



Juliana Kim Moustakas
and chef Pavel Kanja



A MAGIC NUMBER

After starting life in a tiny kitchen, Flat Three grew into an exciting new restaurant that blends Japanese, Korean, and Scandinavian cooking styles

Words SUDI PIGOTT

It's a thrilling discovery for a self-avowed foodie, a very different kind of cuisine, mixing Japanese, Scandinavian and Korean inspirations, ingredients and techniques, a first for London, is evolving in a brand new restaurant in the heart of Holland Park. It is not an area usually associated with the culinary cutting edge, yet local Kensington resident Juliana Kim Moustakas, a former banker is taking risks with her first dining venture, Flat Three. She started the project with the innovative chef Pavel Kanja, whom she met whilst volunteering to be an apprentice at Wabi (co-founded by Scott Hallsworth of Kurobata) to gain firsthand experience of the true reality of running a restaurant.

They came to name it Flat Three as, for the first year of its conception, Juliana's flat was the true epicentre

where ideas were brainstormed and recipes tested with occasional supper clubs. Its new address is a stylishly transformed basement with Scandinavian mid-century vintage furniture and Japanese screens, all deliberately designed to resemble a domestic open-plan dining room and kitchen.

Impressively Juliana chose to immerse herself in the heat of the kitchen to properly experience what it was like 'diving into the deep end, otherwise I'd have had no idea of what was involved in terms of organisation and discipline.' She realised Pavel had an adventurous spirit about him and a hunger to set new trends whilst running a kitchen. Juliana worked too with world-famous Corey

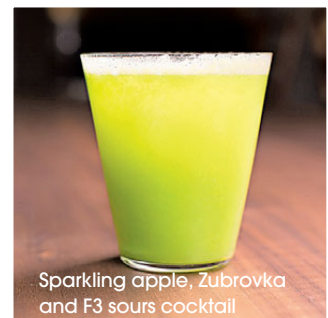
Lee of Benu in San Francisco, who like her is Korean-American. Juliana realised that she wanted to reconnect with her Korean roots but see them reimaged in a contemporary way. Hence the

restaurant's must try is the nine snack gujeolpan appetiser, similar to the traditional Korean vegetable and seafood appetiser but using British ingredients including sea kale

from Kent, celery and pumpkin pollen beside mushrooms in housemade miso.

Pavel, tall, bearded, confident and determined to be singularly original is Serbian but was brought up near the Margaret River in Australia and gained his first London restaurant experience at Roka, 'interesting yet not challenging

For the first year, Juliana's flat was the epicentre where recipes were tested



Sparkling apple, Zubrovka and F3 sours cocktail



Salmon with a Flat Three twist

enough for me,' he says of the experience. The pull of Japanese and Scandinavian food is partly from his travels and work experience in Stockholm and Copenhagen and also from the realisation that both cuisines share a focus on curing, charring, fermenting and foraging. There's also a tendency to use unusual and interesting ingredients found nowhere else and they are not afraid to go their own way.

'It's a philosophy I readily identify with, I want to set new trends,' grins Pavel as he starts to explain how almost everything is created from scratch in house 'to have as much control over flavours as I can' from fermenting several different miso (using koji, a rice like culture, salt and pressure cooked soy beans) to the pickled vegetables (try the pickling juice in the F3 tonic drink).

Many of the ingredients come from a farm, Namayasai in Lewes which supplies Japanese vegetables to restaurants. Pavel is a great fan of Forager restaurant suppliers too.

Don't expect sushi or teppanyaki, the idea is open up diner's palates with lots of unexpected flavours and ingredients,

'it is all about the sequence of the dishes and the breadth of tastes and textures,' explains Pavel.

To give an insight into its originality, a sample lunch was matched with fabulous cold pressed juices starting with apple and cucumber alongside a dish of slivers of white turnip with beurre noisette, apple cider and crunchy milk followed by diver scallop with buttermilk and pickled kombu. Cold smoked salmon served with its scales on and momentarily seared was served with 'Jeung Je' tea leaves, soured cream and bonito soy. The simplicity of the gem lettuce kobu jime, pickled bream and ramson sweet miso is beguiling.

Nothing is taken for granted. Pavel even makes his own special alkaline udon noodles which he says work more efficiently in catalysing the 'breaking down' of starch (the chefs have to control the pH of the water). The noodles are served with lemon thyme and fleetingly cooked onsen quail egg.

Desserts confound the expected too including an impressive sea buckthorn sorbet with housemade dandelion coffee custard or strawberries poached in black

vinegar with geranium ice-cream, both served with omija (a Korean red berry fruit herb) and Hibiscus tea. The delicate Korean tableware has been bespoke designed to complement the dishes too.

It is early days for Juliana and Pavel, though I have confidence that Flat Three may make a seismic change in the London dining scene. For now, their dedication alone deserves recognition. I found dining there as thrilling as my first experience of Copenhagen's Noma, and believe me, that is saying something.

120-122 Holland Park Avenue, W11 4UA 0207 792 8987, flatthree.london



The nine snack gujeolpan appetiser