

Kitchens by design: Murmur, Brighton



Michael Bremner tells Lisa Jenkins about his new beachfront restaurant – his second venture in Brighton, and one designed to have a very different identity from 64 Degrees

Murmur, the new restaurant from Michael Bremner, overlooks Brighton's now derelict West Pier, destroyed by a fire in 2003. Some original posts salvaged from the pier have been relocated – rust and all – to the area in front of Murmur's terrace in a newly developed part of the seafront.

Bremner's original restaurant in Brighton is 64 Degrees, located in the twisting alleyways of the Lanes – the city's historic quarter.

The restaurant has consistently held a bib gourmand from Michelin since it opened in October 2013 and is considered a fine-dining eatery in the local area and wider afield.

Murmur is the second venture from Bremner and his partner, Carla Grassy. It is in the Kings Road Arches, at sea level, below the city's main promenade, and commands a magnificent view of the beach.

Making hay...

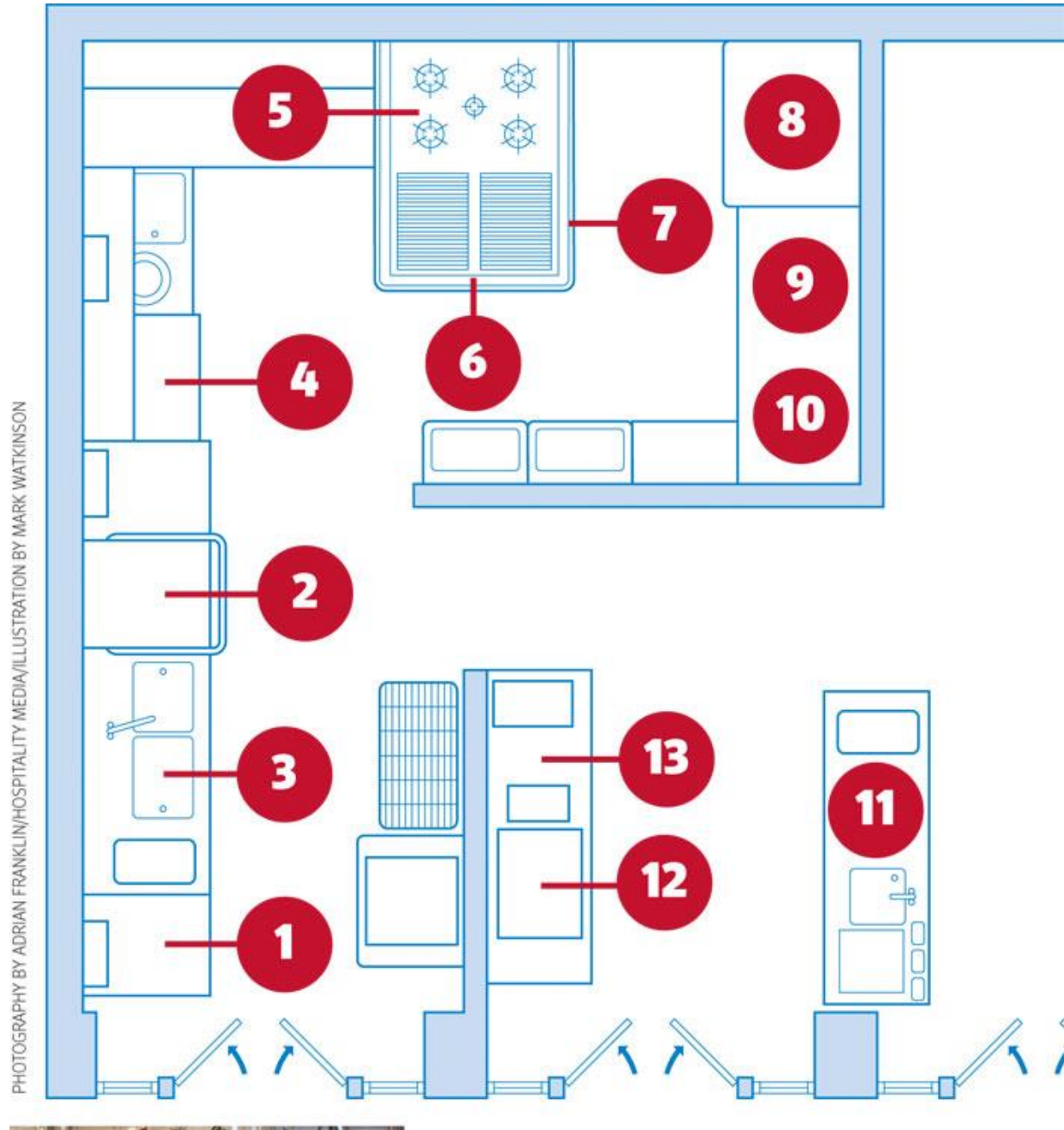
The couple hadn't planned a second opening so soon, but realised it would have been foolish not to capitalise on Bremner's recent success in BBC Two's *Great British Menu* – he won for his main course on the show – not to mention his sterling reputation in the town.

So when a unit came up as part of a new development on the beachfront, the opportunity was just too good to miss. "It was the push we needed to commit to doing something different," Bremner says.

He adds: "We are very proud of 64 Degrees and it's the place I always imagined it would be, a place chefs enjoy working at. But I had been clamouring to try something fresh, with a healthier focus – the sort of food Carla and I like to eat with our two girls."

There is a good market for such places in Brighton, says the chef. He cites Matt Gillan's Pike & Pine, Silo by Douglas McMaster, the more recent Etch from Steven Edwards and, just up the road in Hove, the Little Fish Market from chef Duncan Ray.

Between them, Bremner as chef-patron and Grassy (a photographer by trade and a hands-on designer of front of house) are hoping to deliver a straightforward restaurant that provides value for money, somewhere that will attract groups of friends as well as families with young children.



Murmur is much bigger than 64 Degrees, with 39 seats inside and 40 on the terrace. As you walk through the main arched doorway to the L-shaped kitchen, the equipment begins with a Foster Refrigerator Slimline upright fridge (1) next to the KPs' area with its DC Premium pass-through dishwasher and integral softener (2), and potwash sink with an Aquajet pre-rinse spray arm (3).

Further in, Bremner has opted for optimal storage and worktops, with a Blizzard undercounter freezer (4).



The Control Induction cooking suite (5) is in full view of the restaurant on the other side of the high pass. It includes two 3kW induction hobs, two planchas, a Hatco Rise and Fall Salamander (6) and an Adande built-in four-drawer gastronorm fridge/freezer (7) below the range.



A Rational six-grid SelfCookingCentre 5 Senses (8) sits snugly in the corner with a left-handed hinged door alongside further cooling kit from Williams Refrigeration – an Aztra cabinet and two Genfrost two-door under-counter fridges (9).



Further worktops are fitted towards Bremner's high pass (10) (this is a chef who's 6ft 4in) with its ceiling-mounted hot lamps, heated gantry and plate warmer.

Cleanability

It's compact, but the chef is used to working in tight conditions. He uses Control Induction equipment at 64 Degrees too, and comments on how easy the suites are to clean: "They always look brand new – and that's important when they are on view to the customers."

Grassy was in charge of the bar and restaurant design, working with Brighton Catering Supplies (BCS), the main contractor on the project and responsible for the kitchen and restaurant services. This area includes a DC Standard Extra glasswasher (11), with a two-minute cycle, a Scotsman self-contained ice machine and water filter system (12), Gamko bottle fridges (13), and a Verre de Vin wine preservation unit.

There is a temperature-controlled wine fridge in the restaurant, sourced through the couple's wine supplier, Hallgarten Druitt, to showcase the interesting wine menu.

Grassy and Bremner worked on the interior design of the restaurant with Krishna Money, director of Brighton-based Platform Group. Money says: "Michael and Carla were clear from the start that the new restaurant should have a different name and its own identity, and that it would have a different food offer."

Sight and sound

Bremner says: "We started with naming, and the chosen route was one of our favourites: Murmur relates to a murmuration – the flocks of starlings that give amazing swooping displays along the seafront at dusk; it also references the murmuring sound of the waves facing the restaurant and reflects the shape of the arches it occupies.

"For the interior, Carla and Michael had lots of ideas, some from visiting contemporary seafront restaurants and café-bars in Australia, and we worked with them to edit a series of image boards inspired by this and the honest, high-quality but informal dining experience they wanted to create. The restaurant needed to be accessible for breakfast and a family lunch on the beach, as well as a more formal experience in the evening. One long wall of the dining area consists of opening double doors set in the refurbished seafront arches, and the interior had to feel at home on the beach in summer as well as during the notso-sunny British winter where the full force of the weather would be on full view.

One of the biggest design challenges was space. The restaurant's footprint is just 94 sq m, including toilets, kitchen and storage, and Platform worked closely with the team and the kitchen designers to fit everything in. Portslade-based Commercial Catering Contracts (CCC) worked with Bremner to design the kitchen and install the equipment. CCC's managing director Michael Doffman, his wife Claire and son Adam liaised extensively with the team to create a flow through the space.

Bremner and operations manager Jake Readman chose CCC for its approach on another project. Readman says: "The company understood how the kitchen and chefs worked, and we wanted someone that understood our needs."

The kitchen at Murmur has as much refrigeration as could be squeezed in. There is no gas – it wasn't allowed. The fit-out was completed by BCS, which was also in charge of the extraction installation.



Fuss-free dining

Bremner insists there will be no water baths, micro herbs or fuss at Murmur.

“The simple, essential equipment will dictate the menu too,” he says.

It seems that Murmur is Bremner's way of going back to basics, and he admits to being influenced and encouraged in his endeavours by some of his competitors on Great British Menu last year.

“It was a pleasure to watch Tom Brown [of Outlaw's at the Capital, London],” he says. “There is such class to his food and his flavours are superb. And I love Tommy Banks [of the Black Swan, Oldstead]; his food is exciting and interesting. The one with the flames on the show just blew my mind!”

“I want to be a better chef – always. And I want to know more about where my food is coming from and appreciate it all the more for that. We are determined to focus on the ingredients more here, and for the restaurant to evolve into a place to showcase the products.”

Suppliers and contractors

Adande www.adanderefrigeration.com

Blizzard www.pentlandwholesale.co.uk

Brighton Catering Supplies www.bcs.direct

Commercial Catering Contracts www.commercialcatering.co.uk

Control Induction www.controlinduction.co.uk

DC Products www.dcproducts.co.uk

Foster Refrigerator www.fosterrefrigerator.com

Gamko www.gamko.com

Genfrost www.genfrost.co.uk

Hallgarten Druitt Wines www.hdnwines.co.uk

Hatco www.hatcocorp.com

Platform Group www.platformgroup.co.uk

Rational www.rational-online.com

Scotsman www.scotsman-ice.co.uk

Williams Refrigeration www.williamsrefrigeration.co.uk