

WORDS IL-BIZZILLA

# THE YEAR AHEAD AT GRACY'S

**AN INTERVIEW WITH GREGORY NASMYTH, FOUNDER OF GRACY'S ARTS AND SUPPER CLUB, AND DANNY DRINKWATER, CEO, ABOUT THE NEW DIRECTION FOR THE CLUB OVER THE NEXT YEAR.**

Gracy's Arts & Supper Club located at the baroque palazzo L'Hostel de Verdelin with its 17th century majestic grandeur, overlooks Valletta's Saint Georges square and the iconic Grand Masters Palace, dating back to the early 1570's and home to the Grand Masters of the Order of Saint John.

**GREGORY, WHEN YOU FIRST SAW THE OLD CIVIL SERVICE CLUB BUILDING, IT WAS IN A TERRIBLE STATE OF DISREPAIR, DID THIS NOT SCARE YOU OFF, UNDERTAKING SUCH A MASSIVE PROJECT?**

After watching *Indiana and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* I became fascinated by archaeology and found myself shortly thereafter wandering down the Siq to the ancient Nabatean city of Petra. While I wasn't being chased by Nazis, I wandered down somewhat less sedately on a donkey, the feeling I had when I first laid eyes on The Treasury, which marks the entrance to Petra, that overpowering sense of wonder, the rise and fall of Empire, was exactly the same as when I entered the Hostel Verdelin. It was like breaking open an ancient Egyptian tomb, what treasures lay within!

**CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISION FOR GRACY'S? WE HEAR THERE WILL BE EXCITING THINGS HAPPENING FOR BOTH CLUB MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.**

The Hostel was in a complete state of disrepair and the Grand Knight's quarters, the Piano Nobile was being used for kids' ping-pong lessons and the snooker room, of a later date obviously, hadn't seen a ball hit in anger since Queen Victoria was on the throne. Obviously, we were going to have to spend a lot of money on the restoration and interior design and the only business model that would get near to covering the costs, was a private members club. The only problem is that a private members club can take five years to get up to speed, and then along came Covid! We opened the ground floor restaurant to the public, which is only fair and just, as history should not be the preserve of the few. Luckily my wife Samantha Rowe-Beddoe is an amazing interior designer, which helped with the budget! Now, with Covid thankfully behind us, we're

pushing on with everything that had to be put on the backburner. Book Club starts next month, we've just bought a projector so we can start showing old black and white movies in the Long Bar, and along with the usual Club highlights such as Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, all done in the style and manner befitting of Malta's foremost Club, we have a whole host of concerts and events coming up in September.

**DANNY, YOU CAME TO GRACY'S WITH A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE FROM EXECUTIVE CHEF AT PARK HYATT SYDNEY TO CEO OF THE INIALA HOSPITALITY GROUP FOR TEN YEARS OPENING THE THAILAND PROPERTY, THEN HERE IN MALTA, OPENING INIALA HARBOUR HOUSE. WHAT DREW YOU TO GRACY'S ARTS & SUPPER CLUB AND WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?**

The Club has always been a special place. My first time in Malta and visiting the Club was summer 2014, Iniala did a pop-up restaurant called Aziamendi100 with Chef Eneko Atxa a 3-star Michelin Chef, it was a first for the islands. Greg and I became friends years ago since our children went to the same school. He told me about his ambitious plans for the club. I saw the building transform into a sophisticated and grand establishment with the interiors that Sam and Greg put together. The synergy we share and the opportunity to create a world class Club with the highest levels of gastronomy and hospitality in such a unique location really appealed to me.

**AFTER ALMOST A YEAR AT THE HELM AND RECENTLY OPENING GRACY'S NEW 'ROOF GARDEN RESTAURANT' FOR BOTH CLUB MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS, WHAT'S YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF 'THE CLUB'?**

To create a legacy – a place that people come to regularly, populated by locals and sought out by travellers to Malta. I'm very much a believer in word-of-mouth, if I'm given the recommendation for a restaurant from a friend or trustworthy source then I'm eager to go. That's always the goal at Gracy's, it's what you want to hear from guests who sit down to dine with ➤



you - that recommendation by a friend based on their own experience. Then have to make sure you deliver!

THE TEAM GAINED A MICHELIN STAR AT INIALA UNDER YOUR WATCH, AND YOU RECENTLY HIRED A NEW CHEF FROM LONDON, TOM PETERS, FOR GRACY'S. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THIS NEW DIRECTION FOR GUESTS DINING AT THE CLUB AND THE FOOD SCENE FOR MALTA AS A WHOLE AND YOUR AMBITIONS FOR GRACY'S FUTURE?

The dining scene in Malta has changed so much since I first arrived, the Michelin guide became the benchmark and aspirations and creativity have since elevated. We are lucky to have as much talent in the kitchens and front of house as we do here on the islands. It does come with many challenges these days, especially in human resources, you have to train and retain, which is why it's most important to have talent at the very top. Greg and I met Tom during the interview process in London, straight away Tom impressed us and we were very keen to get him to come over to Malta and see the islands for himself. Together we went to see local artisan suppliers and gave him a whistle stop tour before he

cooked an amazing dinner for us. One day sourcing ingredients, a day of preparation and he got the job with flying colours! We all share the same vision for quality. Also fifty percent of the menu is changed each month since Tom started, which is a huge challenge in itself and it offers our clientele something new on a regular basis to relish. A very gifted chef, he made the kitchen and the team his own. At the front of house we have a very talented team lead by Alex McMillan, our Restaurant Manager, who was also recruited from London and our Head Sommelier Tuva Villa, with her wealth of knowledge from Michelin starred restaurants in Oslo and London, makes up quite a formidable team. \*

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