

## A CIRCUS OF TASTE AT HALES HALL &amp; THE GREAT BARN, NORFOLK



A Circus of Taste - a unique celebration of local food and drink - was held last weekend (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 & Masterchef, founder of [Mouth.Events](#), & Annie Nichols founder of [Hot Meals Now](#).

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.

Hales Hall owner, Helen Johnston said "Through our shared love of food and provenance Marwan 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 has created through his food is a truly unique celebration of the abundance of the nearby sea and soil and the beauty of Hales Hall.'

Over 150 guests visited The Circus of Taste in the magnificent thatched Great Barn with a vast vaulted roof and 180 arrow-slit windows each individually lit by candles.

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 distillers 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, Chambour, 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 Badran and his team, a warming cassoulet featuring British-grown beans, peas and barley from Hodmedod and pork and chorizo from Marsh Pig (See link for full recipe).

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).

"Such a great celebration of Norfolk and Suffolk produce" said one guest, while another said "What impressed me about the Circus of Taste was that the actual producers were there – they often send, on these occasions, a junior representative. The stories of their journeys were fascinating."

Third generation Suffolk baker, David Wright of The Cake Shop Bakery said: "It was such a great event. Everyone was so friendly and the atmosphere was really wonderful." While award-winning cheese maker Julie Cheyney creator of St Jude's cheese said "I really enjoyed meeting so many new people from both sides of the counter. "

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**

A Circus of Taste: <https://joanamillingtonphotography.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.

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.

[www.haleshall.com](http://www.haleshall.com)

## **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.

## 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.

**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.