

## LOCAL FOOD HEROES

Picture: Simon Pizzezy 107064\_3



Cotswold chef Rob Rees

**STEPHEN WHEELER,** commercial manager at speciality food company Mise en Place, now part of Cheltenham-based Creed Foodservice, shares some of the successes and challenges of local food producers

ROB Rees MBE is one of those people you meet and wonder 'where do they get their energy?' Rob travels the world advising public bodies on such things as school meal provision, writes magazine columns on food, sits on Government committees, campaigns on food issues, acts as a Gloucestershire food ambassador, gives cookery demonstrations, works for charity – and cultivates his allotment. One full-time job, being a parent and mowing the lawn at the weekends is enough for most of us. Rob's most recent project has been to launch his own charity brainchild – the Wiggly Worm. "The Wiggly Worm helps young people excluded from school, through working with food," Rob told me. "The youngsters we help are not just those who've been expelled, but also bullied children who've excluded themselves and young people for whom truancy has become a way of life. "Through creative and challenging work with food, we raise their self-esteem, help them find a purpose and improve their employability. We use volunteer 'coaches' from local businesses such as Creed Foodservice to mentor them in life skills; whether it's finding further education, a part-time job,

or just coping with life." Rob learnt his craft as a chef with the Roux brothers at the exclusive Le Gavroche restaurant in London, then via the Royal Crescent Hotel in Bath to luxury hotels in the Caribbean. Still in his 20s, Rob opened his own restaurant in Painswick, which he ran for six years. "I was working so hard, I was losing my passion for food. That was the time to exit," he says. "I saw a Government job advertised with the School Food Trust. I was offered the post – and was by far the youngest on the board; it was the start of my 'public' career." So how does Rob see the future for catering and food supply? "The bistro is coming back. Simple, tasty, inexpensive, short menus. People want to eat out, but for it not to cost a fortune. Long term, I'm concerned about food poverty and malnutrition – not just in developing countries. With population growth, and climate change some foods are going to become prohibitively expensive. Governments need to think creatively about how they're going to feed everyone." Part of the answer must be support of our local food producers.

*Mise en Place*  
THE SPECIALITY FOOD COMPANY

# No job too big for caring cook

Picture: Paul Nicholls 108088\_1

Olivia Barrington, from Bisley, has rekindled her love affair with cooking by setting up her own catering company. **WEEKEND** caught up with her in the kitchen

**A**FTER juggling a job, two teenage sons, a husband and a home, Olivia Barrington has ditched life in an office and set up her own catering business.

As she dished up leek and mushroom risotto to her new clients in Nailsworth, she smiled cheerily – this was a career move that made sense.

"I absolutely love it," she says.

Olivia, 46, had been working for an estate agent in Tetbury for three years. But it left little time to devote to her husband Rupert and sons, aged 12 and 15.

"I wanted more flexibility so I could go to things like rugby matches," she explains. It was Camilla Miles, the managing director of Corinium Care in Nailsworth, who encouraged her to turn to catering. "Camilla knew I'd cooked professionally in a previous life, and asked me to do the catering for the training days she provides for the carers at Corinium Care," said Olivia.

"It's been an enormous success. I'm having great fun, and it's something to build on."

Olivia, from Bisley, has lived in Gloucestershire for 15 years. After she left school, she went to catering college in Eastbourne and cooked for a living for the next 10 years.

"I did everything from chalet girl and villa cook to being a chef in London restaurants," she said.

"When I was 25, I took myself off to Australia and worked with a wonderful chef in Port Douglas for three months who taught me so much. I'd got a job as a dishwasher, and within a week I was cooking alongside him. I loved every minute of it."

On her return to the UK, Olivia provided directors' lunches in London and worked at the Ebury wine bar, and since her marriage has continued to dip in and out of the catering business.

Now she's back in earnest, rekindling her culinary expertise at Corinium Care.

"The great thing about the food industry is that it keeps changing and you have to be brave enough to have a crack at something new," she said.

"Some foods are simply no longer



Olivia Barrington runs Olivia's Kitchen

fashionable. Gone is the prawn cocktail. Now people want goat's cheese salad, fresh prawns in chilli sauce and lemon tart.

"Everything's much lighter. There's less cream, and smaller portions. And everyone wants the option of cheese for dessert."

Corinium Care is delighted with Olivia's Kitchen.

"She's done a great job," said Camilla.

"We run training for 16 live-in carers at

our offices in Nailsworth for a week every month, as well as refresher courses for existing carers, and relatives' training. We wanted to make sure they all got a good lunch every day. So it made sense to bring the catering in-house.

"We hand over our kitchen to Olivia and she comes up with fabulous food. It adds to the quality of our training."

■ For more details, email [Olivia@dillayfarm.com](mailto:Olivia@dillayfarm.com) or [www.coriniumcare.com](http://www.coriniumcare.com)