

# News digest

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## Pickett leaves Plateau to launch solo venture

Allan Pickett, former head chef of London's Plateau restaurant in Canary Wharf, has teamed up with Andre Blais, the founder of Bodean's BBQ restaurant group, to launch his first solo venture next year. Piquet - named to reflect Pickett's classic French training - will open in early spring 2015 in Newman Street in London's Fitzrovia, close to the Cross Rail development that is expected to bring an additional 2,000 people to the area each day. Blais and Pickett will be joint shareholders in the business, with Pickett overseeing the day-to-day running of the 25-cover fine-dining restaurant as chef-patron, while Blais will work in an advisory role. The restaurant will serve modern French food, while also reflecting Pickett's Kentish roots in both its menu and design. "I've always dreamt of doing French food and if you look at the countries France borders, there are lots of different influences - so it will be nice to pick and choose the influences we use," he says.

☒ See *Bossing the Big Smoke*, p26

## Bistro Qui? to expand at pace

Liverpool-based French restaurant group Bistro Qui? is further broadening its scope with the launch of a new smokehouse concept, and has announced ambitious expansion plans for the



Trail-blazers: Bistro Qui's Stephen Slater (l) and Mark Friend

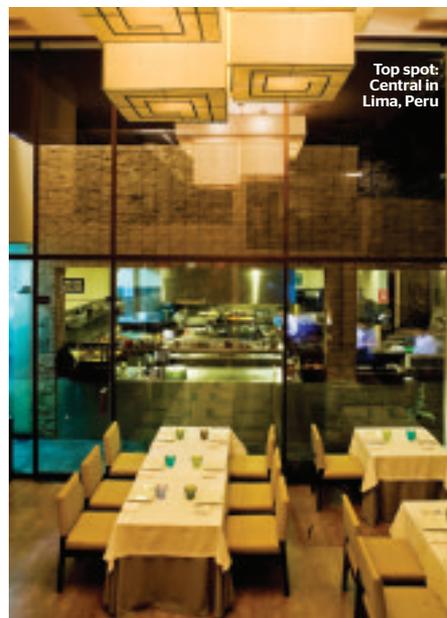


**Aw shucks:** Hugo De La Rosa from Wright Brothers in east London's Spitalfields was crowned British Oyster Opening Champion at Holborn Dining Room last month. The new champion shucked 30 oysters in a winning time of three minutes 24 seconds, beating 10 other contestants. This was the 22nd Tabasco British Oyster Opening Championships, which herald the start of the UK native oyster season.

next three years. The group, founded by Stephen Slater and Mark Friend, has invested a six-figure sum in its new Button Street Smokehouse, in the city's Cavern Quarter, which serves food from the Deep South. The company, which operates Liverpool's The Hub Alehouse & Kitchen and French bistros Pierre, Jacques and Franc, also in the city, and Shrewsbury's Bistro Jacques, aims to have nine restaurants by the end of 2015 and 14 in total by the end of 2017.

## The Clink's fourth site targets women inmates for first time

A fourth The Clink Restaurant will open at HMP Styal in Cheshire in 2015, providing hospitality training to prisoners. The restaurant, the charity's first in the north of England, will also be its first initiative in a prison for women. At 50%, female reoffending stands slightly above the national rate of 46.9%. "We are pleased to welcome this exciting partnership with The Clink Charity, which will help us get more women into employment and, in turn, help reduce the risk of reoffending," says John Hewitson, governor of HMP Styal. "When the restaurant opens, it will give the community an opportunity to see at first hand how we're helping to prepare these women for release." The charity focuses on reducing reoffending by offering prisoners hospitality training through a five-step programme (recruit, train audit, employ and mentor). It has achieved a reoffending rate of just 12.5% after a full year of release for its trainees at HMP High Down, since opening its first restaurant there in May 2009.



Top spot: Central in Lima, Peru

## Central tops Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants

Peruvian restaurant Central was named the number one restaurant in Latin America at the climax of a pisco-fuelled Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants event, sponsored by S. Pellegrino and Acqua Panna, held in Lima, Peru, last month. Located in the upmarket Miraflores district of Peru's capital, Central was opened in 2009 by chef Virgilio Martinez, known for his unique take on the local cuisine and his understanding of the country's biodiversity. Martinez, who works alongside his wife Pia