

Becca Cherrett and Jamie Holliss at the Café on the Green: 'This came up and it seemed like it was meant to be!'



Dream team

A couple in their twenties, who took the bold decision to move to Dartmoor and take on a busy café, are loving their new life in the National Park - as they told SHARON GOBLE over breakfast

Becca Cherrett and Jamie Holliss never intended to relocate to Dartmoor. They never planned to buy a sizeable café either, certainly not at this stage in their lives.

But that's exactly what they did last year when Becca's mum was looking for a home in the South West and they discovered the Café on the Green at Widecombe-in-the-Moor was up for sale.

After spotting the property online, then travelling from Reading for a proper viewing, they were smitten. They fell in love with the location. They could see the café's potential. But could they? Should they make the



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move? They made a cheeky offer and the deal was done!

Since moving to Widecombe last summer, Becca and Jamie haven't looked back. They've survived their first Dartmoor winter, living in a small caravan tucked away behind the main building, and are putting into action their plans to develop the business, including extending the opening hours, renovating a rear annexe as their office and hosting a variety of clubs and events for the local community. Last autumn, they launched a new breakfast menu.

Recently, they've created a shop within the café, selling a selection of locally-sourced

produce to tantalise the taste buds. The teas, coffees, jams, chutneys and condiments on sale are also used by Jamie in the dishes he creates for their customers, so you can try before you buy.

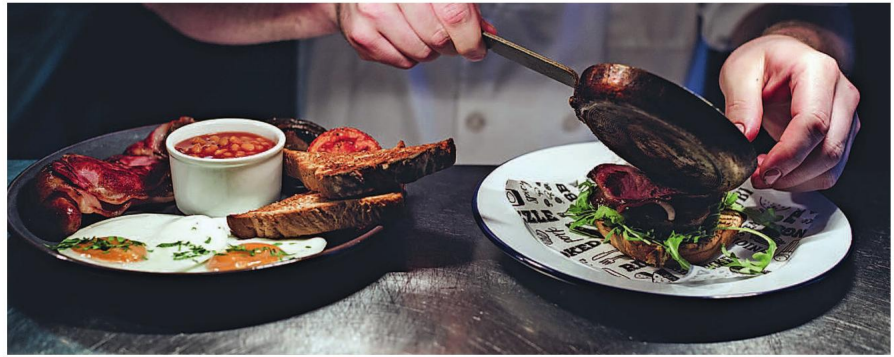
I meet up with Becca and Jamie to sample one of the new vegetarian breakfasts on the menu. The smashed avocado and poached eggs on toasted sourdough are truly scrummy and done to a T, served with crumbly feta, chilli flakes and coriander. No bog-standard veggie brekkie, for sure. A pot of locally-blended, loose-leaf tea is the perfect accompaniment.

It's a chilly morning out on the moor but it couldn't be cosier inside, beside the roaring wood burner. The last time I visited the Café on the Green some years ago it had a rather cold, canteen-ish feel. Now it has a warm, distinctly rustic vibe with painted tongue and groove panelling, cosy sofas and local artwork. Becca and Jamie are clearly delighted to be here.

Becca says: "I'm technically in my 'year out' from studying Food Science at Reading University, but I probably won't go back for the final year. The two years I've had there have helped me decide what I want to do in life and stood me in good stead to take on this place.

"Just a year ago I was set on going into the corporate world, now I'm so happy working for myself. This came up and it seemed like it was meant to be!"

Jamie and Becca met at Leiths Cookery School in London, where they both did diplomas. They then ran a private cheffing



ABOVE:
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BELOW:
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'Our challenge is to make café food sexy!'

business together before Becca headed off to university and Jamie went on to work in a number of high-end professional kitchens, including Hurley House in Henley, a multi-award-winning hotel and restaurant.

Jamie says: "Everything fell into place at the right time for us to take over this business. It

wasn't part of our game plan but it was too good an opportunity to pass up."

The Café on the Green has been serving visitors for almost a century since tearooms started to spring up on Dartmoor to meet the growing popularity of charabanc trips onto the moor organised by enterprising hoteliers.

In fact, the Moorland Café, as it was then called, is thought to have been one of the first in Devon to offer cream teas. A black and white photo on an information board inside shows a party of Victorian visitors pulling up outside. The new owners' vision is for a contemporary take on what's gone before.

As he heads back to the kitchen, Jamie tells me: "We've come here for a better quality of life for ourselves and to establish a strong identity for the Café on the Green as a fantastic place serving interesting food. We want to build on its historic origins and create the very best café we can here on Dartmoor. Our challenge is to make café food sexy!" ♦ thecafeonthegreen.co.uk



SERVING UP THE ORIGINS OF A CREAM TEA

Scones, jam, clotted cream and perfectly brewed tea make an indulgent afternoon treat. But how and where did the tradition of Cream Tea begin?

It's thought the Duchess of Bedford invented the concept of Afternoon Tea. Peckish during the long interval between lunch and dinner, she started ordering tea and treats to her room. This soon evolved into a posh social affair, inviting friends to join her in her country house.

By the middle of the 19th century, Afternoon Tea was an everyday occurrence

amongst the upper classes; a spread of sandwiches, cakes, scones, cream and jam.

The Cream Tea tradition flourished in the West Country following the opening of the railway and the resulting tourism boom of the 1850s. Visitors flocked to the South West looking to relax and indulge.

Hotels and farmhouses were happy to oblige, and a host of tearooms and cafés sprung up – offering cream teas made with the finest local ingredients. The jam was invariably strawberry and the cream was always clotted.