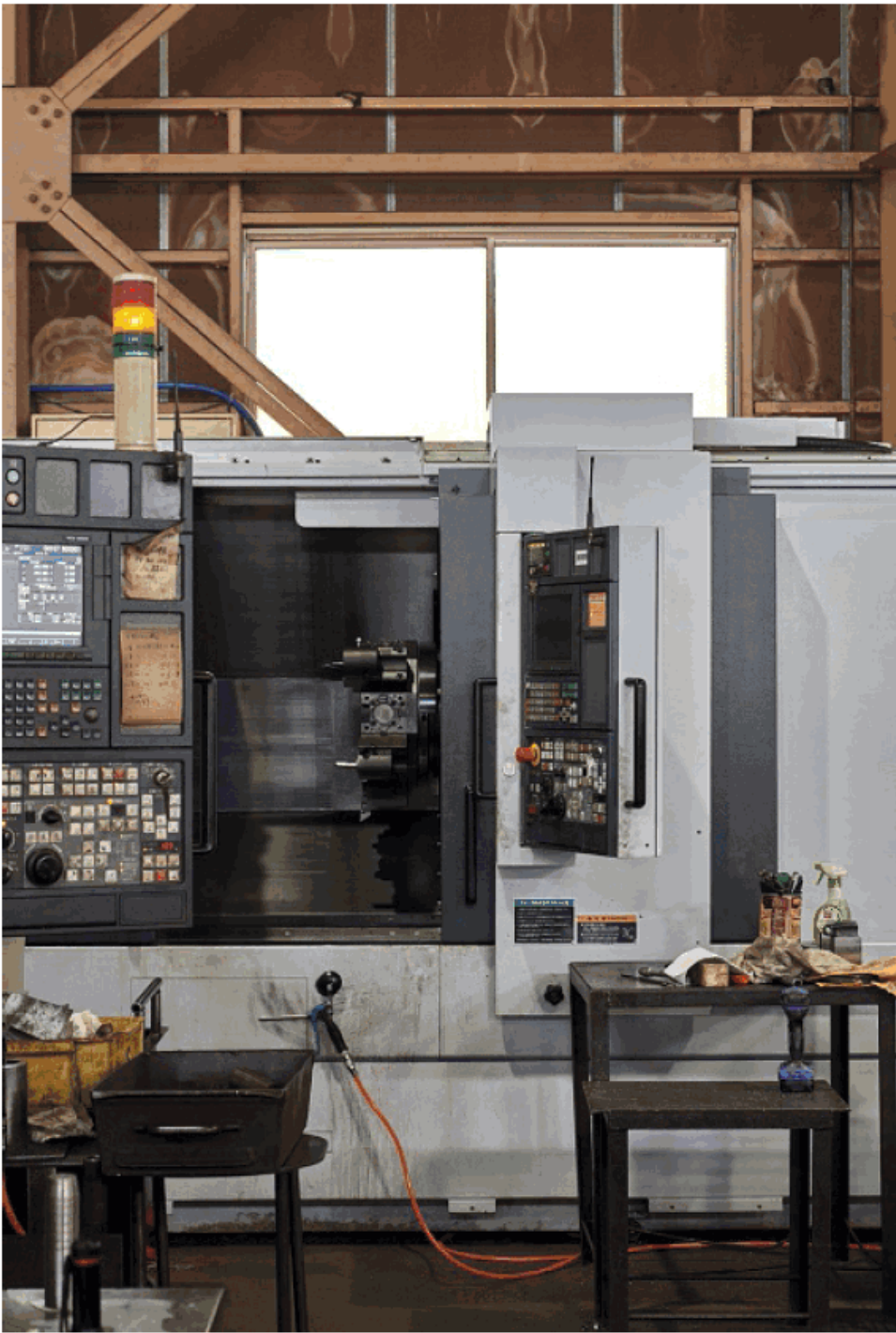
■ **BUSINESS NAME:**  
**ARAIE MANUFACTURING**  
 (BELOW, PREVIOUS PAGES AND PAGE 26)

■ **FUNCTION:**  
**MANUFACTURES INDUSTRIAL PARTS; MOVING INTO MAKING PRODUCTS SUCH AS COFFEE MILLS**

■ **CURRENT OWNER:**  
**FORMER AIRCRAFT-ENGINE SPECIALIST KIMIHIKO YAMASHITA (LEFT)**

■ **BUSINESS TRANSFER:**  
**BROTHER TO BROTHER, THEN BUYER- MATCHED VIA A GOVERNMENT-BACKED 'SUCCESSION CENTRE'**

■ **LOCATION:**  
**KAGA, ISHIKAWA**



that he had “made a bad child”. Kumiko won the battle, which played out on the front pages of major newspapers for months, but the company’s declining performance forced it to merge with an electronics company earlier this year.

Even when the financial stakes are smaller, family dramas and fallings-out have potency. Yasuhiro Ochiai, an expert on family businesses at the University of Shizuoka, says the negative effects of companies without a successor go far beyond the closure of each business itself. Small businesses are often core to local communities, as well as significant employers. And they frequently play a key role within longer supply chains. Business closure as a result of the lack of successors is, he says, “a clear threat to big companies at the top of the supply chain as well”.

As the crisis has grown, so too has the industry around it. Foreign and domestic private-equity funds have camped out in Japan on the expectation that succession issues will deliver a stream of buyout deals where the hidden treasures of industrial Japan are suddenly available to buy. The likes of Carlyle and Bain Capital have been richly rewarded for that bet. In 2020, Bain clinched a \$1.2bn deal to buy Japan’s leading nursing home operator Nichii Gakkan after acquiring shares from the founding family.

Now banks, accounting firms and other financial advisers have reworked their business models to provide services to company owners looking to pass on their businesses. Companies have sprung up specifically to conduct merger and acquisition deals among smaller companies - the vast majority of them driven by the need for an owner to hand over their enterprise as a going concern while they still have time to enjoy the profits from a sale.

Other innovations include companies such as Tranbi, a “dating app”-style system designed to match heirless company owners with the sons and daughters they never had. But getting people to the negotiating table is not always so straightforward. The leading M&A advisory houses employ entire teams of sales staff with approaches calculated to have the strongest effects. Female cold-callers are said to be good at convincing restaurateurs and retailers to consider selling; construction company owners will only ever speak to a male broker.

Rumiko Kodomari, who is in charge of call centre operations at Nihon M&A Center, says: “Five years ago, almost no one knew about M&As. So they had no idea what we were talking about. Sometimes they got enraged, blaming us for talking about such a serious issue over the phone.” These days more people have heard about the idea of “M&A succession”. “Still, it is very rare to reach out to someone who knows about it. It’s like winning the lottery,” says Kodomari.

Over the past two months, the FT has been surveying a range of companies to find out how the coming crisis might play out across the country. Their stories show that, when the deals are finally done, tears flow and people who have spent their whole lives building their business breathe a sigh of relief. For some, it puts an end to worry about looming bankruptcy. For others, it means learning to let go. For all, the consequences go far beyond individual success or failure.

**ARAIE MANUFACTURING**  
**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SUPERMAN GOES**

When Takeshi Araie died in September 2019 without anointing a successor, the manufacturing firm he ran with his brothers for generations was thrown into limbo. Takeshi was a traditional Japanese manager and, typical of bosses of his generation, one of few words. He did not share much with his employees about his clients or what the parts made by Araie Manufacturing were being used for. There was no computerised system to manage inventories or order flow. Everything had been in Takeshi’s head.

Crucially, he didn’t discuss the day-to-day running or finances with his younger brother, Masayuki, who now found himself ►

**'WE WERE TOLD WE'D HAVE TO WAIT ABOUT TWO YEARS FOR A MATCH. I WORRIED BECAUSE WE WERE ALREADY ON THE BRINK'**

**MASAYUKI ARAIE, WHO INHERITED HIS FAMILY'S FIRM IN HIS SEVENTIES**

◀ inheriting the firm in his seventies. Worse still, it turned out that the business was in severe financial distress, with a quarter of a million dollars in personally guaranteed loans at risk of being called in at any moment. "I couldn't really disobey my brother or stick my nose into his affairs, so I kept myself to the factory and didn't know much about the finances or management," Masayuki says. "Then I found out we were in deep trouble."

The company that later became Araie was founded in 1956 to produce industrial parts, then branched into industrial conveyor belts. As the country rebuilt after the second world war, it was small manufacturing firms like this that laid the foundations. But by the end of the 1980s, as the asset bubble burst and deflation ate into corporate margins, Araie's fortunes declined, along with those of its hometown of Kaga, a snow-covered resort on the Sea of Japan. Once a popular destination for corporate get-togethers, Kaga's *ryokan* hotels fell into disrepair when Japanese firms cut back on such extravagances. Its population, which hit 80,000 in 2000, is projected to be just half that by 2040.

As Masayuki scrambled to save Araie, he received a helping hand from the local government-backed "succession centre", created as part of Japan's push to help small enterprises survive. Such offices play an increasingly important role. In the fiscal year to March 2021, they successfully matched 1,379 small firms with successors, more than a tenfold increase from just six years earlier. "We were first told we would have to wait about two years for a match," Masayuki recalls. I worried because we were already on the brink."

But then, through the scheme, he met Kimihiko Yamashita, 57, for the first time at the end of 2019. A lanky former aircraft-engine specialist who is sporting a red jacket and a double-layer of face masks, Yamashita describes Masayuki as "a sophisticated craftsman who's been the pillar of this factory for 60 years". He also uses the term *monozukuri*, synonymous with manufacturing but which also implies a deep respect for the craft of "making things". After the two talked, Yamashita used a government scheme to borrow the money to buy Araie's shares. The company's loans would also now be guaranteed by a government-backed entity, without personal risk to the new owner.

More than two years on, Yamashita's modest office at the Araie factory still looks like thousands of similar family-run places across Japan, with its grey desks, filing cabinets and low chairs. In the far corner, there is a miniature shinto shrine on the wall. As Yamashita lays out his vision, an employee regularly pops in to use a microscope on the desk. One of his first moves was to expand the workforce from 11 to 16 because Masayuki was simply not replaceable by another "superman". Yamashita spent about ¥300,000 (\$2,519) in six months on job ads and looking for ways to attract new employees. Passing on Masayuki's knowledge is vital, he says. "If we can't do this, the firm will surely collapse."

Despite this, Yamashita believes that Japan's succession problem is not because there aren't the people to take over companies







■ **BUSINESS NAME:**  
**GENKI**

■ **FUNCTION:**  
**TRADITIONAL UDON RESTAURANT**

■ **CURRENT OWNER:**  
**ENTREPRENEUR REIKA HACHISU (FAR LEFT)**

■ **BUSINESS TRANSFER:**  
**FROM ORIGINAL OWNER RYOZO IWASAKI (LEFT) TO HACHISU, WHO IS KNOWN AS THE 'SUCCESSOR OF LAST RESORT' TO RESTAURANTS ACROSS JAPAN**

■ **LOCATION:**  
**YOYOGI, TOKYO**



like Araie. Instead it's down to the immense cost pressures these companies face. In our two hours together, he fields three long calls from business partners. "You know we can't keep producing at these prices!" he tells one during a testy exchange. The caller had demanded a single part that takes 30 minutes to produce - for a price of ¥50 (\$0.42). "So I asked him: if it's ¥50 for 30 minutes, it's ¥100 for an hour. Would you work for that kind of money?"

In a bid to increase margins, he has started accepting orders for larger, more complicated parts for the construction industry. "If you raise prices, fewer people send you orders, but the net result is the same and it frees up the resources to do more innovative, value-added work." Yamashita shows off one more thing he hopes will help turn Araie around: a 3D-printed bright green prototype of a coffee mill, which is the result of combining his engineering background with Araie's technology. He wants to transform the company into a maker of products, not just parts. "Companies like ours have the technology without which Japanese *monozukuri* would not exist," he says. "We must first help these firms and then help find people who can inherit them."

## GENKI

### SURVIVING AND THRIVING

For almost three decades, Ryozo Iwasaki worked in quiet anonymity among the ranks of Japan's salarymen. Then, in his early fifties, he left the construction company where he was a civil engineer and went to noodle school before setting up Genki, a traditional udon restaurant in the Sugamo district of Tokyo.

A heaving *shitamachi* labyrinth of small restaurants and bars beloved by the post-work crowd, the area was the perfect home for Iwasaki's new venture. It didn't take long for word of his delicious udon to spread through a city not short on fine-dining options. Within a few years, Genki appeared on the revered Tabelog list of the capital's top 100 udon shops. And by 2020 Iwasaki had built a fanbase among aficionados. Then his landlord gave him some bad news. The building Genki stood in was to be sold for redevelopment.

Tokyo owes its ever-changing skyline and its flavour as a city to a permanent state of being torn down and rebuilt. Many businesses faced with such issues simply find a new spot to open. But for Iwasaki, who was 68 and had never considered the issue of a successor, it felt like a sign that it was time to give up. However highly his noodles ranked among foodies, the idea of securing 10-year bank loans to relocate in his late sixties was daunting. Meanwhile, his two sons had careers of their own, and there was no energetic young successor ready to take on the job.

With the end in sight, Iwasaki got in touch with an employer in the construction industry to ask if they needed the services of a retired civil engineer. He also began telling loyal customers that the days of their favourite udon were numbered. They were not ►



◀ happy, begging him to explore every possible avenue to keep his kitchens open. A possible buyer for the business did appear but pulled out at the last minute.

Six months later, Iwasaki sits at a table near the entrance of the newly opened Genki in Tokyo's upmarket Yoyogi district. A few hundred metres south lies the home of former prime minister Shinzo Abe. A similar distance to the north is the home of Japan's richest man, the Uniqlo founder Tadashi Yanai. The lunchtime rush has just finished, and a large delivery of eggs for the evening is being hoisted from the front door to the gleaming metal kitchen. The smell of corn oil, in which Iwasaki deep fries Genki's signature tempura, hangs thickly in the air.

Iwasaki tells me that salvation for Genki finally came in the form of one of its many devotees. Reika Hachisu is a 36-year-old entrepreneur with a habit of swooping in as the successor of last resort to restaurants across Japan. She also happened to be a huge fan of the old Genki. Whenever she had been there, Hachisu noted the long queues outside, even in the rain. She started to do her research on udon restaurants, even going to the south-west island of Shikoku - one of several places that claims to be the birthplace of Japan's favourite comfort food.

A month before Genki was due to move out of its old building, Hachisu, who is chief executive of the restaurant operator Otto, came to the negotiation table. The deal was done shortly after the first meeting, with Otto, which runs more than 20 establishments nationwide, taking care of everything from finding the relocation site to hiring staff. Critically, Hachisu also agreed that Iwasaki himself would stay on.

It's not her first merger. The last time out she also hired the former owner, but there were conflicts over staff recruitment. "Employees were unsure who to follow," says Hachisu. With Iwasaki, she shares her ideas on how she wants to grow Genki, including plans of opening at least five udon eateries under the same brand.

They also discuss how to educate the younger generation as udon chefs and technical aspects such as whether soup and noodles should be made at a central kitchen if they expand the chain. Hachisu wants Iwasaki to stay as long as he can, in whatever capacity he wants: "Just tasting udon at each Genki location and giving advice, for example, is an important task that only he can do."

Iwasaki says: "There are various forms of succession. Some people hesitate to sell their business to be hired by a company." He is happy with his decision. "I have no stress in udon-making. But I do feel pressure," he says, laughing. "I need to meet the sales target or I'll be fired."

## IKOMAYA

FATHER TO SON, WITH A TWIST

In Kobe, everything changed on January 17 1995, when the mighty western port city was bowed by a massive quake that killed 6,000 people and left 320,000 people at evacuation centres. For Kazuo Inoue, the battering of his family liquor store, Ikomaya - which was founded in 1935 and survived the second world war - was one of thousands of life-changing events that defined the quake's aftermath.

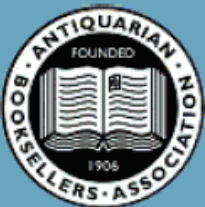
When Inoue reached his shop in the affluent district of Ashiya, adjacent to Kobe, he found every bottle of sake broken, their remains mingling with the shattered pieces of traditional roof tiling brought down as the city trembled. The scene inside Ikomaya was bad. But compared with the devastation everywhere around it, at least it was still standing. As the painful reconstruction of the city began, Inoue too began rebuilding, using driftwood and other scrap material he dragged from a nearby beach. His 12-year-old son, Ryoji, watched him work.

There was a wider spirit of rebirth around Kobe during this period and Inoue had his sights set on fundamental change. ▶

**'SOME PEOPLE  
HESITATE TO  
SELL THEIR  
BUSINESS TO  
BE HIRED BY A  
COMPANY'**

**FORMER GENKI OWNER  
RYOZO IWASAKI, WHO  
STILL WORKS AT THE  
UDON RESTAURANT**

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■ **BUSINESS NAME:** IKOMAYA

■ **FUNCTION:**  
WHOLE FOODS SHOP

■ **CURRENT OWNER:**  
RYOJI INOUE (ABOVE LEFT)

■ **BUSINESS TRANSFER:**  
INOUE TOOK OVER FROM HIS  
FATHER KAZUO (LEFT)

■ **LOCATION:**  
ASHIYA, NEAR KOBE

◀ Years earlier he had been diagnosed with an intestinal disease that doctors said was incurable. Rather than accepting this fate, Inoue adopted a strict diet of brown rice, organic vegetables and natural foods, a regimen he says kept him alive and which he was determined to share with the wider world. When Ikomaya reopened, it did so as a whole foods shop.

Over the next two decades, the transformation worked. Inoue, now 74, recalls the deep pleasure that came from hearing about customers who overcame their own debilitating illnesses by eating his foods. But he was quick to see that the unstoppable rise of giant supermarkets and e-commerce had huge implications. "Although customers come to our shop at first to discover products, they move away to heavily discounted places to make their second purchase," he says.

This realisation crystallised Inoue's succession plan: he would do everything he could to steer Ryoji away from taking over the business. The boy was instead urged to study and play with his friends. "I never wanted him to feel like how I felt when my father asked me every day to help him prepare the store."

For a while it looked like his plan was working. Ryoji graduated from one of Japan's best public universities, and his father convinced him to join a company listed in the the Tokyo Stock Exchange's prestigious first section (recently renamed the prime section), home to the likes of Sony, Toyota and Panasonic and a byword for job stability, a decent salary and white-collar respectability.

That changed two years ago when Ryoji, now 39, demanded the right to succeed his father and take over the shop. Inoue was horrified, not to mention confused. "I have always envied people who work in offices," he says. "In this shop I have no fixed salary, no bonus, no paid leave." To cap it off, Ikomaya was now struggling badly. Inoue told Ryoji he was opposed to the idea.

The son says he took his decision with his eyes open and knew Ikomaya was in the red, though he admits that, when his father

showed him the finances, "it was worse than I had expected". The store had posted a deficit for eight consecutive years. But he set about persuading his parents that he should quit his job and devote himself to keeping Ikomaya alive as it approaches its 10th decade.

Ryoji prides himself on making logical decisions. He moved the financial decision-making out of the hands of an elderly tax accountant on whom his parents had leaned heavily for decades. He also overhauled his own outgoings so that, if necessary, he could survive without income for up to two years. The opposition from his father – and particularly his mother – was stronger than he expected. But he found an important ally in his younger sister, who'd missed her brother when he left Ashiya for his big city job, and joined the effort to talk their parents around.

After months of discussion, the successors won. Ryoji took over his father's business in October 2021. He confesses to having felt anxious at the beginning but says not having a retail background allows him to "see things differently". There is even a plan to rent out a kitchen space in the shop as a bar after it closes at 6pm.


Inoue still spends a lot of time at the shop. "We are in small conflicts every day," Ryoji laughs. His father often throws away vegetables without notifying Ryoji, who manages inventory. When Ryoji experimented with displaying products on different shelves, Inoue silently put them back. "I am still not entirely from the bottom of my heart for the idea of Ryoji taking over the business," he admits.

Since he became the fourth generation of the family to own Ikomaya, Ryoji's monthly salary has more than halved. His story may be a twist on the prevailing narrative in Japan, but he is satisfied with his decision. "For the first time in my life, I did something different from what I have been told by my father." **FT**

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*Leo Lewis is the FT's Asia business editor. Eri Sugiura and Antoni Slodkowski are Tokyo correspondents for the FT*

**'I AM STILL NOT ENTIRELY FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART FOR THE IDEA OF RYOJI TAKING OVER THE BUSINESS'**

**KAZUO INOUE,  
 IKOMAYA'S  
 PREVIOUS OWNER**



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By *Will Coldwell*

Photography by *Sabine Hess*

The  
*ART* of  
*CRIME*

What a veteran forensic artist knows about human memory that computers can't replicate



**M**elissa Dring keeps her kit in a black leather briefcase with a silver catch. Flip it open and inside you will find a curious selection of criminological ephemera. There is the forensic artist's tattered copy of the FBI Facial Identification Catalog, filled with black-and-white photographic references to "triangular" heads, "buggy" eyes and "average" noses. There is a piece of card with a scribbled list of questions such as, "Does he seem the sort of person to remember his mum's birthday?" or "Are they a country boy at heart?" And there are witness statements on which the signatory must declare how close a likeness Dring's sketch is to the person they have just described. "Dead close" is what she shoots for.

Stuffed in the front pocket, beside the pens and pastels, are two small soft toys: a fluffy dog and a tiger. These can be a comfort to those she meets, many of whom will have experienced something awful. It's not just children, she says. Even lorry drivers have reached into her open briefcase for the plushies. She also carries a jar of home-made strawberry jam wrapped in paper. It took Dring a while to settle on the best gift to bring her witnesses: something that was not inappropriately celebratory but was comforting. An object that clearly differentiated her from the police. The jam is always the first item she takes out of the case.

Dring, 78, is perched on a low wooden seat in her studio at her Northampton home. She is wearing a black velvety jumper dress and dangling pearl earrings. Her hair is dyed deep red. Postcards, photographs and sketches line the walls and crisp winter light floods in through a large window. Outside, her cat, Humphrey, can be seen trotting round the garden. I sit on a stool and twiddle my toes in a pair of bright red slippers that Dring handed me on arrival.

It is all rather lovely. But as we discuss her work, the tabletop becomes layered with papers indicative of some of the worst traits of humanity. Wanted posters, crime reports. "Have you seen this man?" The trappings of Dring's 35-year-career drawing people she has never seen, in the hope that you might recognise them.

If you read the papers or watch the news, it is likely that you have encountered her sketches. Those drawings of the suspicious men seen near the Portuguese resort where three-year-old Madeleine McCann went missing in 2007? Dring's hand. Last year, she created an updated portrait of a man believed to be one of Scotland's most notorious murderers for the BBC documentary *The Hunt for Bible John*. There are hundreds more of her sketches out there. Suspects in murders, rapes, abductions, their images exhibited on the front pages of tabloids, in televised appeals and stuck on the walls of police stations.

They may only have captured your attention for a second, if at all. The artist's impression or police sketch has become such a media staple that even if you did pause to scrutinise the details - and scanned your mind for a trace of recognition - you probably gave little thought as to how the image came about. Despite efforts to systematise the process by which they are created, through science, computers and psychology, these works remain a fragile experiment in human memory. Dring is one of a small number of people who keep the

profession alive in the UK. In an era of CCTV and facial recognition technology, national fingerprint databases and mobile phone tracking, her job remains an intensely personal part of the investigative process. It relies on a delicate dance between the mind of a stranger and the hand of an artist.

**The police have called on artists to assist** with the identification of suspects since the late 19th century. Percy LeFroy Mapleton was one of the first people to be depicted in this way when the Daily Telegraph published a caricature-like portrait of him in June 1881. The 21-year-old had been seen staggering out of a first-class carriage on the London to Brighton express covered in blood. He soon became the prime suspect in the murder of Isaac Gold, a retired stockbroker whose body was later found in a railway tunnel. Mapleton gave the police the slip but the drawing helped generate a great deal of public interest that contributed to his arrest.

During the 20th century, the police sketch - sometimes known as a "composite" because it is pieced together from individually described component parts - became a familiar part of the visual culture of crime and policing. Artists' impressions have been published of many notorious criminals, from the Night Stalker, a serial killer who terrorised California in the mid-1980s, to the Unabomber, who, starting in the late 1970s, ran a 20-year bombing campaign across America. In 1995, the FBI released sketches of two suspects as part of the investigation into the bombing of the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, in which 168 people were killed. One of these sketches, a portrait of "John Doe 1", was soon identified by the owner of the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, Kansas, where the suspect had stayed. His name was Timothy McVeigh.

Dring first stumbled into her role in 1986, while working as a tutor at the Northampton School of Art. One day a telephone call was put through to her at home from the college. It was the local constabulary. A young woman had awoken to find a man in her bedroom, holding a knife and removing his clothes. Though the attack took place in near darkness, the perpetrator took the liberty of pausing to light his cigarette. Illuminated by a flame, his face had been visible to the victim. Perhaps, the police wondered, an artist could help draw it for them.

Dring had no experience of this sort of work but had been around portraiture her whole life. Her father, William Dring, was a talented artist who produced portraits for the War Artists Advisory Committee, a government agency tasked with creating an artistic record of the second world war. As a child, Dring sat for her father and watched him work via a mirror placed behind his easel. An oil painting of her four-year-old self, in a white dress and hairband, hangs above the sofa in her living room. After two years at Winchester Art School she went to London to study at the Royal Academy Schools, where she met her late husband, Michael Little, a fellow artist and illustrator. Later they moved to Yorkshire to start a family before settling in Northamptonshire. It was hard work making a living as an artist. The call from the police was more than just a test of her ability, she says. "It was a commission."

Within an hour of the call she was at the station sitting with the witness. The resulting sketch ►



ABOVE: MELISSA DRING'S STUDIO, INCLUDING SOME OF HER TRADITIONAL PORTRAITS AS WELL AS HER FORENSIC SKETCHES PREVIOUS PAGE: AT HOME IN NORTHAMPTON





'My mind is as blank as these pages,' she tells witnesses. 'What's got to be on one of these pages is in your head. We've somehow got to get it out of your head, into my head, down my arm and on to the paper'

◀ was not the most successful piece of work she has produced - it would be years before the suspect was arrested, thanks to DNA testing - but the police seemed impressed. "I became a new spanner in the toolbox," she says. Soon she was on 24-hour call, prepped to grab her pencils at any moment. Cases were coming in every couple of weeks, not just around Northampton but from departments up and down the country. She had her first success when a drawing she produced of a rape suspect was identified by both his estranged wife and his probation officer, and he was arrested.

But Dring felt she was improvising. At the time, there was no formal training in the UK for a forensic artist. A detective suggested she have a chat with John Worsley, a war artist and illustrator who had produced thousands of sketches for Scotland Yard that were said to have led to many arrests. Worsley obliged, but his practice was idiosyncratic and his advice was rooted in traditional portraiture. "It was like talking to my father," Dring says. "It was the more sciencey part I needed help with."

There was only one educational establishment that met the brief: the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. In 1984, it had launched the first course of its kind for police artists. Dring heard about it through her contacts in the police and, after a meeting at the US embassy, she was invited to attend, gratis. It was a far cry from the Royal Academy. When she arrived at the formidable complex in Quantico in November 1988, it felt like landing on another planet. "Have you got a gun, ma'am?" the officer at the gate asked. "No," Dring replied. "I'm English!"

For the next fortnight she trained alongside a cohort of small-town cops brushing up their sketching skills. Each day they would practise drawing from verbal descriptions and pair up to take turns playing witness or artist. They were drilled in the cognitive interview technique, developed in the 1980s to stimulate as many retrieval cues for a memory as possible. Dring returned home with the skills she required - and the FBI Facial Identification Catalog she keeps in her case.

**E**ven as artists' impressions became part of detective work in the first half of the 20th century, investigators were keen to find an alternative. The police wanted something that could be operated in house, a tool that neither depended too much on the descriptive ability of a witness, nor on the presence of an experienced portraitist. The first candidate was the Identikit, which was developed in 1959 by a Los Angeles police detective and consisted of an illustrated set of 37 noses, 52 chins, 102 pairs of eyes, 40 lips and 130 hairlines, all drawn on transparencies that could be layered into an image of a suspect. Professor Paul Lawrence, a criminal justice historian at the Open University, says the system was beset with many practical problems when it was first implemented in the UK, such as its lack of British hairstyles and bowler hats. The Home Office found it to be slow and inefficient, and only effective in 5 to 10 per cent of cases.

It was soon replaced by the Photo-Fit, which was created for the Home Office in the late 1960s by Jacques Penry, a "facial topographer". Penry believed in physiognomy, a pseudo-science that suggests it is possible to intuit a person's characteristics from their face alone. He used police mug-shot catalogues to create a kit that consisted



ABOVE: DRING IN FRONT OF A PORTRAIT BY HER FATHER OF HER, AGED FOUR

RIGHT: HER HOME STUDIO FAR RIGHT: HOME-MADE JAM SHE OFFERS AS A GIFT TO WITNESSES

of photographic slides of the jaw line, mouth, nose, hairline, ears and eyes. There were approximately 500 variants of these parts that could be slotted together into a recognisable face. Again, it was not particularly effective. Research conducted in the late 1970s found that the results tended to yield a poor likeness. Yet it was widely used.

The images - whether an artist's impression or a Photo-Fit - resonated at a time when news coverage of crime was becoming increasingly photographic and televised. They provided a "curious certainty" to an otherwise unreliable process, says Lawrence. "It conveys reassurance to the public, that we know what [the criminal] looks like and we can find them. I think the public has a very secure view of identification practices, whereas anyone who works in it knows how fragile and unreliable human recollection is."

The trouble with systems that focus on individual features is that they don't reflect the way we actually remember faces. We remember them not by their constituent parts, but as a whole. The flexibility and intuitiveness of an artist working with a witness tends to create a more convincing resemblance than someone shuffling together chins and eyebrows. When the artist is talented at drawing out details from a witness, the results can be astonishing. The drawings of Lois Gibson, a now retired American forensic artist who started sketching suspects in the 1970s after surviving a violent rape in her home, led

to a record-breaking 1,266 correct identifications between 1982 and 2021.

Charlie Frowd, professor of forensic psychology at the University of Central Lancashire, has spent many years researching the intricacies of facial identification processes. "We've consistently found that artists produce more identifiable composites than the older feature-based systems," he says. "The way an interview is conducted is part of it. Uniquely, artists are good communicators, but artists also tend to work on groups of features. The approach is more like the way we recognise faces."

To sit with a witness and draw a suspect is an intimate process that Dring has honed with years of practice. An atmosphere of trust and collaboration must be nurtured. For the witness, bringing the memory to the surface can be distressing. Dring often reassures them that this may be the last time someone will ask them in such detail about the person. After all, once it's on the page, it's there for all to see. She shows them her blank notebook. "My mind is as blank as these pages," she tells them. "And what's got to be on one of these pages at the end of the session is in your head. We've somehow got to get it out of your head, into my head, down my arm and on to the paper."

Dring starts by asking about character and personality. "You can't pile straight in and say: how big were his ears? Because unless they're really big, flappy ones like Prince Charles's, no one's going to remember." Instead, the initial questions might be:

did the person seem like a couch potato? What sort of hobbies might they have? Did they seem funny or serious? Would they wash their socks? "All these questions are my way of getting them to think of the person," says Dring. "And while they're wondering if he washes his socks, without realising, the physical details are being assessed in their mind. We're not talking directly about the shape of the face, but somehow it will be internally emerging."

The facial features catalogue comes next. Recognition is easier than recall, not least because most of us lack the vocabulary to describe a person's face in a meaningful way. Could you describe a family member's nose? Probably not. Would you recognise it if you saw it? More likely. Dring will leaf through the catalogue with the witness, taking notes as they pick out features that click and discussing how they might need to be altered to improve the resemblance.

Only then is Dring ready to draw. She keeps her page concealed as she sketches a face. Meanwhile, she will ask the witness to replay the scene backwards, or imagine viewing the incident from a different location, as a bird for example. It keeps the memory warm. She needs a witness to really hold that image of the person in their mind's eye.

When her drawings are finally revealed, it often provokes a visceral reaction. People flush, or they burst into tears. Once someone was violently sick. It is a cruel endorsement of a successful sketch; the shock of being faced with someone who may have been your attacker.

Dring recounts a case from 2010, when she was called by the police to meet a young Chinese student. The previous night, the student had been abducted and raped after leaving a city centre nightclub in the early hours. A man had bundled her into his car and driven her to a secluded industrial site before dropping her back in the centre as the sun began to rise. The student lacked the language skills to be interviewed in English, so a translator was called in. The details of the rapist's face were channelled through this chain of communication - from Chinese to English, from the translator to Dring and on to the page. The drawing was released to the media that evening. The following day, having seen his face staring back at him on the news, the man turned himself in.

Dring shows me her "hot hits" folder, a catalogue of sketches with an uncanny resemblance to the final suspects. There are a dozen or so she is particularly proud of. She points to one of a good-looking young man who had been arrested for trying to run someone down in his car. After the arrest "the policeman pulled the sketch out of his pocket and [the suspect] spotted it", says Dring. "He said: 'That's nice. Can I have a copy to show my mum?'"

At times, though, the work can be draining, with a painful lack of closure. In 2007, Dring was contacted by a private investigation team working on the Madeleine McCann case and produced several drawings that received wide publicity. Jane Tanner, a friend of the McCanns who had been staying in the same resort in Praia De Luz when Madeleine went missing, had a memory of a man she had seen carrying a sleeping child that evening. She came to Dring's home in the hope that the artist could help draw out the details needed to identify him. They worked for hours. While they were able to produce a figure, including his clothes and hair, Tanner was unable to illumi-



The trouble with systems that focus on individual features is that they don't reflect the way we actually remember faces. We remember them not by their constituent parts, but as a whole

nate the face in her mind. "We were both in tears by the end of it," says Dring.

The role of a forensic artist can encompass a wide range of disciplines. Dring has been employed to artificially age the features of long-missing individuals based on photographs, and breathe life into the faces of unidentified corpses. She can't bear the smell of formaldehyde that can linger in the air at a morgue but she refuses to work from a photograph. "I think it's essential to see the poor deceased myself," she says. "To sit with them, draw them and pick up on any little clues that I can."


In 2007, a new computerised system of identification, the EvoFIT, was launched in the UK. The creation of Frowd and a joint team of researchers from the universities of Central Lancashire and Stirling, it was built to take advantage of the holistic way we recognise people. Witnesses select whole faces that feel familiar to them, which are then merged into a singular form. At first the EvoFIT performed approximately as well as an artist's impression, producing an identifiable face about 20 to 30 per cent of the time. In policing, says Frowd, that's still pretty useful. Over the past decade, further research and refinements have pushed the EvoFIT hit rate to 60 per cent.

Does this mean the forensic artist could soon become extinct? Not necessarily, says Frowd. "I think there will always be a role there. These

systems are not very adaptive, whereas art, by its very nature, is."

Dring remains on call. Sometimes there is a detail about a face or an item of clothing that can't be constructed without an artist. Or the witness simply isn't happy with the outcome of a computer composite. "The police have often tried everything they can before they call me," she says, laughing. "So, no pressure."

On the day I visit, she has just been told a witness she was due to meet had backed out after feeling uncertain about being able to recall anything. Dring pushed back. "I told the officer that in all my career I had only had one person who couldn't find a single detail of physical resemblance in their mind," she says. "So they passed that on to the witness, and the job is back on." A couple of weeks later, I call to ask how it went. "I think the witness was amazed to find details that gelled together," she says. "We ended up with an eight-out-of-10 drawing, and the police are now using it."

Dring continues to work as a traditional artist alongside her forensic work. But, when it comes to her identification jobs, she does not view the drawings as her own. She works for the police under her married name, Melissa Little, to create a sense of separation. "What I do for the police is not my work," she says. "I'm just making the marks on paper for someone who can't." 

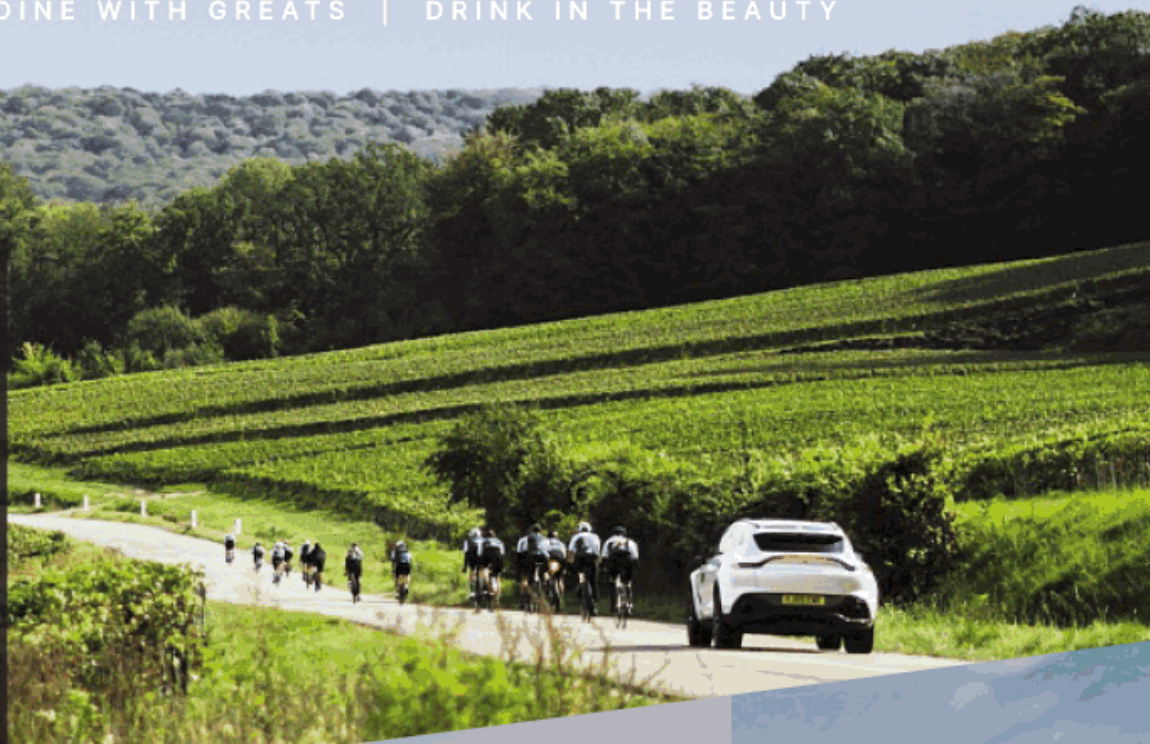
Will Coldwell is a feature writer based in London

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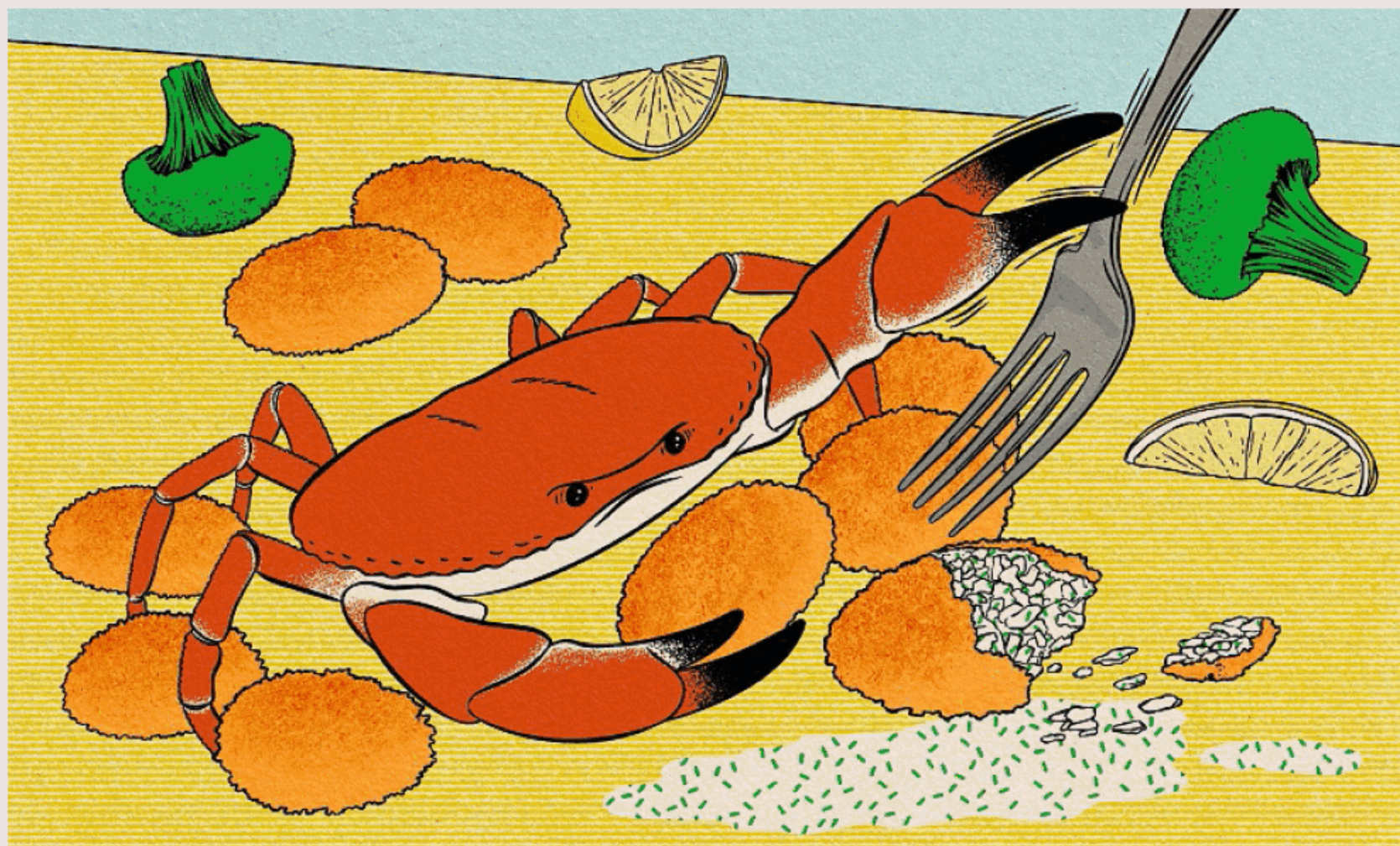
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# Appetites



The Gastronomer

## Tim Hayward

I was bored to death of pretty food until...

In Japan they have codified the art of arranging food. It's called *moritsuke*, and chefs sometimes quote it as an inspiration for their "plating" techniques. We often quote the truism that we "eat with our eyes", that how the food looks can affect how it is enjoyed, and *moritsuke* demonstrates this. But, like *ikebana*, the practice of flower arranging to which it is related, there is a lot more behind it - principally, millennia of a culture and aesthetic entirely different to our own - and we seem to miss the point.

*Moritsuke* is full of rules and precepts that specify colours and patterns, and help in the choice of tableware. It is based in a fundamental belief that ingredients should be left to speak for themselves. By the rules of *moritsuke*, there should be few ingredients on a plate. Moving and reshaping

the ingredients once placed is taboo, and elaborate cutting or forcing of food into shape is considered unclean. In Japan, it's about the food. Care for ingredients, technical rigour, restraint and humility - from which beauty arises.

Here in the UK we've got what one might call Michelin *moritsuke*, appearing on tasting menus across the country and polluting our screens most nights of the week. Too many ingredients. Overworked, over-handled. Too often showcasing how cleverly chefs have creatively imposed themselves on the food. A "narrative", for chrissake! When every pretentious provincial hash house is offering smears on handmade plates, dots of gel and pour-over "broths" with bloody everything, we've warped our definition of beauty. I'm going to be horribly honest here: I'm bored rigid of pretty ▶

◀ food. Or at least I was until I experienced the work of chef Florence Knight at Sessions Arts Club in a romantic and elegant ruin of a studio in Clerkenwell.

You don't meet many people who are ambivalent about cavolo nero. It's a polarising ingredient in a way that makes Marmite look harmonising. Me, I like the stuff, but if I told you they were cooking it to within an inch of its life, mincing it smooth with anchovies and letting it get cold, even the confirmed cavolo zealots would run for the hills. But that's exactly what Knight has done. A dark, emerald paste, full of iron and umami and smeared thick on pane carasau, the Sardinian semolina crispbread. What might have been a grating of parmesan on top turned out to be cured egg yolk and was better for it.

It stripped me of any sense of restraint with the first mouthful. I mean, the thing is the size of a dustbin lid and within 18 seconds I'd made it disappear. Afterwards I felt breathless, profoundly fulfilled and, I don't know, like that moment in a werewolf pic where the guy wakes up in a deserted church with his shirt torn to rags and a horrible nagging feeling that, while he was in that slightly confused state, he may have just slaughtered and eaten an entire village. I've never really done "guilt". This must be what it's like. Wow! I like guilt.

**A**lways make room for a croquette whenever life offers you one. Nice stuff in a fried shell cannot be bad. But Knight presents the ideal of the croquette. The casing is so gossamer-thin, it's as though she blew it through a hoop like a child with bubbles and then pumped it full of a runny, uncontrollable brown crab cream. There is no way to eat it that isn't basically disgusting to behold and consequently I wanted to line 20 of them up along a bar somewhere, at the end of a night of debauchery, and do them one after the other like shots.

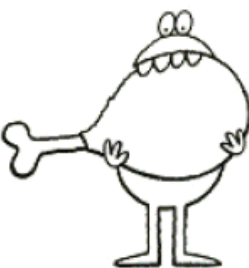
There's a gratifying theme in Knight's cooking. Stuff arrives looking delicate, cool, restrained and then, with the touch of a fork, it gets mucky. Egg and smoked haddock are one of cuisine's adorable old couples, but when the egg is water-bathed so even the white is barely set and the haddock collapses into silken slivers if you just look at it sternly... yeah, this is The Good Stuff.

"Eel, rocket, crème fraîche and roe" looks like a savoury custard slice. A mille glistening feuilles of fried stuff, inter-piped with cream and eel. Popping salmon roe spattered over its browned surface like the beads of a broken necklace. But the flavour work is outrageous. The way the sour in the cream plays with the fatty eel is just so assured, and there's nothing in the gustatory or visual composition that isn't equally aptly placed.

You'd think there was not much you could do to improve on "Clams, crème fraîche and wild garlic" and Knight obviously agrees. Honestly, I had to be physically restrained from standing on the table, waving my napkin and leading the crowd in chants of praise. It takes confidence, skill and humility in equal measure for a chef to present something as simply as this. Tiny clams, just coaxed into disrobing with a hint of winey steam and a bit of a jiggle. Just enough dairy to enrich the juices, just enough fresh herb and then rush it to the table where I'm sitting.

"Rabbit, cotechino, cabbage and mustard" was another breathtaking high-wire act. Rabbit can be lean and bland; cotechino, a fatty sausage made of unspeakable parts of pig, is strong and coarse. In balance, they are beautifully, almost impossibly well-matched. A smart, spherical wrapping of steamed cabbage leaf complements the stuffing with its mustardy, brassica undertones and, in case you don't get the hint, there's an extremely subtle grain mustard and cream sauce to reinforce the idea. Like everything at Sessions Arts Club, it is creatively considered and effortlessly gorgeous.

My impression of Knight is that she is not pretentious enough to do poncey plating but, to me, she operates close to the real principle of *moritsuke*. The food is beautiful, yes - but it's an aesthetic arising from humility, restraint and some viscerally thrilling cooking. **FT**



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Recipe

## Honey & Co

Slow-cooked sardines in spicy tomato sauce

Sometimes you come across a recipe or the story of a dish that strikes a chord. It could be something you tear out of a magazine or a screengrab on your phone that sets off a journey which concludes only when that dish is on your table.


For us, Rosie Sykes' *The Sunday Night Book* has been the starting point for many such excursions. It's a little book with lots of very tasty dishes - with intriguing names such as mortar and pestle eggs and cornbread Pissaladière. Low on effort, high on flavour and full of soul - just our kind of food.

In one recipe, Rosie writes about a kitchen porter she worked with who, at the end of dinner service, would put a tray of fresh sardines in sauce in the oven on a low heat overnight. The next morning, the whole brigade would have them on toast for breakfast. Rosie's version using tinned sardines is very good but we've gone on a journey with it too.

In our south London neighbourhood, known as Little Lisbon, fresh sardines are easy to come by. The fishmonger removes the heads but we don't worry about the bones as they add so much flavour and are softened by the long cooking time. We also like to add a north African slant with cumin, caraway, fresh coriander and a bite of cayenne.

The sardines look like the ones you get in a tin but taste infinitely better. The spice, tomatoes and fish infuse into something deeply complex and so alive with flavour that we're happy to have them for any meal, any day of the week.

Rosie is now one of our most cherished friends. We've yet to share a Sunday night meal with her, but we know what we're going to serve when we do. 

By Itamar Srulovich. Recipe by Sarit Packer.  @honeyandco

SERVES FOUR  
AS A STARTER  
OR LIGHT MEAL

- 500g sardines, gutted and cleaned
- 1.5 tbs sea salt
- 2 onions (300g), thinly sliced
- 4 tbs olive oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp caraway seeds
- 1 tsp sweet paprika
- ¼ tsp cayenne - more if you like it spicy
- 3 large bay leaves
- 500ml tomato juice
- 1 lemon - skin only, shaved with a peeler
- Coriander, coarsely chopped

### Method

Heat the oven to 150C.

**1.** Place a pan on a low heat, add the oil and onions and cook gently for six to eight minutes, stirring every so often until the onions are soft and sweet but not brown, then add the spices and bay leaves. Fry for another two minutes until very fragrant and take off the heat.

**2.** Pat the sardines dry and place them snugly head to tail so that they fit tightly in an oven tray. Sprinkle over the salt followed by the onion-spice mix and lemon-peel strips, pour in the tomato juice and scatter the coriander on top. Place a sheet of greaseproof paper on the fish and seal with foil. Place in the oven for two hours.

**3.** You can serve the dish immediately or let it cool and serve it from the fridge. The sardines will taste better after a day, better still after two. They will keep for longer than that but the flavour will be dulled.

**4.** Serve with either very fresh or well-toasted slices of bread. Smash the sardines on the bread with a fork and add a sprinkle of salt, a squeeze of lemon and a drizzle of olive oil.

A kindly houseguest left us a very special bottle of Douro Superior, and we thought Portuguese wine would work well with sardines. We were right. It is worth learning about this special wine and about the importers, Xisto Wines, and not only for its eco credentials. Good things come in sailboats.



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Wine

# Jancis Robinson

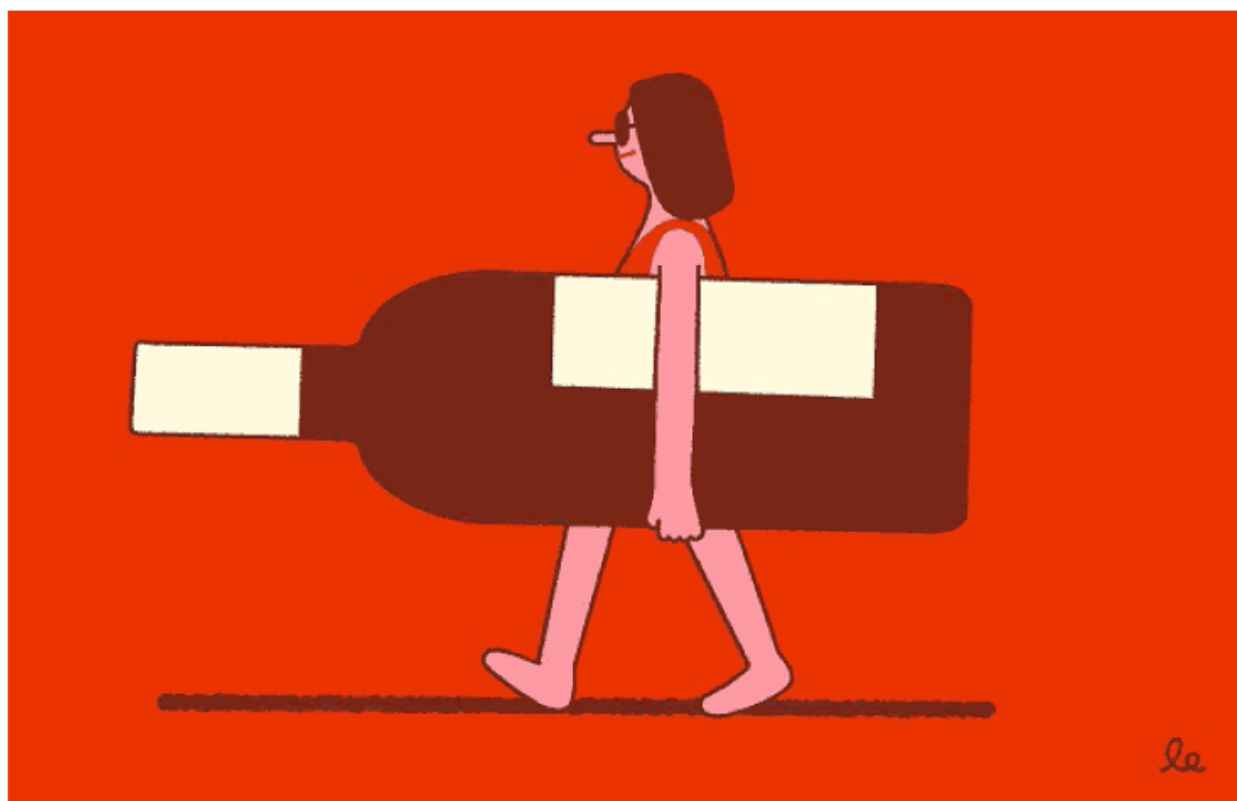
Dreaming of – and tasting  
– California's finest

**A**t a reception at Wild by Tart in London last month I was able to take my pick from 40 different top California wines. They were grouped by style and/or reputation, and at one of the six or seven tables, for example, was Opus One 2018, Harlan Estate 2016, Bond St Eden 2016, Colgin IX 2016, Eisele Vineyard 2014 and Ridge Monte Bello 2011. The Chardonnay table offered the delights of Kistler, Les Noisetiers 2019, Kongsgaard 2019 and Ramey, Woolsey Road 2018.

I hope that any fellow fan of California wine appreciates just what a great opportunity this was. There were many old friends there in human form, but I mainly ignored them, I'm afraid, in favour of the old friends in bottles. After all, I have ample opportunity to chat to my fellow wine professionals, but in Britain we see top-quality California wine all too rarely.

The occasion was the launch of Edition 1 of The California List, an idea dreamt up by Damien Jackman and Justine McGovern, who are responsible for the generic promotion of California wine in the UK. It is a list of the California wine producers who, on the basis of their quality and profile, are the most important in Britain. Jackman and McGovern reasoned that such classifications, such as the famous one of Bordeaux in 1855, help to highlight the best producers and guide potential purchasers.

To come up with this list of 51 top California producers (not individual wines) of relevance to the UK market, they asked five of us to adjudicate. Wine writer Stephen Brook; California buyer for The Wine Society Sarah Knowles; Mark Andrew of Noble Rot; Master Sommelier Ronan Sayburn of 67 Pall Mall and I were chosen because



*Jancis recommends...*

## CALIFORNIA WINES WORTH CHASING

### WHITES

- **Glornata Flano 2020**  
Paso Robles 13%  
£25.99 The Hitchin  
Wine Co, Constantine  
Stores, D Byrne & Co
- **The Joy Fantastic  
Chardonnay 2019**  
Sta Rita Hills 13.5%  
£35.50 Wanderlust
- **Rhys, Alesia  
Chardonnay 2018**  
Santa Cruz Mountains  
12.3% £38.68 Justerini  
& Brooks

### REDS

- **Cain, Cuvée 2012/13**  
Napa Valley 14.3%  
£26.68 Justerini &  
Brooks
- **Valravn Pinot Noir  
2020** Sonoma County  
14.3% £24.95  
Jeroboams,  
expected May
- **Lieu-Dit, Sans Soufre  
Cabernet Franc 2019**  
Santa Ynez Valley 13%  
£28.50 North & South  
Wines, Wanderlust
- **Bedrock, Old Vine  
Zinfandel 2019**  
Sonoma Valley 14.5%

- £29.45 Q Wines,  
also NY Wines,  
Fortnum & Mason,  
Harvey Nichols,  
The Wine Reserve
- **Ridge, East Bench  
Zinfandel** Dry Creek  
Valley 14.5% £39.99  
The Village Vine,  
Oxford Wine Co,  
Gallachers of Rugby
- **The Joy Fantastic  
Syrah 2017** Sta Rita  
Hills 13% £35.50 North  
& South Wines,  
Wanderlust

we share a particular affection for California wine.

In October 2020, we were sent a long list of about 100 producers who export to the UK and were urged to add to it as we saw fit. In the end, we considered closer to 200 candidates. We were asked to mark each producer on the basis of three criteria: wine quality (15 points), availability in the UK (five points) and the overall impact each producer has had in this country (a further five points). Then we all got together online for what the organisers described as "a robust Zoom discussion" to thrash out our final selection.

We weren't given a total number to aim for and the extent to which we judges were left to make our own decisions is perhaps reflected in ►

◀ the total number of producers we chose. We just couldn't agree on which name to exclude in order to round the final number down to 50. American readers may wonder why quite a few producers of great renown in the US are missing. It was mostly because they don't export to the UK, the most important export market for California wine by volume and second biggest by value, after Canada.

The organisers wanted to transform our selection into a fancy framed printout of the classification. Since they were determined to make this as sustainable as possible, they had it printed on a material made from recycled coffee cups - in dramatic gold on black - so it

**TASTING NOTES**

Tasting notes on Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com. International stockists on wine-searcher.com



was not until the end of last month that the classification was finally revealed at the launch party at Wild by Tart.

I take my hat off to McGovern and Jackman for their exceptional devotion to sustainability. The day before the classification was unveiled, they also organised a giant showing at Smith & Wollensky in London of 280 more modest California wines currently available in the UK. And with a decidedly sustainable twist.

For the first time at a professional wine tasting, as far as I know, they included the weights of each full bottle in the tasting list, highlighting some of the most egregiously heavy bottles that will have especially heavy carbon footprints. Black mark to DAOU whose Cabernets each come in a bottle weighing 1,814g when full. Praise to Tablas Creek for their Esprit de Tablas whose full bottle weighs just 1,110g.

As well as this, Jackman and McGovern dispensed with the sort of printed tasting booklets that are often wasted. Instead, they

**'For the first time at a professional wine tasting, as far as I know, they included the weights of each full bottle in the tasting list'**

provided masses of information digitally via QR codes. The wines were also presented, within their categories, in price order - a surprisingly unusual and useful way of doing things.

An Edition 2 of The California List is planned for 2024 and I hope that some of the producers whose wines showed well in the bigger tasting will find their way on to it. There are now so many new wave producers in California taking advantage of regions and grapes less expensive than the most famous

ones that they can provide real value - quite a contrast to stereotypical Napa Cabernet.

On the morning after the launch of The California List, Sarah Knowles detailed her latest discoveries in an online presentation of new wines by The Wine Society's buyers to wine writers. She admitted that it is difficult to find interesting California wines that could be sold in the UK for less than £10 a bottle, "but at £10 to £15 there are wines I believe can really go head to head with wines at the same price from elsewhere", she said, citing family companies such as Cline, McManus and Pedroncelli who own their own vineyards, and can therefore control their own costs and "bring something different to the table".

The main thing I'm happy about is that there seems, at last, to be a real will to get interesting California wine - not just the inexpensive, high-volume brands - into the glasses of non-Americans. **FT**

.....  
 More columns at [ft.com/jancis-robinson](https://ft.com/jancis-robinson)

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**FT Weekend**



## RESTAURANT INSIDER

By Nicholas Lander

Does it matter what waiting staff wear?



In the months before a new opening, a restaurateur faces many decisions, from light fittings and menus to the hiring of key staff. One choice in particular involves psychology, inspiration and vision, yet is often swiftly forgotten once the restaurant opens.

The question is this: what do you want your waiting staff to wear? Will it be formal, with the junior waiters in white shirts and black trousers and their superiors in clearly distinctive jackets? Or will you choose the opposite route and let your staff express themselves by wearing their own clothes?

The biggest determining factor is location. One principle for a successful restaurant anywhere is that what is inside the front door should match what is outside. If your restaurant is in Mayfair, St James's or Knightsbridge, your staff will probably have to dress more formally than if it were in Hoxton, Haggerston or Hackney. But there are notable exceptions: witness the success of Fallow in St James's, where the waiting staff wear their own outfits.

Like the staff in many post-pandemic workplaces, waiters are dressing more casually overall. The importance of your waiters feeling as comfortable as possible was outlined to me by Chris Ammermann, co-founder of Caravan restaurants in London. "From the moment we opened the first Caravan in 2010, we realised our staff were our biggest asset. We always wanted our teams to be able to express themselves and believed they should wear what they feel comfortable and confident in, and not be shackled by a uniform. How can you say to someone, 'Be the best you can be today', and then make them put on a uniform to look like everyone else? We don't promote branded clothing and we don't like singlets because no one wants an armpit in their face. But, apart from that, our instructions to our waiting staff are: 'Be yourself and have fun.'"

Whatever decision is made, there will always need to be an enforcer, someone who regulates the

"uniforms" as well as the hygiene standards of the waiting staff. Naturally, this is a sensitive role.


Willoughby Andrews-King, operations director for the Vinoteca group of wine bars, alluded to this when sending me a copy of its guidelines on dress code and grooming. "Vinoteca is not a fine-dining restaurant but equally we're not a street van. This means no casual trainers, no scruffy jeans, nothing old or untidy," they say. There is a further paragraph on jewellery and make-up, ending with the warning that "the Manager will ask you to change anything they feel is inappropriate".

As is fashionable, Vinoteca has adopted long aprons for its waiting staff, a look borrowed from the kitchen or wine cellar, and from the Paris bistros of yore. These simple, easily branded garments can hide a multitude of sins and have the additional benefit of pockets for corkscrews, order pads and pens. "It's almost ritualistic," says Andrews-King. "You own that apron and you take care of it. When you hang it round your neck, you get into character and you are 'on stage'."

However, François O'Neill, owner of Maison François in St James's, believes his waiting staff's suits, designed by The Deck (women) and Drake's (men) reflect his ambitions. "When paired with Veja trainers and a simple white T-shirt, this is a combination that makes them elegant but also comfortable, which will always lead to happier staff. We are very detail-oriented and, for us, staff uniforms are a key detail that stands to influence our customers' experience... and are therefore worth the investment and time and energy of sourcing."

One company that firmly believes in dressing its staff in uniforms is D&D London, which has more than 30 restaurants in the UK, including Angler and Skylon in London and Angelica in Leeds. Operations director Michael Farquhar is adamant about the advantages of staff uniforms, despite the extra costs involved (a manager's suit can cost more than £200 and on average the company spends £15,000

on uniforms per opening). "We believe a staff uniform contributes to the creation of a common goal that is bigger than just yourself," he says. "It makes everybody feel equal and, I believe, sends out a signal to the customer that everything is under control."

For all that, David Loewi, D&D's managing director, argues that "the world is moving away from uniforms to one that is dominated by 'style guides'". I agree and, in an era when waiting staff are difficult to find, restaurateurs who lay down the fewest conditions will benefit. 

More columns at [ft.com/lander](https://ft.com/lander)

**'It's almost ritualistic. When you hang that apron round your neck, you get into character and you are "on stage"'**

The Humourist

## Robert Shrimpsley

'My country needs me.'

A guide to the politician's mindset



Wit & Wisdom



**T**his is why decent people turn their back on careers in politics!" came the wails from the diminishing band of Rishi Sunak supporters as criticism grew of his family's tax affairs. And, frankly, it is hard to argue. Decent millionaires up and down Britain were this week abandoning their dreams of a political career after discovering that it is difficult to be chancellor of the exchequer and have your wife claim non-domiciled tax status while being domiciled in a grace-and-favour, taxpayer-funded London flat.

I can tell you, it's put me right off a career in government – and I haven't even got a house in Santa Monica. Neither my wife nor I are in a position to claim non-dom status but, dash it all, it's the principle of the thing. And it is not just Sunak. Think of the poor old PM. What if I wanted some friends to pay for the redecoration of our flat in that entirely ordinary way

that friends so often do? No, honestly, it's just not worth the aggro.

I don't particularly want to have a go at Sunak, who doesn't seem to have broken any laws or rules (Partygate is another matter). It cannot be nice seeing your wife attacked because of your job – although if my wife was going to be targeted because of my career, I'd definitely want it to be because of her £11mn annual dividend income.

But the message, from those rushing to defend him from the kind of personal attacks that can be tolerated only when aimed at the other side, is that we really do need to get back to the good old days before all this tiresome whining. Back to those happy times when a health secretary could enjoy a bit of the old rumpy pump while telling everyone else to go stag till the end of lockdown. And why the hell shouldn't a prime minister be able to hold lockdown-breaching parties or bung peerages

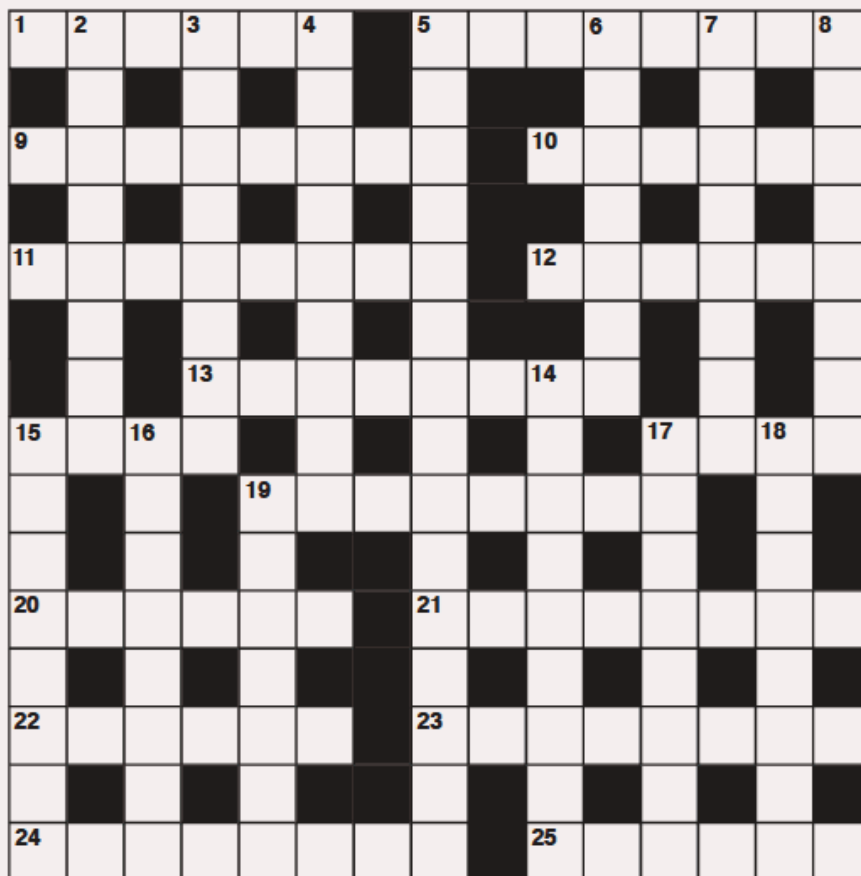
Complaining that top-flight politics is hard on one's family is a bit like becoming a Premier League footballer and then moaning that Roy Keane took your legs out

to his Russian oligarch mates? Seriously, this snide carping is what puts good people off.

Except, well, it isn't. There are still far more people wanting to become MPs than there are spaces. Contrary to popular view, most people enter politics for the right reasons, but it is still an addiction. And those who pursue it do so in spite of rational considerations. One routinely hears complaints from politicians about the salary and yet, if we applied the laws of supply and demand they hap-

**THE CROSSWORD**

No 585. Set by Aldhelm



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic. Four eggs have been hidden in the Down answers and are ignored in the word-play part of their clues.

**ACROSS**

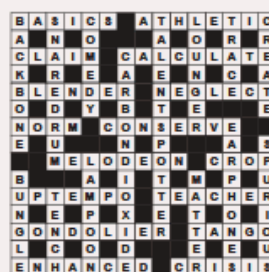
- 1 Run quickly, sprint (6)
- 5 Infringe, encroach (8)
- 9 Shakespearean tragedy (4, 4)
- 10 Voucher (6)
- 11 Language of Indonesia's main tourist island (8)
- 12 Heaviness (6)
- 13 Various devices (8)
- 15 The woman's (4)
- 17 Small bouquet (4)
- 19 Improvement, advance (8)
- 20 Toboggan, sleigh (6)
- 21 Dough ball (8)
- 22 Sour (6)
- 23 Reached (8)
- 24 Conference representative (8)
- 25 Quoting (6)

**DOWN**

- 2 One with a client arranged Mediterranean resort (8)
- 3 Heather's garment (8)
- 4 One wanting the throne repented unhappily to the king (9)
- 5 Couples' contest time with excited cheerleader (5-6, 4)
- 6 Rather wet throw wrapping one in the red (7)
- 7 Wrinkled pair of notes (8)
- 8 Wrestle sin with tact and a bit of your holiness (8)
- 14 Type of fever affected him - a cure's including treatment, ultimately (9)

- 15 Entrance hall item that's different as well (8)
- 16 It's curative to call again, embracing me (8)
- 17 Songwriter's exercise includes sorting out missal (8)
- 18 Irish party pub caught by nasty fines (4, 4)
- 19 Restricting message (7)

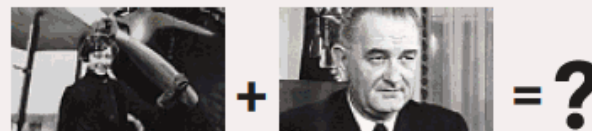
Solution to Crossword No 584



**THE PICTURE ROUND**

by James Walton

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



**A ROUND ON THE LINKS**

by James Walton

All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the connection, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1. Who was the first puppet to win an episode of *The Weakest Link*?
2. Before Sir Ed Davey, who was the last Liberal Democrat leader with a knighthood?
3. What breed of dog is Snowy in the *Tintin* series of books?
4. Which Benjamin Britten opera is based on a story by Henry James?
5. Who's the only athlete to have won the 200m gold at three separate Olympics?
6. Which challenge, done to raise awareness of motor neurone disease, went viral on the internet in the summer of 2014?
7. What card in a traditional pack is known as the Death Card?
8. Which actor's hit singles of the 1990s include "Ain't No Doubt" and "Crocodile Shoes"?
9. In the Book of Genesis chapter 28, Jacob has a dream vision of what object?
10. Which 1948 film, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, has the same name as the Florida town where it's set?

pily utilise when debating how much to pay nurses, we might conclude the wage should be lowered. (I'm not actually suggesting this, but the notion that an extra £20,000 is going to raise the quality of candidates or save Chris Grayling for the nation is, well, how can one put this, yet to pass peer review.)

Likewise the notion that decent people are just walking away. There must, I suppose, be some civic-minded lawyers who once thought about giving it a go but have now decided just to make partner instead. But the key thing to understand about becoming an MP is that you must be imbued with a fundamental view that "what this country really needs is me and plenty of it". This view is not price-elastic. Once you come to see that your country needs you, well it would be frankly selfish to deny the nation such a valuable resource. Nor are people being put off politics in the same way that, say, social care staff might be deterred by the hard work, thankless hours and rubbish pay.

**T**he thing far more likely to put good people off politics is the lack of room for reasoned dissent. The big tents of party politics are narrowing. Non-Brexiteers were driven from the Conservative party, while Labour has enjoyed a decade of pendulum purges. But complaining that top-flight politics is hard on one's family is a bit like becoming a Premier League footballer and then moaning that Roy Keane took your legs out. Politics is a tough gig.

If anything, I worry rather less that good people may be deterred than that this "it's one law for them" political attack might be seen as something of an incentive. For some people, that's what you call an enticing job description. Still, you can imagine the heartbreak later. "But, officer, I was told it was one law for me and a different one for everyone else."

.....  
 robert.shrimsley@ft.com  
 @robertshrimsley

GETTY IMAGES

The Questionnaire

# David Gray

Singer and songwriter

Interview by Hester Lacey



**1. What was your childhood or earliest ambition?**

To play for Manchester United.

**2. Private school or state school? University or straight into work?**

The village primary, Solva School, which was idyllic. The local comprehensive, Ysgol Dewi Sant. I enjoyed school, though when I got really into music, I stopped doing any work. Then, via a foundation course in fine art at Carmarthen art college, Liverpool School of Art.

**3. Who was or still is your mentor?**

My secondary-school art teacher, Steve Barnsley. He provided tons of validation and encouragement. In terms of music, I'm self-taught - a long, slow process. I could have done with a mentor.

**4. How physically fit are you?**

Reasonably. If I do anything, I do it with gusto. If you asked me to climb Scafell Pike or Snowdon, I could but I couldn't jog around Hampstead Heath.

**5. Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?**

Talent alone isn't enough. You have to have drive and discipline. Real progress requires great sacrifice.

**6. How politically committed are you?**

I'm increasingly engaged because it feels as if it's now or never to protect what remains of the natural world. You can expect to find me glueing myself to a motorway any day now.

**7. What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?**

There are pieces of art I never tire of looking at but they're better on public display. I want for nothing.

**8. What's your biggest extravagance?**

Clothes and, on occasion, fine wine. As I drink less, I'm drinking better.

**9. In what place are you happiest?**

The great outdoors.

**10. What ambitions do you have?**

I've become very involved in the plight of the curlew, a wading

bird that's suffering horrendous declines. I'd like to push my music further on into poetry and what Werner Herzog calls ecstatic truth.

**11. What drives you on?**

Urgent necessity. If I go too long without making something, I start to collapse in on myself. Creativity is a fundamental coping strategy for me - one of my ways of connecting with other people. And with myself.

**12. What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?**

Pride comes before a fall. I've done my best, and that's all I can say.

**13. What do you find most irritating in other people?**

I don't react well to neediness.

**14. If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would he think?**

"How did I become such a grumpy git? What's with all the tidying up?"

**15. Which object that you've lost do you wish you still had?**

I've broken many treasured items of my wife's, including a teapot

that belonged to her mother and father. I wish I could resurrect that teapot.

**16. What is the greatest challenge of our time?**

If the earth is going to thrive along with us, we have to find a new way of connecting. And technology: we're fascinated by the black mirrors we stare into day in, day out.

**17. Do you believe in an afterlife?**

No. But I've lost people who are very dear to me, and I carry their ghosts within me.

**18. If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?**

It would be churlish to give any less than a nine. **9**

.....  
*David Gray's White Ladder: The 20th Anniversary tour begins on May 17 and includes a performance at Blenheim Palace on June 16 as part of the Nocturne Live concert series*

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