

Food influencers aren't going anywhere

Until now, I've mostly ignored social media influencers, continuing to write about food for newspapers and magazines. And I don't intend to stop. You're looking at a millennial who still doesn't understand Bitcoin and has never been on Hinge. But more fool me, influencers aren't going anywhere, and their impact has been seismic. Beyond the dialogue around ailing tension spans and the loss of nuance is something clear as day: people like watching videos. Maybe journalism and content needn't be mutually exclusive. Actually, maybe it's really not that complex.

After all, not all content creation is tedious and irritating; not all influencers turn up unexpectedly with a ring light and a tripod. Entitlement is one of the world's most unattractive qualities, yet I didn't see any semblance of it at Lucky Cat, on the 61st floor of 22 Bishopsgate where Gordon Ramsay¹ held his birthday party. People just seemed happy to be there, sipping white wine and eating spicy tuna maki. People didn't even have their phones out much. It was all quite analogue.

I've talked to a lot of chefs and restaurateurs about influencers lately. Mostly it's down to the veteran restaurateur Jeremy King, of Arlington, The Park and Simpson's in the Strand. King recently compared their proliferation within the hospitality scene to an 'influenza-like outbreak' and said, 'We started to notice guests coming in with what appeared to be the sole purpose of taking and posting fashion photographs, using the restaurant as a background'. King goes further, 'When I remonstrated with one particularly entitled woman, she told me that she could do whatever she wanted because it was a public place and that I should be grateful for her shooting footage.'

This sounds unbearable indeed, though much the same as any other industry; not all influencers are insufferable as those who have been plaguing King. There is merit to creativity and in 2026, we should probably embrace it. The good food videos are just that: good. And if they help support a struggling industry, well, I'm not sure it's all so bad.

Ramsay, who has history with professional restaurant critics – he famously expelled the late, great AA Gill from his restaurant after taking umbrage with the writer's acerbic pen – has by contrast expressed cordiality with influencers for some time. In *Being Gordon Ramsay*, he wrote: 'A lot of chefs hate these influencers because they don't understand where they are going with their phones and the constant posting, but they are very powerful. They don't take six weeks to fill a restaurant. They post and it's gone viral and gone in seconds to the other end of the world. They are the most powerful critics on the planet today.'

I don't wholly agree. Long live print. But there's a place for influencers at the table now too, whether we like it or not. I might even cave and agree to a phone upgrade. My iPhone 12 didn't do the food justice at all.

¹ Gordon Ramsay ; famous British chef and food critic, famous for Hell's Kitchen (inspired French chef Philippe Etchebest's Cauchemar en Cuisine show)

