

# Pearls of wisdom

## Ryan Clift

The British-born chef who ran Vue de Monde in Melbourne for eight and half years before setting up the Tippling Club in Singapore talks about pairing drinks with food, serving £30 cocktails and making cauliflower cheese using sound waves

►► **We opened the Tippling Club in August 2008 at the start of the financial crisis**

and it's been six years of extremely mixed emotions. A lot of people lost their jobs in Singapore and it was pretty scary to realise I'd invested my money in a concept I thought was solid. It was a really harrowing first few months.

►► **If you don't get good PR, you're dead in the water.** I'd always like to think that people came just for the food, but in this day and age modern restaurants really need to have solid marketing too.

►► **Singapore has become a destination for food tourists** - it's bordering on eclipsing Hong Kong in terms of quality. About 75% of the people who come to Tippling Club are gastronomes, they're purely in Singapore to eat. They eat at my restaurant, Restaurant Andre, Iggy's, Jaan and Gunther's.

►► **Never, ever drop your standards,** even when everybody else is dropping theirs. Keep true to yourself and you'll become what you are.

►► **When the financial crisis happened, we created a cocktail called Fuck the Subprime.** It was cognac with Cristal champagne and it was S\$65 (£30) for a fucking cocktail, but you had to order it in a group. We were full of people buying it, so we realised in times of stress, people still want to drink.

►► **I get a lot of requests from people to do restaurants in other countries** but my answer is that for now it's not going to happen. I've just moved and reinvested everything into the new Tippling Club.

►► **I've got a state-of-the-art R&D kitchen with its own private dining room** on the second floor, which will open to the public at the end of July. It will have a different name and its own micro-website.



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►► **Our menu is paired to cocktails.** On our 28-course menu, the last two savoury dishes are always served with wine because we don't want to take away that experience of eating a beautifully rested piece of meat or a perfectly confited piece of pigeon and not having wine with it.

►► **We make our cauliflower cheese sauce in a machine called a sonifier.** We pass 20,000 soundwaves per second through milk, parmesan and black truffle. The sound works the ingredients really vigorously and we then emulsify this really delicate-tasting cheese sauce. You get this really rich umami sauce to pour over the cauliflower.

►► **I still follow what's going on in England.**

I was pretty excited to hear that Simon Rogan has taken over Claridge's. That's the best fucking news I've heard in years. Finally, that hotel is going to have someone cooking good food in it. What Simon is doing is amazing. I like the style he has, Claridge's needs that.

►► **We treat our cocktails with as much research and development as we do our food.** We weren't the first people to serve cocktails with dishes but we're pretty confident we were the first serious fine-dining restaurant to take it to the level we've taken it. Our concept of food and cocktail pairing kept us going.

►► **The philosophy of our restaurant is fine-dining without the snobbery.**

People get to see an absolute mindfuck of ingredients. Everybody leaves with that feeling that something's just happened to them.

►► **Singapore is one of the most competitive places I've ever seen.** Last year 1,500 restaurants opened in a city that's around 40km by 20km wide. The scary thing is that 85% of those restaurants didn't last one year. It's dog-eat-dog.

►► **My inspiration was an old college lecturer called Andrew Offland.** He instilled a lot of values in me when I was young and got me into Claridge's. That really kickstarted my career. Mark Veyrat and Michel Bras were also inspirations.

►► **For any chef, the greatest achievement is always opening your own restaurant.**

For me that was the first Tippling Club. But now my greatest achievement is the new restaurant, which we moved to a fresh location in December. I could not be happier with life at the moment.

► [tipplingclub.com](http://tipplingclub.com)

### In the July issue > Out 4 July

#### Kerb their enthusiasm

What makes chippy Kerbisher & Malt tick

#### The 100 club

Our rundown of The National Restaurant Awards 2014

#### World beers

A country-by-country look at the most interesting brews on the market

#### A perfect world

Inside Heston's new The Perfectionists' Cafe at Heathrow's Terminal 2