2020 Visionaries

2020 rocked us all. The Corona pandemic and subsequent lockdowns forced restaurants, bars and hotels to close across the world.

In many cases, food businesses closed before they were mandated, putting people ahead of profit. At the same time, many threw themselves into social initiatives, political campaigns, and the process of devising entirely new concepts and business models in search of revenue.

The innovation, resilience, social purpose and community spirit on display across hospitality was a testament to the determination and desire to serve that drives the most passionate industry in the world.

It has been a year to reflect, to debate, to question and to innovate, and with this in mind, we decided to highlight just a handful of the people whose amazing ideas, initiatives and pivots have answered the year with a visionary response.

Ryan King, Editor in Chief, www.finefininglovers.com
Valeria Raimondi, Editor in Chief, www.finedininglovers.it/fr/es
**Jesse Ziff Cool**

The veteran Bay Area restaurateur Jesse Cool eliminated tipping and shifted to what she calls a *Heart of House* (no front or back of house) service charge system during the pandemic. Employees help out in the kitchen and dining room, and all partake of the service charge pool. After decades of championing sustainable agriculture and cuisine, Cool proves she remains as innovative as ever.

**Lara Gilmore, Massimo, Charlie and Alexa Bottura**

The Bottura family opened up their kitchen to the world with their Instagram series *Kitchen Quarantine*. The family’s nightly cooking demonstrations, orchestrated by Massimo’s daughter Alexa behind the camera, and co-presented by wife Lara and son Charlie, helped thousands of people through the darkest hours of the pandemic and won a Webby.

**Roshara Sanders**

Chef Roshara Sanders – *Culinary Institute of America* graduate, *Chopped* champion, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, and all-round inspiration – pivoted from working as chef de partie at New York’s *Oceana* to become the Institute’s first black female instructor. She has big plans there to change restaurant culture from the inside, and with such determination and talent, it’s only a matter of time.

**Meals On Heels**

Giving the gift of drag in difficult times, the performers of *OASIS* – San Francisco’s internationally-acclaimed drag show nightclub / cabaret – delivered meals, drinks and a kerbside performance throughout the city, spreading joy and humour, while providing an important service to restaurants and diners.
Rafael Rincón, president of Chile’s Social Gastronomy Foundation, set up Comida Para Todos (Food for All) in the midst of the pandemic. It’s a solidarity platform that works to eradicate hunger and reactivate the gastronomy sector. Comida Para Todos empowers restaurants to prepare nutritious and delicious dishes that are delivered to those in need across soup kitchens. In just seven months, the network served over 190,000 solidarity lunches, created work for 77 people, supported 800 families and worked with 35 different local producers.

Vikas Khanna, the New York-based Indian chef, TV personality, writer, director and humanitarian mobilised a huge movement to feed millions of hungry Indians during the pandemic. Over 20 million meals have been served so far in 2020 by the Michelin-star chef’s initiative.

Teague Moriarty used the pandemic to create a more inclusive, equitable business for all staff. Taking a risk with his Michelin-star restaurant, he increased wages, and provided healthcare and paid vacations for staff, giving them more of a stake in the business while reducing his own. A future vision of a more cooperative kitchen model.

Douglas McMaster flipped the restaurant business model on its head, creating a more inclusive, equitable business for all staff. Taking a risk with his Michelin-star restaurant, he increased wages, and provided healthcare and paid vacations for staff, giving them more of a stake in the business while reducing his own. A future vision of a more cooperative kitchen model.
The chef opened up his Brooklyn restaurant Maison Yaki for the Black Entrepreneur Series and showed how a diverse community-based gastronomy initiative could elevate diners' experience, and how shared opportunities can elevate society.

At Alinea, Grant Achatz showed the world how pivoting to takeout and delivery could keep the light on in restaurants. Kokonas' Tock restaurant reservation platform branched out as Tock To Go, enabling restaurants to manage their pivots to takeout as efficiently as possible.

When the Slovenian chef was forced to close her restaurant she took to the mountains with her 32 members of staff. Together they worked on sourcing high-altitude ingredients and developing innovative food products for supermarket shelves. Pivoting to new business, Roš helped protect the local food-system while creating new revenue streams.

Chef Elégbédé, who left Nigeria to pursue his culinary dream in some of the United States' top restaurants, returned to his native country with a determination to change the food-system. He developed the Abori Network, an online marketplace for Nigerian suppliers to reach customers, filling a missing link in the country's food system. Thinking globally, but acting locally, Elégbédé is a visionary chef who is building a network of suppliers and empowering an entire food chain.
Dan Barber

Kitchen Farming Project

The chef, innovator and farm-to-table guru turned to the land during the pandemic. His Kitchen Farming Project worked to regrow and nurture the mycelium of the connected food chain, and save small farmers from the disappearance of their restaurant customers. The initiative mobilised thousands of people around the world to plant during the pandemic.

Nidal Barake

Gluttonomy

The food entrepreneur reminded us that there is opportunity in crisis, urging restaurateurs to rethink their business models. Barake was the brain behind Restore.biz, an online platform designed to create alternative, supplementary revenue streams for restaurants and chefs.

Sasha Correa

The Basque Culinary Center’s Sasha Correa – food journalist, innovator and ghost-thinker – applied her creativity to asking the broader questions about how the pandemic might shape restaurants, the industry and society. Correa was the driving force behind Reto Coronavirus, a major project by the BCC to provide a platform for hospitality in Spain and Latin America to share and monitor important developments during the Covid-19 pandemic. The initiative was also responsible for a series of debates and discussions challenging the status quo of the industry.

Kreuzberger Himmel

Be an Angel

What started as a Berlin restaurant team welcoming refugees into their homes, became a project that brought together diverse individuals, initiatives, companies and the media, all in an effort to make a positive impact on the lives of people fleeing danger in their home countries. More than 500 refugees have been through their doors, and thanks to the work of Be an Angel, they managed to avoid homelessness or living in refugee camps.

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Ed Lee

When Louisville chef Edward Lee closed his restaurants due to the pandemic, his small non-profit The Lee Initiative launched the Restaurant Workers Relief Program, serving over a million meals to hungry hospitality workers. The group has worked tirelessly to provide food to those in the industry hit hardest by lockdowns and subsequent closures.

Camilla Marcus

Camilla Marcus is a chef, restaurateur, entrepreneur and pioneer for positive social and environmental change within the industry. She was a founding member of ROAR, a coalition of NYC-based independent restaurateurs and chefs formed to fight for governmental relief for independent restaurants. She is also a founding member of lobbying group The Independent Restaurant Coalition (IRC), an organisation dedicated to advocating for the rights of independent restaurants through national legislative action.

Brian Canlis

Canlis Restaurant

Canlis, the historical fine-dining restaurant in Seattle, was behind one of the earliest pivots to takeout, burger shacks, drive-ins and even TV dinners, all delivered with inventive online accompaniments, from piano music to cook-along bingo. The team also launched a community college with 6000 people enrolling into classes that saw Brian Canlis and his brother, Mark, launch an educational TV show for children. Their work showed that a restaurant can be so much more than a place to eat.

Nidiya Kusmaya

Textile Artist

By extracting colours from the food she eats every day, and by applying them to textiles, Kusmaya shows how the food chain can bleed into fashion. She also uses carbohydrates and protein-based food waste as growth mediums for colour-producing microorganisms.