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A place at the table 安樂茶飯

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Socially conscious chefs and restaurateurs are transforming the restaurant model to give back to society or shine a spotlight on important issues while delivering delicious dishes. 關心社會的廚師和餐廳老闆正在改變餐廳的經營模式，期望在為大眾提供美味佳餚之餘，同時能夠回饋社會，或引起大眾對重要社會議題的關注。 By Payal Uttam

A place at the table

安樂茶飯

“What if you could help somebody who really needed it just by eating lunch?” Celebrity chef Michael Solomonov and his business partner Steven Cook posed this question on a Kickstarter campaign to help realise a dream. Receiving an incredible response, they raised almost US\$180,000, which helped them open The Rooster, a stylish old school diner that donates all profits to charity. The restaurant built a reputation not only for feeding the hungry but also for quality fare. In 2017, it helped to donate more than 72,000 meals and that year *GQ magazine* named The Rooster one of the best new restaurants in the United States. Soon after, *Food & Wine magazine* followed suit.

“Ultimately, what we are trying to do is to help create a little peace for those who really need it,” says Solomonov. “Restaurants represent the heart of their communities – they are where friends and family gather to celebrate, to swap stories, and to share meals. At the end of the day, hospitality is all about caring for people.”

The duo hatched the idea for The Rooster when they realised how much waste their other restaurants generated. Instead of using the scraps to open a run-of-the-mill soup kitchen, they took the idea one step further. They decided to elevate Jewish diner classics and find creative ways to use leftover chicken, coming up with dishes like The Pastramen, a rich chicken-stock soup with rye noodles spiked with soy sauce and topped with pastrami-cured short ribs.

In recent years chefs and restaurateurs are using cooking as a call to action to raise awareness about issues such as poverty, hunger and human trafficking. Unlike temples of haute cuisine, which thrive on exclusivity, a number of philanthropically minded eateries are opening their arms to anyone in need and giving new meaning to the idea of a guilt-free lunch. They are making a statement by maintaining high standards in the kitchen while also giving away all of their profits. Some restaurants are also using their kitchens to help train some of society's most vulnerable including refugees, disenfranchised youth and unemployed veterans.

「如果只是吃一頓午飯就可以幫到真正有需要的人，你會怎麼做？」名廚Michael Solomonov和生意拍檔Steven Cook，在眾籌平台Kickstarter提出這樣的問題，期望藉此助他們實現夢想。二人的計劃獲得空前的回響，共籌得180,000美元，助他們開辦一間將所有利潤都捐給慈善團體的舊式餐廳The Rooster。今天，餐廳不只以給挨飢者提供膳食聞名，其美味菜餚亦同樣為人津津樂道。2017年，餐廳共捐出72,000份餐膳，並獲《GQ》雜誌評為美國最佳新餐廳之一，其後亦得到《Food & Wine》的肯定。

Solomonov表示：「我們的最終目的是希望為真正有需要的人提供一刻的平靜，餐廳代表他們社區的中心，是親朋好友歡聚慶祝、閒話家常和分享美食的地方。說到底，餐飲業的重點是關懷他人。」

Solomonov和拍檔是驚覺二人經營的其他餐廳製造大量廚餘後才萌生The Rooster的構思，但他們並沒有像其他人那樣開設普通免費食堂，而是更進一步，將它提升為經典猶太餐館，以創意善用剩的雞肉，做出The Pastramen（濃郁的雞湯醬油蕎麥麵配燻牛肋肉）等美食。

近年來，許多廚師和餐廳老闆均透過美食來喚起大眾對貧窮、飢餓和人口販賣等議題的關注。有別於高不可攀的高級餐飲業聖殿，助人為樂的食肆對任何有需要的人敞開大門，並且為「不用感到罪疚的大快朵頤」寫下新的定義。這些餐廳一方面供應高水平的佳餚，一方面把盈利撥捐慈善團體，令人印象深刻。不僅如此，部分餐廳甚至利用自己的廚房，為社會上最弱勢的社群，如難民、未能自力更生的青少年和失業的長者等提供培訓。

悉尼慈善團體The Pure Collective的創辦人之一Nicolas Degryse認為：「我們住在自己的泡沫裡而不自知……你想得到更多，但實際上卻向著相反的方向前進。」

THE ROOSTER IMAGES BY ALEXANDRA HAWKINS; CONSCIOUS EATERY IMAGES BY BROOKE FITTS; DOG TAG BAKERY TRAINING IMAGE BY SANDI MOYNIHAN



Dog Tag Bakery in Washington DC
美國首都華盛頓的 Dog Tag Bakery 餐廳



“What we are trying to do is to help create a little peace for those who really need it ... hospitality is all about caring for people

我們的最終目的是希望為真正有需要的人提供一刻的平靜……餐飲業的重點是關懷他人 55

– Michael Solomonov

This page, from left: The food selection at celebrity chef Michael Solomonov’s charitable restaurant, The Rooster; The Pure Collective’s Portal cafe in Sydney

Opposite page, from top: Waterhouse Restaurant in London; a salmon dish at Portal

本頁左至右：名廚Michael Solomonov的慈善餐廳The Rooster的美味菜式：悉尼慈善機構The Pure Collective的Portal咖啡店
對頁上至下：倫敦餐廳Waterhouse；Portal咖啡店的三文魚菜式

“We all live in our bubbles and we don’t realise ... You want more and more but we are actually working in the opposite way,” says Nicolas Degryse, co-founder of The Pure Collective, a philanthropic organisation in Sydney. “Our purpose is much bigger than just wanting more money.” The collective has opened a string of profit-for-purpose restaurants and cafes, which donate all extra earnings to charity. At their recent venture Portal, a sleek cafe in the heart of the city, diners who order favourites such as the Smashed Avo with Coriander and Preserved Lemon on Sourdough are handed a bouncy ball which they can drop into one of three jars to donate to a cause of their choice – these have included keeping Vietnamese children safe from human trafficking and ensuring that hungry children get a school lunch.

Partnering with the Salvation Army, The Pure Collective also launched Symbols of Hope, a scholarship programme offering hospitality training to refugees, which can range from pulling espressos to serving sandwiches at their venues. “These are people who have absolutely no help so most of them could just end up homeless, in the sex trade or other terrible situations,” says Degryse. “It’s great to be able to work with people during their journey and help them integrate into the team and be part of something.”

Waterhouse Restaurant, which serves fresh seasonal fare in London, shares a similar mission. Owned and run by the Shoreditch Trust, a local charity, the canal-side eatery rescues youth from drug addiction, homelessness and abusive relationships and gives them a chance of a new life as chefs. “The first thing you feel when you walk into the restaurant is the sense of heart,” says head chef Amrit Bhachu. “We break down social barriers so young people know they can express themselves without censor, without peer pressure. There’s a lot of respect, communication and care.” Their comprehensive culinary training has been so successful that some of their chefs have gone on to work in Michelin-starred restaurants.

Dog Tag Bakery in Washington DC focuses on helping veterans and military families, and takes this training idea to the next level by putting them through their paces in the kitchen, as well as enrolling them in a “living business school.” Alongside scooping chocolate-chip cookies and baking buttery croissants, trainees gather in a classroom above the bakery for courses, which earn them a certificate of business administration from Georgetown University’s School of Continuing Studies. Last summer the bakery made headlines as former President of the United States, Barack Obama, and his former Vice President, Joe Biden, stopped by for lunch. They both ordered ham and Gruyère sandwiches with shallot-infused jam on ciabatta. Following their visit, the bakery was packed for weeks.



我們的人生目的應該比賺更多的錢遠大。」The Pure Collective開辦了一系列半牟利的餐廳和咖啡店，所謂半牟利（profit-for-purpose）是指這些公司會設定利潤目標，然後把多賺的錢捐給慈善團體。在他們近期在悉尼市中心開設的時髦咖啡店Portal裡，客人凡點一份碎牛油果茼蒿檸檬酸種麵包三文治，店員就會將一個彈彈球交給他，讓他將彈彈球放進三個代表不同慈善用途的玻璃瓶裡，捐款用途包括有保護越南兒童免受人口販賣所害，以及給挨餓兒童一份學校午餐等。

The Pure Collective亦與救世軍合作推出Symbols of Hope（希望象徵）獎學金計劃，在旗下食肆為難民提供由沖泡濃縮咖啡以至做三文治等的餐飲業工作培訓機會。Degryse直言：「這些人名副其實是无依無靠，當中大部分人最後會淪為露宿者或性服務工作者等不堪境況。能夠在他們漂泊的時候一起共事，助他們融入員工裡，讓他們不用感到孤單無依，是一件很有意義的事。」

強調採用當季新鮮食材的倫敦餐廳Waterhouse Restaurant也有著相似的使命。這間位於運河附近的餐廳由當地慈善團體Shoreditch Trust持有及經營，





Famous guests aside, socially conscious restaurants are gaining ground as people are becoming genuinely interested in giving back to their communities. According to Cone Communications LLC, 78 per cent of Americans, want companies to “stand up for important social-justice issues.” Diners worldwide are now realising feel-good food can be more than just ethically sourced and environmentally friendly. As hunger and poverty levels climb, they are waking up to how many people don’t have a place at the table.

“Homelessness is only a degree away for most. It’s a terrifying, but a real life truth,” says Cierra Laub, co-founder of Conscious Eatery, an artisan sandwich shop in Seattle. For Laub and her fiancé Chaz Rowlan fighting hunger is a deeply personal mission. “My family has always lived paycheck to paycheck. We were not strangers at the Food Bank,” she says. “At one point my dad, brother and sister were homeless. My fiancé’s parents and brother were also once homeless.”

Their restaurant follows a similar one-for-one business model to that of Toms Shoes in which diners can donate a meal to someone in need simply by adding a soup or two sides to their main sandwich or salad. Since they opened in 2016, they’ve managed to donate more than 20,000 meals and have ambitious plans to expand to help other communities.

The Pure Collective also recently launched a catering company, which shares the same approach. For every order for 100 people they match it by donating 100 meals to the needy – and it’s their most successful venture yet. The organisation also plans to launch its own wine and coffee brands worldwide, which will donate all proceeds to charity. “You will see that in the next five to 10 years, more and more people will try to make the world a better place and try to help people,” says Degryse. “It’s going to come naturally.”

For all this optimism, sceptics in the industry may argue that slim margins and high operating costs mean it’s not easy to run an ordinary restaurant let alone a profit-for-purpose one, but places like Conscious Eatery that are run by one driven couple prove otherwise. “You can give back to the community, you’ve just got to take a smaller cheque yourself, and live within your means,” says Laub. “It can be done – if you want it enough.”

專門拯救吸毒的青少年、露宿者及被伴侶虐待的人，給他們學習烹飪、當廚師的機會，讓他們重過新生。總廚Amrit Bhachu表示：「踏進餐廳首先見到的是人心，這裡沒有社會地位的壁壘，讓年輕人可以在沒人監察和沒有同儕壓力的環境下自由地表達己見，這裡的人會互相尊重、溝通和關心對方。」他們的綜合廚藝訓練非常成功，有受訓廚師甚至獲米芝蓮星級餐廳聘用。

位於美國首都華盛頓、主要幫助退役軍人及軍人家屬的Dog Tag Bakery，將這個培訓概念提升至另一層次，不單讓受助人在他們的廚房裡學習，甚至讓他們一邊接受培訓一邊讀書。受助人在舀碎朱古力曲奇粉漿和烘焙牛角包之餘，還會到餐廳樓上的課室一起上課，完成課程的人會獲得佐治城大學持續進修學院的商業管理證書。去年夏天，Dog Tag Bakery聲名大噪，因為美國前總統奧巴馬及前副總統拜登大駕光臨，並各自點了一份火腿芝士青蔥意大利麵包三文治當午餐。在總統光顧後，餐廳多個星期一直門庭若市。

除了名人效應，大眾真心希望回饋社會也是這些關心社會的餐廳大受歡迎的原因。根據公關及市場推廣公司Cone Communications LLC的報告顯示，七成八美國人希望公司可以「捍衛重要的社會公義問題」。世界各地的人已意識到，讓人感覺良好的食物並不局限於符合道德的食材和注重環保。飢餓人口和貧窮水平不斷攀升，大家醒覺原來許多人連一頓安樂茶飯也吃不到。

西雅圖手工三文治店Conscious Eatery創辦人之一Cierra Laub解釋：「露宿對大部分人來說並不是遙不可及的事，這是可怕但真實的人生。」Laub和Chaz Rowlan對飢餓有切身的體會，她說：「我家一直入不敷支，我們是食物銀行的常客。我爸爸和兄長更曾經露宿街頭，我未婚夫的父母和兄長也曾經無家可歸。」

他們餐廳的經營模式跟Toms Shoes相似，客人只要在他們點的主菜或沙律外多叫一份湯或兩客小菜，即可向有需要的人捐贈一份正餐。餐廳自2016年開業以來已捐出超過20,000份正餐，我們期望能擴展業務，幫助其他社區的人。」

The Pure Collective最近推出的到會服務也採取相近的模式，每接到100人的到會服務，就會向有需要的人捐出100份餐膳。這是他們最成功的業務。接下來，他們計劃建立自己的葡萄酒和咖啡品牌，並直指全球市場，他們期望將所有盈利捐給慈善團體。Degryse相信：「在未來五至十年，社會上會有越來越多人嘗試改善這個世界，嘗試幫助他人。這是自然而然的趨勢。」

在一片樂觀的氛圍中，業內的懷疑聲音或許會說，餐飲業利潤微薄但開支龐大，經營一間普通餐廳已殊非容易，更遑論是「半牟利」食肆，但像Conscious Eatery這樣的餐廳已推翻這種質疑。Laub說：「只要願意拿少一點薪金，過自己可負擔的生活，你便可以回饋社會。只要你希望它成功，目標一定可以達成。」

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Sandwiches at Conscious Eatery in Seattle; training at Dog Tag Bakery; Asparagus Salad at Waterhouse Restaurant in London; Conscious Eatery’s

Cierra Laub and Chaz Rowlan

對頁左上圖起順時針：西雅圖Conscious Eatery的三文治；受助者在Dog Tag Bakery接受培訓；倫敦Waterhouse的蘆筍沙律；Conscious Eatery老闆Cierra Laub和Chaz Rowlan