

Your stories.

*Celebrating 250
years of
Catering Services
in the Commons*



WE
make
Parliament
happen.



Foreword by Robert Gibbs, Interim Director of Catering

It is with great pleasure and pride that I welcome you to this special edition of *Your Stories* celebrating the incredible journey of Catering Services at the House of Commons as we mark our 250th anniversary.

This milestone is a testament to the unwavering dedication and hard work of the entire Catering Services team, both past and present. As we reflect on this remarkable journey, we are filled with gratitude for the tireless efforts that have brought us to this moment.

Our celebration began with a memorable reception in Mr Speaker's House, setting the stage for a series of delightful celebratory menus across all our venues.

Throughout our 250 years of history celebrations, countless individuals and teams have played a pivotal role. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Archives, Heritage, Media, Internal Communications, Design and Digital teams for their invaluable contributions in bringing this programme of events to life. The display in Portcullis House and the exciting 'design a pie for Parliament' competition are just two examples of collaborative, creative and dedicated work.

Most of all, gratitude extends to the staff who have made Catering Services what it is today and who work so hard to make Parliament happen. Your hard work and commitment allows us to operate 21 outlets across six buildings, processing up to 9,000 transactions a day and achieving approximately £13million in annual sales.

While we celebrate our rich history, we also look forward to the future. In 2024, we have plans to open a new and larger Despatch Box, implement a new point of sale system, upgrade our venues, and redefine our standards of customer service. These initiatives reflect our dedication to continuous improvement and providing the best possible experience to all of our customers.





In these pages, you will find not only reference to the history of Catering Services but also profiles of some of the remarkable individuals who make up our team. It is the dedication, passion, and hard work of our staff that truly make Catering Services shine.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating this remarkable 250th anniversary!

We look forward to many more years of serving you with excellence, innovation, and a touch of history.

As we gather to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Catering Services, we acknowledge the absence of our Director of Catering, Richard Tapner-Evans who is currently on long term sick leave. Richard's vision and efforts have been instrumental in bringing this milestone celebration to life. Richard has worked to ensure that this momentous occasion would be a memorable one for us all.

We send our deepest well wishes for a swift and full recovery. We also send our best wishes to those staff presently not at work due to illness.

HOUSE OF COMMONS CATERING

**CELEBRATING
250 YEARS**



“The catering service has consistently demonstrated its adaptability during extraordinary circumstances”.

250 years of the House of Commons Catering Services — thank you, from Mr Speaker

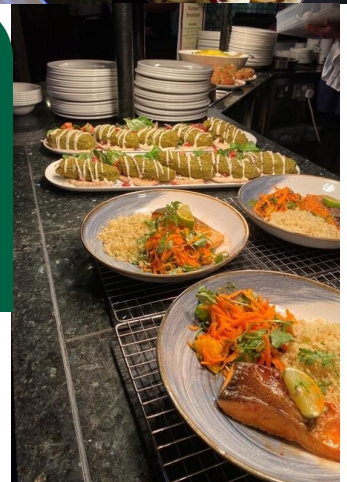
I am immensely proud to celebrate an incredible 250 years of Catering Services in the House of Commons. It all began in 1773 when John Bellamy, the deputy housekeeper, was asked by Members to set up a dining room. It became known as 'Bellamy's' and was the first official catering establishment of the House, drawing Members away from the many taverns and eateries of old Westminster – the rest, as they say, is history!

The Catering Service has come a long way since then, and plays a vital part in our daily working lives. They feed thousands of staff, Members and visitors every day, operating across a huge 21

venues in six buildings on the parliamentary estate.

I know how important sustainability is in everything they do, so it's great to see efforts to reduce food waste, promote environmentally friendly packaging and source local and ethically produced ingredients. It's no wonder the team has recently received a very well-deserved award with a 3-star accreditation from the Sustainable Restaurant Association's Food Made Good Awards.

The Catering Service has consistently shown its adaptability during extraordinary circumstances to turn out amazing food every day—even during a pandemic. As Speaker I have seen first hand how the





“Our dedicated catering team rises to the occasion time and time again”.



team has impressed high-profile visitors, including former US Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Princess Royal. Whether its keeping MPs fed through important debates or supporting international events hosted within the House, our dedicated catering team has risen to the occasion time and time again, ensuring our Members, staff and guests are met with excellence. I would even go as far as to say our jerk chicken is world-renowned!

A huge thank you to all of you in Catering Services for making Parliament happen day in and day out and heartiest congratulations on this extraordinary milestone!

Sir Lindsay Hoyle
Speaker of the House of Commons

Your Stories hears from Terry Wiggins MBE, Sous Chef in the Commons from 1974 to present

September 16 1974 was the day that I started in Parliament; it was recess and I was told that there wasn't much on that week and to go home and come back the following week...I thought to myself "this is nice!". There were two elections in that year, 28 February and 10 October, which meant more time off—happy days!

I was always destined to work in Parliament. My mum had worked there from time to time up in the Press Gallery in the 1950s. I was born in the General Lying-In which was part of St Thomas's Hospital which overlooks Parliament. I lived and went to school about three miles away in the Walworth Road not far from the old Labour Headquarters and I got the position of Commis Chef through my school careers office.

I started life in the Members' Dining Room and worked on the cold buffet which is no longer there.



This was the 1970s and we would have an array of different dishes including cold tongue, beef, turkey, smoked salmon, smoked eel and avocado prawns. Most nights, two Members would come in and ask "Chef, two working man's portions of your finest beef and two beers in our pewter mugs". At that time Parliament was a bit like Hogwarts and Eton with a bit of 'upstairs downstairs' with the front of House staff dressed in black formal tails and dresses with white frilly aprons.

What is a normal day for you?

I have a team of 13 chefs and we look after The Debate, The Adjournment, Despatch Box, Attlee Suite and the small rooms that go round the Atrium of Portcullis House—we can do over 2000 covers a day.

At the moment I'm working on the breakfast section, I'm there by 7am as we open 8-10.30am. We offer all your typical breakfast items as well as our famous meat wrap—we can do up to 150 of those every morning!

We have a daily menu meeting at 7.30am and go over other points of the day like functions, maintenance and theme days coming up. From 10.30am we do a clean down and then get set up for lunch service which starts at 11.30am.

Our best-selling dish is jerk chicken, up to 900 portions can be sold in one lunch sitting! I look at dishes from all over the world to put on our menus so that our offering remains varied.

My first break of the day is at 2pm when I go for lunch and if I'm lucky I'll get 30 minutes! On a Monday we have a Sous Chefs meeting with our Executive Chef and we will talk about safety and training, what is going on in our venues and any House business that may affect our daily running. I will then check my emails, check on the next week's menus and any other business. I have a very good Sous Chef who helps me with other paperwork like daily fridge temperature checks, ordering, sick returners and a lot more. If I'm lucky I'll be out and on my way home by 3.30pm...but like I said, that's if I'm lucky!

What has been your most memorable day working in the Catering Service so far?

Over the last 49 years there has been so many. In 1991 the opening of Bellamy's by Prince (now King!) Charles with all the staff lined up the stairs and His Majesty stopping for a chat (picture below). In 1996 Nelson Mandela speaking in Parliament, Ronald Reagan's visit in 1982, Bill Clinton in 1995 and most recently was Barack Obama back in 2011.

My most recent memorable time was the passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth II which was very sad but also highlighted what a great parliamentary team I work with; not only in Catering but all the other departments that always pull together when things happen that require the House being recalled. I have been called in to Parliament on three occasions: The Falklands War, the passing of HRH The Queen Mother and for HRH Queen Elizabeth II. When Her Majesty the Queen Mother passed away, we opened the Terrace Cafeteria for two weeks, 24/7. We fed all the Armed Services that would be on guard for Her Majesty including the police, security guards, you name it, we fed them. Catering went as smooth as clockwork as did everything else.

What is your favourite dish made by the Catering Team?

Kathy Wilson who works in Portcullis House makes a fantastic Balinese pork belly stew with noodles or rice, it has a coconut and lemongrass sauce, the pork is cooked in small batches so the fat is well cooked giving the dish more depth of flavour.

What would you have as a celebratory three-course meal?

Crab soup made properly with a top of brandy to start, calves' liver with garlic mash, broccoli, green beans and onion gravy as a main and a proper tiramisu for dessert. Absolutely delicious!



A trip down memory lane



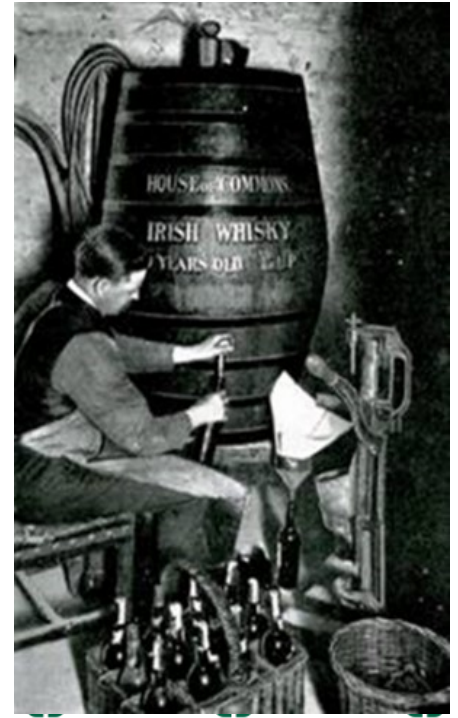
Members' Tea Room,
1897



The Speaker's State
Dining Room, 1897

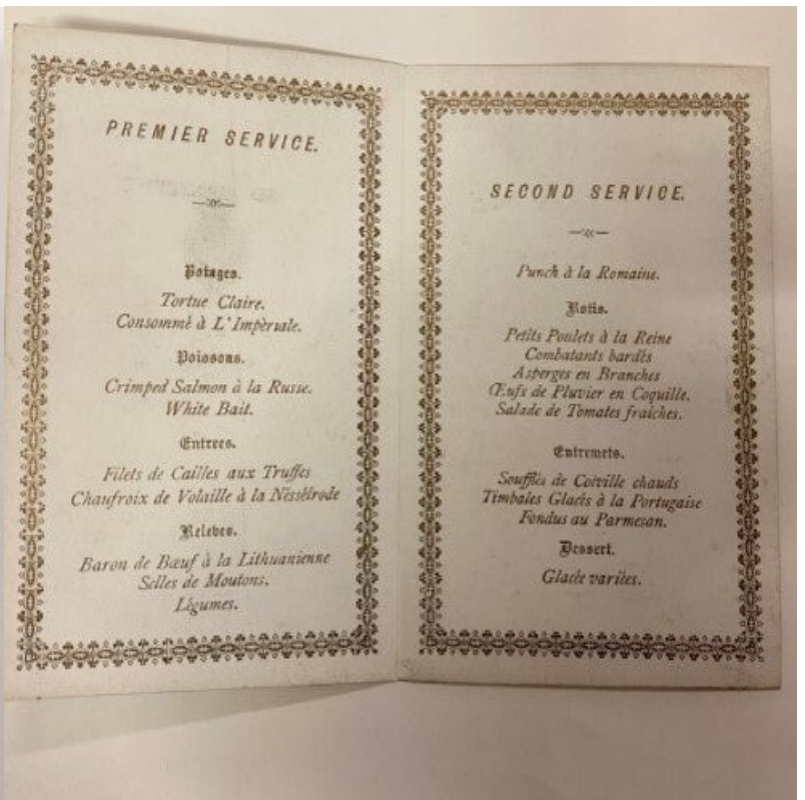
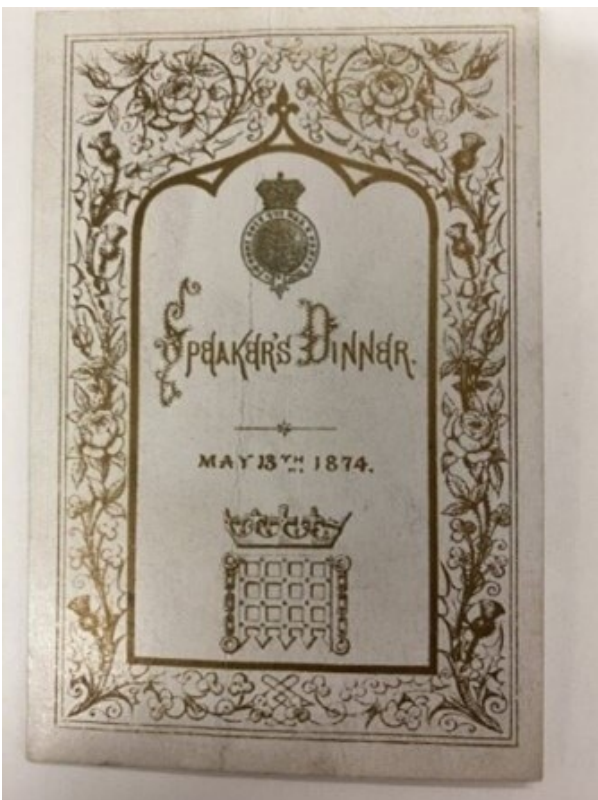


The Terrace Dining
Room (called the
Harcourt Room), 1908



Left: House of Commons Kitchen, 1905

Right: Vat of Irish Whisky for Parliament's bars



Speakers' Dinner menu, 1874

The last days of Bellamy's Refreshment Rooms, 1851

Miss Goodbody		W.	20	Address in the House of Commons, Middle St. Strand	Periodically
9	Margaret P. Bartlett	Head	W.	35, Northumberland House, Strand	Ke. kitchen, & highest
	Ann Amelia Colpus	Sergeant	W.	40, House of Commons	Line New
	Anne Hughes	Sergeant	W.	25, House Sergeant	Curry, & various
10	William Ellis	Head	Mar	50, Off. House Sergeant	Standage, & others
	Mary do.	Mrs	Mar	52	Roxwell
					Wiley, & others
Total of Persons					

1851 Census: ©The National Archives, HO 107/1480

Mari Takayanagi and Elizabeth Hallam Smith – parliamentary insiders who have been researching previously untold stories of Parliament's staff and published a book titled 'Necessary Women: the Untold Story of Parliament's Working Women' – have uncovered some fascinating new evidence about the last days of Bellamy's, the famous Commons Refreshment Rooms.

Since 1773, Bellamy's had served hungry MPs and Peers with fast meals of delicious pies, steaks and chops, washed down with copious supplies of wine and beer. But in 1851 the writing was on the wall for it, as Charles Barry's new dining rooms for the two Houses, with their facilities and menus modelled on the best London Clubs, were nearing completion.

In April 1851, Bellamy's - at that time in an old building near the south end of Westminster Hall - was headed up by Elizabeth Burton or Barton, born Favill, Resident Housekeeper of the Commons Refreshment Rooms.

Elizabeth had served as Bellamy's chief cook since 1817 and was none other than the famous 'Jane' - the flirtatious, defiant and entertaining waitress who had gained great fame back in 1836 when featured in a newspaper article by Charles Dickens. The press had continued to follow her activities with fascination ever since, and now marvelled at her resistance against all attempts to introduce elegant menus into her kitchen. She understood the dining needs of MPs in a hurry - and they flocked into to her small, plain and broiling hot apartment with 'an immense fire, meat screens, gridirons and a small tub for washing glasses', where, assisted by 'two very unpretending old women' – probably those shown here on the census form – she served up little other than beer, chops and steaks.

But Bellamy's was living on borrowed time, and when Parliament rose in August 1851, this famous Commons institution was closed down. In September its fixtures and fittings were auctioned off, Elizabeth's kitchen range fetching £7.15shillings amid loud jokes from crowds of spectators about Bellamy's famous chops. When the elegant Commons and Lords Refreshment Rooms, with their elaborate menus and formally attired staff, opened in February 1852, Bellamy's passed into history – along with 'Jane' and her small team of cooks.



Hear from Ling Cai, Chef de Partie at Parliament's nursery

"I began my journey in Catering Services in July 2015, initially as a part-time chef for the nursery located in 1 Parliament Street. However, in 2016, I transitioned to a full-time role due to the growing number of children attending the nursery; we can accommodate up to 40 children in a day.

My work day begins at 7.30am. The first task on my agenda is to meticulously check all the deliveries to ensure that all the ingredients needed to create fresh meals for the day have arrived. Following this, I meet with the nursery team who provide me with a detailed list of the dishes required for the children that day, along with any specific dietary requirements I need to be mindful of. I take great joy in cooking for the children, and the nursery team is exceptional at sharing their knowledge about ingredients and creating a delightful dining experience for the little ones.

It warms my heart to see the children's smiles when they catch sight of me, and I make every effort to ensure their happiness. We serve their lunch at 11.30am, which is a special moment of the day.

In addition to lunch, I also prepare an evening tea and an afternoon snack for the children. The menus are carefully crafted by chefs from the Early Years Chef Academy, with a strong focus on providing nutritious meals for balanced diets.

Coming to work at the House of Commons was an exciting change for me. It's such a unique place, and one of the first things I noticed was that my kitchen had a window—a stark contrast to my previous job, which was in a basement with no natural light. Prior to this, my husband and I ran a Japanese restaurant in Chinatown for seven and a half years.

If I were to indulge in a celebratory meal, it would feature a seafood starter, a hearty lamb main course, and a delectable trifle or cheesecake for dessert".



Adenike Elizabeth Babalola tells Your Stories about her past 33 years working in the Commons



Adenike receiving a certificate from John Benger to commemorate her 30+ years of service to the House

Tell us what it's like working in Catering Services for you.

I am currently working as a General Assistant and Cashier. I've been part of the team for a remarkable 33 years and during this journey, I've witnessed the collective effort of every individual in bringing the Catering Service to its current high standard. I worked in the Terrace Cafeteria until 2017 and then moved to the Debate in Portcullis House. It's important to recognise that no operation within this establishment is possible without the technical assistance of each person. As we celebrate the 250 year anniversary, it's crucial to acknowledge and grant equal recognition to all the contributors who have played a role in shaping this beautiful catering establishment.

The most hectic time in my role is the mad rush during a busy day in the Debate cafeteria, particularly on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We can process nearly 2000 transactions each day through our till and sell upwards of 1000 lunches.

What is your fondest memory of working here?

A particularly memorable day for me was the staff Christmas party we had one year, along with a send-off for our then senior administrator, Mrs. Sheila Nicholas. She was instrumental in introducing diversity in catering when it was known as the Refreshment Department. The Christmas party and send-off events were moments of unity, where we could appreciate everyone's efforts and contributions. It was a great time to come together.

I am deeply grateful to the police and security services for ensuring our safety over the years. In the 90s, times were tough, but their commitment to our safety gave me the confidence to continue coming to work. In all honesty, everyone, including our amazing customers, deserves appreciation and I have many fond memories of them all.

What is your favourite dish made by the Catering Team?

I really enjoy the salmon Wellington, roast potatoes and delicious vegetables they serve in the Terrace.



“Working in Catering isn’t just about food”

“I’ve been a part of Catering Services for eight years, starting as a Kitchen Steward in various kitchens before moving to the Linen Room Steward role, and now I hold the position of Assistant Manager.

My workday begins at 6am, where my responsibilities include overseeing the delivery of clean laundry to the Palace of Westminster. This laundry consists of chefs’ uniforms and the attire for all the front-of-house teams, plus tablecloths and napkins. To ensure efficiency, we meticulously scan all the uniforms, recording quantities and assessing their quality. Once inspected, we place the clean uniforms into the auto valet bags, ensuring they are ready for the teams when they arrive for their shifts.

Our auto valet system is an automated uniform locker system that dispenses clean uniforms and stores outdoor clothing. Additionally, we ensure that all the dining rooms and event spaces have the necessary linen, including tablecloths and napkins.

I also manage paperwork related to laundry deliveries across the parliamentary estate. This involves reconciling, checking and approving the documents to facilitate invoice payments.

One of the most memorable days during my time here was the 250th anniversary celebration event held in the Speaker's State Apartments. Not only is this area incredibly beautiful, but it's also rare for all the catering teams from across the estate to come together, making it a truly special occasion.

I genuinely enjoy the majority of the dishes the Catering Team serve up but my personal favourite would have to be the steak and kidney pudding in the Terrace Cafeteria.

For a celebratory meal, I’d go for: deep-fried calamari with a zesty lemon and garlic dressing to start, a Pad Thai for my main and a delicious strawberry trifle for dessert! So good!”

**Daniel Betts,
Assistant Linen
Room Manager**





Kathy Wilson, Chef de Partie with Catering Services for 22 years

"I am a chef based in Portcullis House, and my day starts early at 6am, though I'm usually the first one in the kitchen, arriving at 5.30am. I take charge of opening the kitchen, ensuring everything is cleaned and sanitised.

My first task in the morning is to prepare Danish pastries and start making porridge. I'm also responsible for baking any pastries required for first-floor hospitality. I also coordinate with the front-of-house teams to determine the quantity of baguettes and sandwiches needed for the Despatch Box. Throughout breakfast service, I make sure that all these items are consistently stocked and replenished. I also commence with the preparation and cooking for the lunch service, including tasks like making soup and the main course dishes.

I collaborate closely with my commis chef, and together we prepare for the 11.30am lunch service. During lunch, I work in the hot kitchens downstairs, ensuring that all the

food for lunch is batch-cooked to maintain its freshness. We communicate with the chefs running the counter via walkie-talkies.

Some of the most memorable days for me are when we work on theme days. Terry, our Sous chef, is fantastic at coming up with a variety of ideas, including celebration foods and dishes from different cultures around the world. It's really rewarding to witness the customers' reactions to these special dishes. Personally, I really enjoyed the Asian theme, particularly the fish dishes, but my absolute favourite dish here in the Commons is the Balinese pork belly—Terry showed me this recipe during one of our theme days and I absolutely adore it.

For a three-course celebratory meal, I'd opt for avocado and crab with a crispy soda bread to begin, crispy duck as a main and bread and butter pudding for dessert—this dessert is a classic choice and it has to be done just right!"



“Effective organisation is key”

“In February 2019, I joined Catering Services, taking on the position of Executive Assistant to the Catering Director.

In my role I take charge of the Director's diary; office management duties fall within my remit, ensuring the office is well-stocked with essential supplies and stationery for our teams. I also serve as the records officer for the department, overseeing the organisation of files and folders, offering guidance on structuring information effectively.

One of my vital tasks involves ensuring that all catering intranet pages are kept up to date—this information is crucial as it feeds into the venues via an app used for daily menus. I collaborate closely with chefs and supervisors as needed. I also assist in collecting data for parliamentary questions and FOI (Freedom of Information) inquiries.

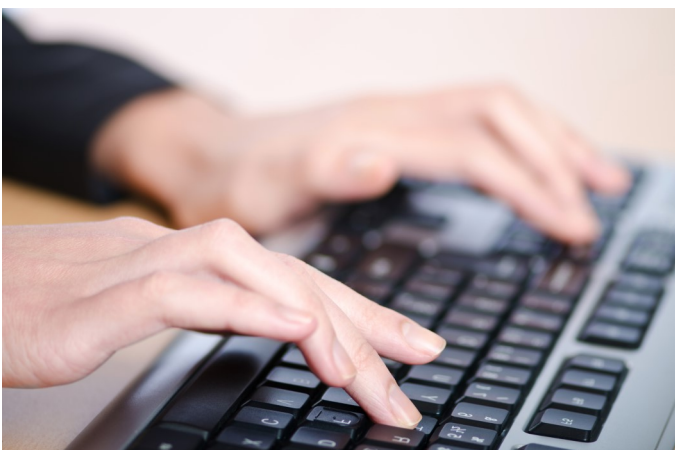
I actively engage in various projects such as the new intranet site ParliNet and I played a pivotal role in organising the 250 year celebration event hosted at Mr Speaker's House.

My favourite thing served by Catering Services is the vegan chocolate cake found in the Terrace Cafeteria—it is simply amazing!

If I was treating myself to a celebratory meal, I'd go for lemon and thyme chicken with broccoli for a main course, paired with the vegan chocolate cake I mentioned earlier. Yum!”

Melanie Roffey

Executive Assistant to the Catering Director



Behind the scenes with Richard Keane, Purchasing Store Supervisor / Storekeeper



"I began my career in Catering Services in October 2007 as a Storekeeper at 7 Millbank. After that, I worked as a Storekeeper in Portcullis House for eight years before making the move to the main stores here in the Palace, where I've been ever since.

My typical workday starts early at 6am. The first task is to check our temperature control monitoring system, ensuring that all the fridges and freezers are maintaining the correct temperatures and that there have been no issues overnight. I then print out the purchase orders for the day to have a clear understanding of what will be delivered.

As the deliveries start to arrive, I meticulously inspect all the goods. This involves ensuring that the temperatures of perishable items are within the specified range, verifying use-by dates, confirming the quality meets our standards, and checking that sizes or weights match the purchase orders. We receive three deliveries per day with the first arriving between 5.40-6am, the second around 9.30am, and the third at

12.30pm. Once the goods are checked and sorted, we deliver the requested stock to various kitchens within the Palace, fulfilling orders that were placed the day before.

Afterwards, I input all the paperwork into our stock control system, confirming the invoices against the stock requests or purchase orders. I also review any stock requests that have come in from the kitchens for the following day to determine what goods and supplies need to be ordered from our suppliers.

We adhere to a strict cleaning rota to ensure the delivery bays and stores remain spotless, and this cleaning routine is performed daily.

One particularly memorable day for me was the birth of my son. I had only been working in Parliament for a couple of weeks, and I was supposed to be on my induction, which I ended up missing to be there for this special occasion. It's a moment I'll never forget, and I never did get that induction!

I've had the pleasure of enjoying some special dishes created to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Catering Services. These dishes have been a highlight for me.

If I were to choose a celebratory or last meal, it would be Italian cuisine, which I absolutely love. For starters, I'd go for a hearty soup or delicious doughballs. For the main course, I can't resist a classic pizza or a comforting pasta dish—chicken tagliatelle is a personal favourite. To wrap up the meal, I'd indulge in a cheesecake for dessert.

Outside work I take care of my elderly father and I often volunteer in 'keep Britain tidy' days - I really believe in social responsibility".



Hear from Denise Durkin, Catering Manager

"I joined Catering Services in May 1999 and have accumulated 24 years of service. My journey here began with a brief stint via an agency, where I worked as a General Assistant in Parliament Street. Subsequently, I served as a waitress in the Millbank Room at 7 Millbank. In 2001, when Portcullis House opened, I transitioned to the Adjournment, where I initially worked as a Restaurant Supervisor. Just six months later, I received a promotion to Assistant Catering Manager.

In 2007, I took on the role of Catering Manager within the Palace of Westminster. This role entails overseeing various areas, including the Terrace Cafeteria, the Members Tearoom, and the Visitor Café, the Jubilee.

A typical day in my role is often unpredictable, as you never quite know what to expect within the Palace.

However, it typically involves liaising with our Sous Chefs who manage the Terrace and Tearooms. We work together to balance the menu and plan upcoming promotions. Staff management is a significant aspect of my role, where I address any issues that may arise. I have six direct reports, and together, we manage and review the sales mix in our venues, explore new products, review staffing rotas, and handle customer feedback and event bookings, particularly for the Jubilee Room.

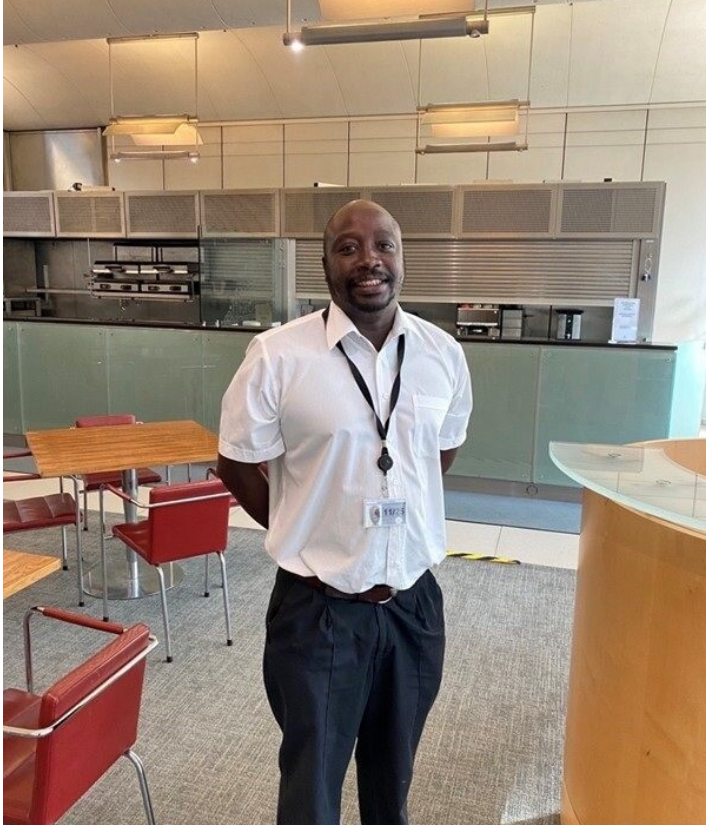
One of the most cherished moments in my career was when my Mother and Aunt joined me for lunch at the Adjournment, just before I transitioned to my current role. Their awe at the grandeur of the building and the opportunity to witness my workplace first-hand left a lasting impression on me. They shared their experience with friends and family, and it filled me with immense pride.

Another enduring memory that lingers in my mind is the stroll from Westminster station to 7 Millbank. This scenic route passed by iconic landmarks like the House of Commons, Elizabeth Tower, and Victoria Tower. Each time I made this journey, I couldn't help but marvel at these magnificent structures. The soft, warm glow from the lamps lining the path created a unique ambiance. The surroundings were often abuzz with various activities, making it feel like stepping into a world of its own.

Among the dishes served in the Commons, my favourite is mussels in white wine with French fries. It was truly special to see this dish featured in the 250 special dishes and regional promotions.

If I had to choose a last meal, I'd definitely go for seared king prawns with garlic and chilli to start, followed by pan-fried seabass with new potatoes and seasonal vegetables and then a lovely crème brûlée or crema catalana to finish off. With some bubbles too of course—preferably prosecco!"

Abdoulaye Fadiaba talks to Your Stories about the role he's held for two decades



Tell us what it's like working in Catering Services for you.

My journey in Catering Services began as a Kitchen Steward in Westminster Hall, I then became Assistant Chief Steward, a role I've held for the past 20 years.

In my capacity as Assistant Chief Steward, I'm responsible for overseeing all the behind the scenes activities across the Northern Estate. This involves ensuring that all our equipment is clean and in optimal working condition, as well as maintaining an adequate inventory of supplies required for our service times. I also have the responsibility of supervising a team of 11 kitchen stewards.

A typical day for me starts with a thorough inspection to ensure that all our kitchens are in top-notch condition before the chefs arrive. Safety and hygiene are paramount, and I ensure that any issues are rectified for the teams. I then gather my team and brief them on the day's and week's schedule. Our shifts include both early and late ones to

ensure coverage throughout the day.

Our first major service is breakfast, which kicks off at 8am. It's essential that all the equipment is in place, and the staff are ready to deliver a smooth breakfast service. We then have a quick turnaround to prepare for the 11.30am lunch service. Additionally, I liaise closely with the chefs to stay informed about any functions or events, especially on the first floor in Portcullis House, as it can get quite busy. In the evening there may be additional staffing needs or equipment requirements for events held here.

Can you tell us about a memorable day in your career?

One particularly memorable day in my career was during Easter when I went away with two colleagues from the catering department. Unfortunately, it coincided with the sad passing of The Queen Mother. We had to cut our trip short and rush back to open the Terrace Cafeteria. It was a challenging time, but we managed to make it back in time to handle the situation.

What is your favourite dish made by the Catering Team?

My personal favourite dish within our catering department is the jerk chicken. It's incredibly popular and has garnered a dedicated following among our patrons.

What would you have as a three-course celebratory meal?

I would go for scallops to start and a steak with dauphinoise potatoes and French beans for my main course. I'd then have a beautiful lemon tart for dessert.

Catharina Sidney tells us what working in Catering is like for her

"I began my journey at Bellamy's in 1 Parliament Street, where I joined as a Deputy Supervisor with a focus on the banqueting side of the business. We managed two dining rooms, the Astor Suite and the Clubroom, where we often hosted both lunch and dinner services. At that time, silver service was the norm, although it's less common nowadays. There was also a bar in the same location where the current nursery is situated.

After Bellamy's discontinued breakfast service, I transitioned to working in the Debate. Over time, I've had the opportunity to work in almost every venue within the catering department, ranging from events to bars to cafeterias. I even spent some time working in the kitchen. Prior to my role here, I worked for the military, which honed my attention to detail.



My typical day begins at 7.30am. I start by setting up the cafe bar, checking deliveries, reviewing menus, placing orders for the following day, and then proceeding with service. I have one team member whom I supervise, and I enjoy interacting with our customers throughout the day.

A memorable day for me was attending the Queen's garden party—an unforgettable occasion. I've also had the privilege of sitting in the gallery for the State Opening, which is a true honour.

I have a particular fondness for Bellamy's stir-fries; they are truly amazing. I also enjoy the varied sandwiches and baguettes we have.

If I were to go out for a celebratory meal, my choice would be a prawn cocktail for starters, followed by a delicious lamb shank for the main course. I'm not much of a dessert person, so I'd opt for a cheese board. And I must admit, I have a soft spot for Irish coffee.

In 2006, I ran the London Marathon, and it was a proud moment with lots of support from people within the House who sponsored me".



DID YOU KNOW?

The House of Commons is one of the busiest banqueting operations in London, creating over **10,000 homemade canapés** per day and can operate up to 28 functions per day. This rivals many 5-star banqueting hotels!

There are 250 catering staff and we take approximately **9,000 transactions** per day. This generates approximately £13 million in annual sales!

Sales across the estate on an average sitting day include:

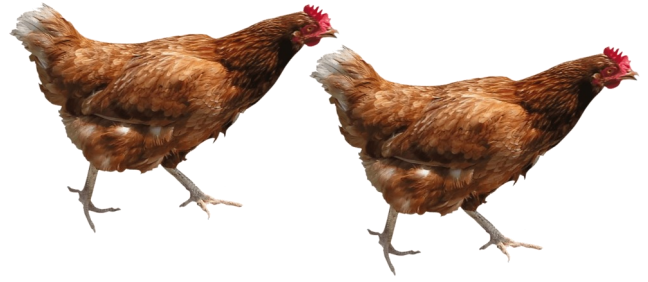
- **670 sandwiches**
- **2192 main course meals**
- **3818 hot drinks**
- **approximately 900 portions of jerk chicken (when on the menu)**



Over **1000 metres of Twix** is sold annually in Commons' catering venues—that's about the size of the Victoria Tower!

From 1 April 2022—31 March 2023 the catering department purchased:

**28,300kg
of chicken**



**46,500 cans
of diet coke**

**16,552
lemons &
6,953 limes**



**91,630 hash
browns**





Make Parliament's famous jerk chicken at home

This is a 3-stage recipe with some preparation needed before cooking – fail to prepare, prepare to fail!

Stage 1 – make your jerk seasoning mix and cook your meat

For this recipe, you will need **4 whole chicken legs** and a **roasting bag**.

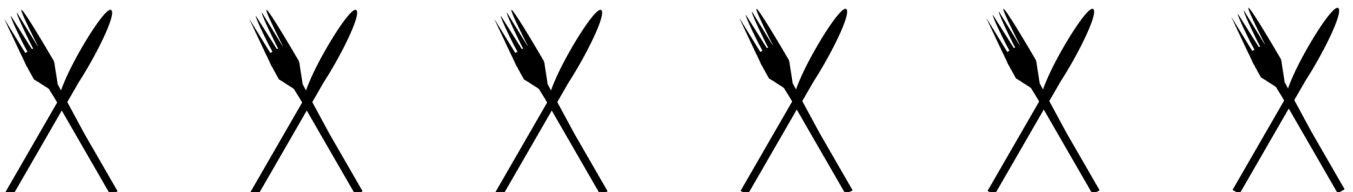
Jerk seasoning mix – pop all of the ingredients below together and mix well

- 20g ground ginger
 - 10g soft dark brown sugar
 - 5g ground turmeric
 - 5g ground cinnamon
 - 10g coconut powder
 - 5g chilli powder
1. Place your chicken legs into the roasting bag and sprinkle in your jerk seasoning mix. Shake well until meat is evenly coated.

2. Tie the end of the bag and pierce a few holes in the top of the bag.
3. Place the bag onto a baking tray and put in the middle of a pre-heated oven (175c / gas mark 3) for 30 minutes.
4. Remove the bag from oven and carefully untie the bag and remove the meat. Don't throw the bag away, you'll need it later!
5. Put the meat back on the tray and return to the oven for a further 10 minutes to crisp and colour at 200C / gas mark 4. Keep warm until ready to serve.

Stage 2 – the best bit – the sauce!

- 50g finely chopped onion
 - 350ml double cream
 - 5ml sunflower oil
 - 15ml soy sauce
1. In a saucepan on a medium heat, add the oil and chopped onion and gently cook the onion until soft but without colour.
 2. Carefully empty the seasoning mix and meat juices from the roasting bag into the pan, add the soy sauce and mix.
 3. Add the cream and reduce until the sauce is slightly thickened. Keep to one side.



Stage 3 — to finish off...the rice and peas

- 150g easy cook long grain rice
 - 50g finely chopped onion
 - 1 x spring onion finely sliced
 - 1 small sprig fresh thyme
 - 100g tinned red kidney beans (keep the water from the tin when you drain)
 - 200ml coconut milk
 - 25ml sunflower oil
 - 25g finely sliced red chilli
 - 25g fresh coriander chopped
 - Salt and pepper to taste
1. In a saucepan on medium heat add the oil and gently cook the chopped onions. Add the rice and cook until softened.
 2. Add spring onion, thyme, kidney beans and kidney bean juice to the rice then *just* cover the rice with water, bring to the boil and allow to gently simmer.
 3. When nearly cooked add the coconut milk, chilli and coriander.
 4. When cooked adjust the taste with salt and pepper to taste.

To serve

Place the rice and peas on a plate and top with the chicken. Finally cover generously with your delicious jerk sauce and enjoy!



Front of House with Charlotte Effah-Broni



Tell us what it's like working in Catering Services for you.

I've been working as a Catering Assistant in the Terrace Cafeteria since 2019, but my journey began in 2017 when I started as an Agency Steward in the Jubilee Café. After six months, I moved to the front of house team in the Terrace.

My workday kicks off at 7am, when I set up the Terrace for breakfast service, ensuring all equipment is clean and ready for action. One of the most crucial tasks is preparing coffee to perfection and ensuring all the fridges are fully stocked. We open at 8am for breakfast, and I'm stationed at the counter, where I craft breakfast sandwiches and maintain close communication with the chefs to ensure the cooked breakfast is promptly prepared for our customers. Breakfast service wraps up at 11am and then we prepare for lunch. I typically have my lunch at 11.30am, and from 12-3pm we serve our customers and ensure the Terrace is stocked.

Having an in-depth knowledge of allergens and ingredients is vital, as many customers enquire about them. We need to work swiftly and maintain impeccable cleanliness because lunchtime can get exceptionally busy. Interacting with customers and ensuring their satisfaction is something I truly enjoy.

What is your fondest memory of working here?

One particularly memorable day stands out when a group of customers asked me about allergens. I was thrilled to provide them with all the information they needed, knowing that their satisfaction was met through our knowledge and service.

I really enjoy meeting and talking with our customers particularly if we have new products.

What is your favourite dish made by the Catering Team?

I relish the plain salmon prepared by our chefs in the Terrace. On Fridays, I often go for plain grilled fish instead of battered fish, paired with a side of chips. I love fish and chips on Fridays!

What would you have as a three course celebratory meal?

I would go for vegetable spring rolls with a zesty vinaigrette for a starter and baked chicken for a main. I would then have poppy seed sponge with custard for dessert.



Hear from Adunni Fashuni, Kitchen Steward

"I began my journey at the House as a General Assistant in the main kitchen of the Palace of Westminster in July 1991 where my duties included washing glasses and plates. After some time, I moved to the principal floor, where I was responsible for looking after the dishes in the Strangers' Dining Room. In 2000, I joined the team at Bellamy's also as a Steward.

In 2012, Bellamy's ceased serving breakfast and that's when I started heading over to the Debate to prepare breakfast sandwiches and particularly the breakfast wrap – this was introduced by our Executive Chef Mark Hill and has become incredibly popular.

My typical day starts early at 7.30am when I arrive at Bellamy's. I start the day by turning on all the equipment and setting up the kitchen to ensure it's ready for the chef.

From there, I head to Portcullis House to commence the breakfast service.

During this time, I can prepare up to 200 wraps and breakfast sandwiches over three hours, especially on busy Fridays and payday when we see queues stretching across the atrium. I thoroughly enjoy interacting with the customers, and many of them are lovely. After the breakfast rush, I clean down the breakfast section and usually manage to squeeze in a break.

During the lunch service, I return to Bellamy's, where I work in the plate washroom. This can be quite hectic, especially on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

One particularly memorable day in my career was when I had the incredible opportunity to attend the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. I brought my son as my guest, and it was an amazing experience.

Meeting and interacting with friendly customers is something I genuinely enjoy about my job. They make the work more enjoyable.

When it comes to the dishes served within Catering Services, I love the salmon—it's always well cooked and tasty.

For a celebratory meal I would go all out and go for a chicken soup to start, followed by jollof rice as the main course, and to round it off, a delicious serving of carrot cake with custard for dessert".

Keith Cummins—in the Pugin Room since 1994



"I've had the privilege of working in the Pugin Room since 1994, where our clientele consists of Members and their guests. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to serve many notable individuals and have witnessed countless memorable moments.

A typical day in the Pugin Room begins with breakfast service at 9.15am, where we offer a continental breakfast spread. As the morning progresses, around 11.15am, we transition into a lunch service, catering to those who have reservations in the Members or Strangers Dining Rooms. Our role is to ensure that these guests have a delightful experience and are well-prepared for their upcoming meals.

In the afternoon, starting at 3.30pm, we shift gears into an afternoon tea and coffee service, featuring the renowned Westminster tea. During this time, we often welcome Lords and their esteemed guests, creating an atmosphere of elegance and tradition.

Throughout my tenure in the Pugin Room,

I've had the pleasure of serving a multitude of distinguished guests. Some of the notable names that have graced our establishment include the Dalai Lama, Richard Gere and Keanu Reeves, to name just a few. Each encounter has added a special touch to my career and made it more memorable.

Among the dishes served within the catering services my favourite is the jerk chicken.

If I were to envision a celebratory meal for myself, it would undoubtedly revolve around Indian cuisine, a subject I hold close to my heart. To commence, I'd delight in an exquisite Indian appetiser, perhaps something like a south Indian hot and spicy daal. My main would have to be Sabzi (a spicy vegetable curry). To conclude on a sweet note, I'd opt for an Indian dessert, such as Halwa with pineapple and raisins".





Jamie Woodstock—from Commis to Sous Chef

"My journey in Catering Services has been a remarkable one, having climbed the ranks from a Commis chef to my current position as a Sous chef. This remarkable journey has all taken place within this establishment, which has been my workplace since I left college at the age of 18.

I began my career as a Commis chef, based in Portcullis House. Over time, I had the opportunity to explore different areas within the establishment. I moved to Bellamy's as a Demi chef, where I gained a reputation for my exceptional stir-fry dishes. From there, I transitioned to Moncrieff's when the press had a cafeteria, serving as a Chef de Partie.

Following that, I joined the principal kitchen, responsible for catering the Members' and Strangers dining rooms. After that, I took another step up the ladder and returned to the Adjournment brasserie as a senior Chef

de Partie. In this role, I had the privilege of running a restaurant, crafting my own menus, and managing a team of four. Earlier this year, in 2023, I achieved my latest promotion to the role of Sous Chef, which brought me back to the principal kitchen.

One particularly memorable day in my career was when I received feedback praising my stir-fry dish at Bellamy's. The feedback was addressed to "Jamie Woodcock," a nickname that stuck after my senior chef had overheard our conversation!

In my current role, a typical day is a well-structured and busy one. It primarily revolves around ensuring the smooth operation of our kitchen and delivering exceptional dining experiences to our guests.

Another essential part of my daily routine is overseeing the quality of our ingredients and produce. I check all the deliveries to ensure that we have received everything we need and that the quality meets our high standards. This attention to detail ensures that our dishes are prepared with the finest ingredients.

Preparation is key to a successful service, so I also ensure that all our prep work is completed and ready for lunch service. This includes everything from chopping vegetables to marinating meats, so that our chefs can work efficiently during service. It's a fast-paced environment, and my role becomes crucial during this time. I take charge of running the pass, where I oversee the final plating and presentation of dishes from each section. This ensures that every plate leaving our kitchen meets our high standards for quality and presentation.

I've participated in culinary competitions and achieved significant success, winning gold and earning the title of "best in show" at the HAC competition, where I showcased my skills in vegan cuisine. I've had the privilege of learning from some outstanding mentors over the years, and now I can give back by acting as a mentor to our new recruits, passing on my experiences and helping them develop their culinary skills".

Your Stories talks to Junelle Seall, Commis Chef in Tothill Street, about her career in Catering



"My journey within Catering Services commenced immediately after my time at Carshalton College. It was during my college days when my tutor alerted me to an enticing job opportunity within the field, and I decided to seize it.

My initial role was as a commis chef at 7 MillBank, where I spent six months honing my culinary skills and familiarising myself with the ins and outs of the kitchen. Following this foundational experience, I embarked on a significant transition that led me to the heart of the culinary world—the principal kitchen. Here, I had the privilege of immersing myself in the realm of fine dining for a period of two years.

This transition from a cafeteria environment to a fine dining establishment was a huge leap in my culinary journey. It not only broadened my horizons but also developed my culinary expertise and boosted my confidence. Working alongside seasoned chefs in the fine dining setting was not only an opportunity to refine my culinary skills but also a chance to receive invaluable

mentoring. These mentors guided me through culinary competitions, and I can proudly say that I clinched a bronze award along the way.

After my stint in the principal kitchen, I embarked on a new culinary journey and joined the team in Portcullis House within the Debate cafeteria and The Adjournment restaurant. The sheer volume of food preparation in the Debate was staggering, with the potential to churn out hundreds of dishes. It was an environment that tested my culinary prowess and organisational skills.

Now, I've transitioned to a new chapter in my career at Café 14 in Tothill Street, the latest addition to Catering Services.

My typical day at Café 14 revolves around the meticulous preparation of salads. While I adhere to a prescribed recipe, I'm fortunate to have the creative latitude to infuse my unique presentation skills and an eagle eye for detail, both of which I finely tuned during my tenure on the principal floor. Beyond just executing recipes, I find joy in mentoring and inspiring my colleagues, imparting the art of presentation to elevate our offerings in the cafeteria environment. Additionally, I extend my support to the Sous Chef by tackling prep work and contributing to the preparation of the day's featured menu items.

Working at Café 14 is a rewarding experience. Our team is a tight-knit and talented group, and I relish the opportunity to regularly interact with our customers. The positive feedback we receive is undoubtedly uplifting, but it also comes with its fair share of pressure, which we wholeheartedly embrace and thrive upon.

Among the array of dishes we serve, one that holds a special place in my heart is a creation we crafted to commemorate the 250th anniversary of catering services: mussels in a white wine cream sauce, accompanied by chips".



Feast your eyes on some of the beautiful creations put together by the Catering Team. If you weren't hungry, we bet you are now!







Thank you to the whole of Catering Services—past and present—for all you did / do to make Parliament happen!

Here's to the next 250 years!





Teamwork is at the heart of great achievements

Thank you to those who provided old photos and menus—it has been an honour and privilege to see them.

All the latest photos you have had taken and the memories you've helped create and capture will serve as a lasting legacy to this historic occasion ensuring that those who look back in 250 years' time from now will really be able to have a sense of what the House of Commons Catering Service in 2023 was all about.

Thank you to you every single one of you who took time to provide profiles, make videos, create special dishes and wear your aprons with pride.

Massive thanks to Jon Hewett for all your contributions, Andy Ditchfield for making our 250 year's celebration cake and to Andy Barron for designing the Catering 250 logo and wall display in Portcullis House.

A special thank you to Zéna Butt Uddin for putting this fantastic edition of Your Stories together and a huge thank you to Tanith Banks for all your contributions—from being the driving force behind the competition, to the wording of 268 certificates and for keeping me to the point while documenting this momentous celebration!

James Ellis
Catering Project Manager