

3 Restaurants in the Emilia's Crafted Pasta family, when Wood Wharf opens its doors in November

by Jon Massey

Five years ago, Andrew Macleod opened the first branch of Emilia's Crafted Pasta at St Katherine Docks in east London. Following its success he opened a second, larger establishment in Aldgate in 2019.

Born of a passion for good pasta and a desire to bring it to Londoners freshly made, served with a punchy array of sauces and at a reasonable price, the brand continue to grow.

Now Andrew and his team are preparing to launch Emilia's largest flagship restaurant at Wood Wharf, with the doors expected to open in November.

That will place his dishes within easy walking distance of the whole Canary Wharf estate, not to mention much of the Isle Of Dogs, for the first time.

"Wood Wharf is an evolved concept," said Andrew. "Part of



What we've done with Wood Wharf is to have half the restaurant as more of an all-day bar

Andrew Macleod, Emilia's

what we do at Emilia's is to keep everything simple and fresh. That's what we stand by in terms of our food, our business and how we run stuff.

"Whenever we go into an area, we want to be part of it, not impostors. So, what we've done with Wood Wharf is to have half the restaurant as more of an all-day bar – for example, there will be a tabletop version of bocce, an Italian game similar to French boules.

"Wood Wharf is going to be a neighbourhood where people come to work, live and enjoy themselves, so what we wanted was the space to be tailored to that.

"For me, that means I want people to walk in, play a bit of bocce, have a drink, a coffee and a catch up, or for them to be hanging out, sitting on a beautiful terrace overlooking the water and the park, eating pasta and drinking cocktails.

"The idea is that you're coming into a bustling trattoria in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy – a place the whole concept pays homage to, both its food and the techniques used to make it.

Continued on Page 8



Emilia's makes the pasta it serves to customers fresh every day with shapes carefully paired to sauces for maximum taste

how **Emilia's Crafted Pasta** is set to open a flagship restaurant with a playful edge at the heart of Wood Wharf

anticipating the
sauce

from Page 6

"For me, the vision is that we want to bring 100% natural, affordable, fresh pasta to as many people as possible, in a way that respects those traditions, and feels very casual and Italian

"The more we can spread that, the happier I'll be. We're not in a rush, we're not here just to open other branches – we just want to make this one right."

The new restaurant will be located on the ground floor of 12 George Street, overlooking Harbour Quay Gardens and the boardwalk along West India South Dock. Inside visitors can expect rustic wooden furniture, plenty of marble and hand-painted tiles.

New dishes are promised, alongside Emilia's core menu, which offers bowls of pasta costing between £8 and £14 – the Canary Wharf bar is also expected to offer a range of cocktails based on locally sourced fruits and Italian spirits.

At full capacity, the restaurant will be able to accommodate 100 diners with 70 inside and 30 outdoors.

Andrew said: "For me, launching a pasta restaurant never had anything to do with trends. When I was at university, I loved pasta, but I was really disappointed, because I'd moved out of home and was trying to find good places that did it and the only ones were big chains.

"About 10 years ago most of it was just frozen and horrible and places were charging £15 a bowl. You could pay £20 and get something a bit more high-end but I felt that didn't really represent pasta in the way it was traditionally consumed in Italy, informally.

"I thought if Emilia's could make pasta that was significantly better than what people were having at home in the UK, then we would be in with a shot as a brand.

"At the heart of Emilia's, from day one, has always been that all our food is 100% natural.

"We make it on-site, start to finish, and anything we source, comes from people who are suppliers of food that I would eat every day at home myself and be proud to do so.

"That's how we've built it, and we've never stepped away from that. We started in St Katharine Docks in November 2016. We had some nights in the early days without a single customer, but slowly people discovered us and we built up a following.

"Then we got so busy we decided to expand. Aldgate came in 2019 and now we have this fabulous opportunity to open in



Parmesan, Pecorino and basil pesto with casarecce

Wood Wharf. We want to be at the forefront of showcasing that, as a young brand, without much funding, you can, with tight cost control, a good team and a good culture, build something very meaningful, and we've grown organically from day one. Each of our restaurants comes off the back of our previous operation.

"For us, the key thing is that, if you do something sustainably, it should be able to continue for a very long time without damaging the world or the people who are with you.

"Most of our managers have been with us for more than three years. When Covid hit, we didn't sack anyone, we paid furlough and topped up people's wages because that's who we are.

"Emilia's is like a family, it lives on. It's got to be that people are coming to work happy, doing their shift and going home happy. That's our company culture.

"It's about being able to see that you're leaving the world a better place for all the people who have been part of the journey – that's what sustainability is all about.

"When a business is built, you create jobs, livelihoods. You develop people, help them grow and, hopefully, the soil somewhere is better because it gets properly kept as farmers are following sustainable agriculture and processes to make it better. That's what it's about, and that's what we strive towards.

"I'm very excited to be opening this restaurant and that we're continuing our mission in one of London's most exciting developments in a beautiful setting surrounded by green spaces and water."



Scan this code to find out more about Emilia's Crafted Pasta

5 Years since Andrew created Emilia's Crafted Pasta at St Katherine Docks in Wapping

//

The vision is that we want to bring 100% natural, affordable, fresh pasta to as many people as possible in a way that respects those traditions and feels very casual and Italian

Andrew Macleod, Emilia's



Andrew Macleod founded Emilia's after spotting a gap in the market for reasonably priced, good quality pasta inspired by his travels around the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy. After opening in St Katherine Docks, the business expanded to Aldgate and now to Canary Wharf



Above, Emilia's papardelle, served with Bechamel Bolognese that's slow-cooked for four hours