



## AN ADVENTURE IN TASTE AT HALES HALL &amp; THE GREAT BARN, NORFOLK



An Adventure in Taste - a unique celebration of local food and drink and the Norfolk skies was held last weekend (17-18 March) at [Hales Hall and Great Barn](#), a magnificent Tudor estate restored to modern-day luxury, set amid exquisite formal gardens and wild Norfolk meadows. The event was a collaboration between Hales Hall's owner, Helen Johnston, and her friends, Marwan Badran Food Artist, Master Chef and founder of [Mouth.Events](#); Chef and Artist Annie Nichols of [Hot Meals Now](#); and Artist and Astrologer Madeleine Botet de Lacaze, founder of [Astrology for Artists](#).

An Adventure in Taste was a 25-hour food performance - part art, part theatre and food experience. Guests enjoyed the luxurious rooms and roaring fires of Hales Hall despite the arctic weather outside and took an epicurean journey from field to fork and planet to plate to discover the flavours of Norfolk and Suffolk produce in a feast prepared by Marwan and Annie.

Performance artist and astrologer Madeleine Botet de Lacaze, took a planetary reading of the exact moment in time and space for Marwan to interpret through his culinary mastery. Together Madeleine, Marwan and Annie painted a gastronomic picture of the sky, consisting of 'Taste Sculptures' interpreting the four ancient elements of fire, earth, water and air, which included Magic Matches, Mushroom Truffle 'Soil', homemade Prawn Crackers and a lemony broth. This was followed by a dinner that told the story of Neptune who is the god of the night of 17 March. Guests feasted on Prawn in the Garden of Eden, Fishy Stuffed Quail, a celebratory Savoury Cheese Cake, soft cheese & Poached Rhubarb & Blood Orange Compote with dark chocolate and cheeses.

Hales Hall owner, Helen Johnston said "Through our shared love of food and provenance Marwan, Annie and I wanted to find a way to show off Hales Hall and recognise all the incredible producers that surround

us on both sides of the Norfolk/Suffolk border. We were determined to come up with a memorable way to bring together many of the special things about East Anglia in general and Hales Hall in particular. What Marwan & Annie have created through a food & astrology collaboration with Madeleine is a truly unique celebration of the big skies of these wonderful flatlands, the abundance of the nearby sea and soil and the beauty of Hales Hall.'

Madeleine read and drew up each guest's Astrological Natal Chart, showing what the sky looked like at the exact moment of their birth. This formed the starting point for discussion, reflection and visualisations, exploring creative processes from an unusual, highly personal perspective.

The second day of the Adventure featured 'A Circus of Taste' in the magnificent thatched Great Barn with a vast vaulted roof and 180 arrow-slit windows each individually lit by candles. Over 20 food and drink producers from Norfolk and Suffolk came together enabling guests to discover the flavours of East Anglia. The Taste Circus concept was to create a community of food and drink producers that share similar beliefs. Each producer shared a stand and collaborative taste story with another and hence performed a taste sensation that belongs to both producers. For example, Fire Station Coffee and Wild Knight vodka made an Espresso Martini between them, while Mrs Temple's Binham Blue and the rich, dark bean-to-bar chocolate from Tosier made a surprising and delicious pairing.

Visitors were able to chat to passionate Suffolk and Norfolk food producers and taste produce from raw milk, butter and cheese from two local farms Fen Farm and Old Hall Farm; award winning charcuterie from Marsh Pig and smoked fish from Smoka and Paddy & Scotts coffee. Four local vineyards, Winbirri, Chet Valley, Flint Vineyard and Valley Farm brought wines to taste, while disitillers Wild Knight Vodka, St Giles Gin and The English Whisky Company and an innovative new brewery Ampersand also featured.

Guests were served cocktails and mocktails made by Chambers Cocktail Company from Norwich: Pinky Blinders made with Wild Knight Vodka, homemade raspberry syrup, Chambournd, soured hibiscus and lemon juice. Highlines made with English Whisky, Blackdown elderberry port, Dolin Rouge and blackberry syrup. Hedgerow made with soured hibiscus, blackberry syrup, fresh lemon juice and soda. (See link for full recipe of Buck Rogers mocktail).

Also served, was sparkling Horatio wine from Chet Valley Vineyard and wines from all the other vineyards present. Lunch was a celebration of local ingredients prepared by Marwan & Annie, who created a luxurious trio of Cassoulets: A meat Cassoulet featuring British-grown beans, peas, and barley from Hodmedod and pork and chorizo from Marsh Pig (full recipe in link), a vegan Cassoulet with micro vegetables and seaweed, and a fish Cassoulet featuring a variety of sea vegetables and locally caught fish

Dessert too was a coming together of six different ingredients from Norfolk and Suffolk in a 'Borderland Bakewell'. Created by the Cake Shop Bakery from Woodbridge, the beautiful tart used raw butter from Fen Farm Dairy, Norfolk Saffron, DJ Wines Strawberry Liqueur, Eastgate Larder Medlar Jelly, Nurtured in Norfolk's Red Apple Blossom and the wonderful English Whisky (full recipe attached).

"The most wonderful weekend. It was such a privilege to see inside and stay in the utterly glorious Hales Hall, and such a great celebration of Norfolk and Suffolk produce too. I love how you are flying the flag for it." said one guest, while another said "What impressed me about the food circus was that the actual producers were there – they often send, on these occasions, a junior representative. The stories of their journeys were fascinating."

Hales Hall is the perfect venue for a magical wedding, private party or special event for up to 200 people or a relaxed weekend in the countryside. The Hall and accompanying Cottage, Gatehouse and Garden Rooms can accommodate 25+ guests for luxurious holidays for large groups. An Adventure in Taste was the first in a series of collaborations with Mouth Events to celebrate local food and drink.

Mouth.Events a culinary and artistic collaborative that curates togetherness through food-based performances holds regular 'shows' at Hales Hall and other venues. Guests can either commission them to put on a bespoke event or attend one of the scheduled events. There will be a programme of events throughout the summer at Marwan's Chateau Engalin in South-West France. The next one to be held at Hales Hall will be in winter 2018 when we will welcome the public to A Circus of Taste.

Hot Meals Now founded by artist, chef and cookery writer Annie Nichols, is a company specialising in innovative supper clubs and pop-ups, combining food, art and performance. Annie, now based in Margate, Kent, has gained a reputation for creating exciting and unusual botanical cocktails, mixing seasonal and foraged ingredients that she gathers from the sea and on the shore.

## **CONTACT**

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## **High resolution photos**

Saturday An Adventure in Taste: <https://joannamillingtonphotography.pixieset.com/circusoftastesaturday/>

To download the images you will need the pin: 9461

Sunday: A Circus of Taste: <https://joannamillingtonphotography.pixieset.com/circusoftastesunday/>

To download the images you will need the pin: 2472

## ABOUT HALES HALL

Award-winning Hales Hall, is one of Norfolk's iconic country estates, proudly set within its coveted walled gardens, an exclusive destination within easy reach of vibrant Norwich and its renowned theatres, galleries, museums, and shopping - with fast links to London.

The extensive, secluded private grounds and spacious, opulent country house accommodation can be yours. Hales Hall country estate, offers a truly unique experience with luxury accommodation, nestled in some of the finest Tudor architecture, together with the perfect party venue, an imposing Tudor thatched Barn, complete with party planner and delicious catering if required.

Sleeping from 2 to 25+ guests, the boutique self-catering accommodation can accommodate large groups and includes Hales Hall, together with The Cottage, The Gate House, and two charming Garden Rooms all exquisitely refurbished by renowned interior designers with quirky antiques and sumptuous soft furnishings, creating the quintessential country escape.

If you're looking for a unique setting, the beautiful Grade I listed Tudor country estate is breath-taking. Guests can enjoy an exclusive stay, with the complete country estate available for large groups, weddings, and celebrations; from pretty meadowland to walled gardens - all yours to enjoy with access to traditional lawn games, croquet, and woodland walks.

Hales Hall is certainly full of character but with a delightful softness that feels both welcoming and imposing. Few country estates can boast the ambience and feeling of exclusivity Hales offers – it genuinely feels like a home; it's a place to 'be', a place to fall in love with and adore.

“Our interiors enhance the historic character of Hales Hall, with antiques, quirky collections, and boutique modern fixtures. Visitors enjoy the idiosyncrasies and character of this beautiful old Norfolk estate, and the opportunity to make it their exclusive escape” says owner Helen Johnston.

The majestic thatched Tudor Great Barn is a renowned party, wedding, and event venue. Beautifully imposing, it's the largest brick-built barn in the country (incidentally the Tudor bricks are a lovely rose-colour) with 180 original 'loophole' windows allowing sunshine to flood the vaulted barn. It's light and airy with a stunning first floor galleried reception room offering further flexible accommodation with stunning views.

“There's nothing quite like the feeling you get here, its beautifully secluded with The Great Barn and accommodation all set within the historic, walled gardens; offering far reaching views of wild flower meadows and woodland - it's the perfect place to unwind and relax” says Helen Johnston.

Helen Johnston's family has been associated with the area for hundreds of years – they can trace their roots in Norfolk back to the time Hales Hall was built. Helen, an editor, and her husband Gary, an entrepreneur, with their young family, run Hales Hall.

### The Accommodation

The Hall - Complete with seven boutique bedrooms, all individually styled with Vispring beds, plush bathrooms featuring large showers, marble vanities and cast iron freestanding baths. There are three reception rooms and a 40-foot country kitchen with an Aga. The Hall is ideal for those looking to have a family get together for the weekend.

The Gatehouse - Sleeps two and has a spacious kitchen with a range cooker, a wet-room with underfloor heating and a cosy sitting room with large open fireplace. Upstairs is an antique four poster bed with a bespoke cashmere filled Vi-spring mattress and an antique roll-top bath under a stunning chandelier -ideal for the bridal couple.

The Cottage - Sleeps five in two double bedrooms and a single bedroom looking out onto the private garden. There is a large bathroom with a drench shower, a roll-top bath and underfloor heating, as well as a modern stylish kitchen and a comfortable sitting room.

The Garden Rooms – Sleeps 4. An attractive stable block in the stunning grounds has recently been refurbished into two stylish double bedrooms, both with ensuite bathrooms and lovely views across the gardens and moat.

## **ABOUT MOUTH.EVENTS**

Mouth.Events is a culinary and artistic collaborative that curates togetherness through food based performances. Founded and led by Food Artist and Master Chef Marwan Badran, Mouth.Events encourages guests to shift their perceptions by uniquely combining food and art protagonists. Working with fellow chefs, performance artists, musicians, film makers and food producers, to name but a few of the disciplines involved, Mouth.Events creates experiences that are as unexpected as they are revealing.

[www.mouth.events](http://www.mouth.events)

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Marwan Badran** was born in Baghdad to a Lebanese/Palestinian father & Indian/Portuguese mother. He arrived in London in his teens and went on to complete a medical degree at University College London. His passion for all things foodie led him to compete on Master Chef in 1993 where he reached the semi finals. Marwan opened his Islington restaurant EUPHORIUM in 1995, a creative collaboration between himself and a stream of architects, graphic designers, furniture makers and artists – with food at its heart. It was immediately short listed for Time Out restaurant of the year award. Two years later, Marwan launched EUPHORIUM Bakery, which pioneered the ‘handmade on the premises’ baking revolution. Marwan moved to Gascony in South West France in 2005 to establish Engalin a Culinary Utopian Retreat, hosting private and corporate events. Marwan has just completed an Art post-grad at Goldsmiths in London and established his Food & ‘Other’ Art Foundation at Engalin featuring a Food Lab & ‘Otherness’ Art Residency Programme. Marwan is also founder of Mouth.Events a Food & Art Participatory Performance Platform which curates togetherness.

**Helen Johnston** is half Norfolk and half Suffolk and grew up on one side of the border and was schooled on the other. She left home at 18 to study for an MA in English Literature at Edinburgh University and went on to live in Russia and Hong Kong where she worked as a news journalist for the local and international press. Helen returned to London five years later where she became Deputy Editor of Marie Claire and Cosmopolitan; and Editor of New Woman, Now and The Daily Mail’s Self section. She was on the launch team of Grazia and fashion glossy Distill Magazine. Helen is now Content Director at Cedar Communications creating multichannel food and drink content for brands. The lure of her East Anglian roots finally became too much to ignore and Helen decided to look for a project with her family in the area to combine

with her media life in London. As soon as she saw Hales Hall Helen fell in love with the place and knew she could combine her expertise in fashion, food and luxury travel with her passion for the region, to create an environment where guests would want to come and relax, dine and party in style.

**Madeleine Botet de Lacaze:** is an Argentine astrologer and performance artist based in London. She studied Cinematography in Argentina and moved to London in 2011 to complete an MA in Performance Art at Wimbledon College of Art. She has performed internationally at festivals such as Spill, In Between Time, Buzzcut, Sacred and Performatorium. She has worked with artists such as Marina Abramovic at the Serpentine Gallery, Ron Athey at Fierce Festival and she has been mentored by Franko B, Ron Athey, and Tim Etchells. Madeleine's performance work is interdisciplinary, vulnerable and visually engaging not only in its use of multiple disciplines - video, audio, objects and environments - but also in terms of its connections to other fields: ecology, nature and astrology. She is the founder of ASTROLOGY FOR ARTISTS, believing that 'we are all artists and life is our most important creative act'. She studied astrology in Buenos Aires at the renowned school CASA 11 for four years and a further three years in London at The Faculty of Astrological Studies. Integrating her two passions, art and astrology, enables her to communicate and reflect upon 'what makes us creative and what makes us feel alive'. Through ASTROLOGY FOR ARTISTS Madeleine now creates unique creative retreats, experiences, events and classes.

**Annie Nichols** describes herself as an artist that cooks a lot of food. She is a leading food writer and stylist. Originally training and working as a chef in hotels and restaurants here in the UK, Switzerland and Australia, she subsequently became a freelance food stylist, working with the world's top cooks and chefs, styling food for books and magazines, including Waitrose Food, The Guardian, FT Weekend, AnOther Magazine, Elle, Food & Travel, Square Peg, Quadrille and Octopus. Her fifth cookery book, Dinner at Mine, is a collection of seasonal menus, which she styled and photographed herself. As a mature student she also studied a B.A in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins (now University of London) and has shown at Barbican London. Now based in Margate, Kent, she is in the process of writing her sixth cookery book, due to be published at the end of 2018.