

Sodexo Marks 60 Years with Renewed Focus on Culinary Leadership, Talent and Innovation

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As [Sodexo](#) enters its 60th year, the business is sharpening its focus on what has always been at its heart: food, culinary expertise and the people behind it. Across the UK and Ireland, Sodexo's senior chefs are coming together with a renewed focus on celebrating culinary heritage, nurturing talent and accelerating innovation across its food services portfolio.

The renewed focus brings together Sodexo's most senior culinary leaders from across its business to drive the next chapter of its food ambition, supporting the company's strategy to create future-ready food services, combining menu personalisation, automation and sustainability across its portfolio of distinctive food brands.

For 60 years, Sodexo has delivered high quality, responsible [food services](#) at scale for some of the most complex and diverse environments - from offices, schools and hospitals to defence sites, offshore locations and world-class live events. Its commitment to culinary excellence is not new; it is something the business delivers day in and day out, rooted in craft, consistency and care.

Craft development and menu innovation sit at the heart of the team's ambition. Alongside the day-to-day delivery of exceptional food at every site, the team will be launching new initiatives focused on chef development, mentoring, innovation and celebrating culinary talent across the UK and Ireland.

Richard Learmount, food director, Sodexo UK & Ireland said: "For 60 years, food has been central to who we are at Sodexo. Our chefs create food experiences for an incredibly diverse audience, office professionals, scientists, engineers, military personnel, schoolchildren, hospital teams, and even

spectators at world-class events. Every day, we serve more than meals; we deliver moments that matter.

“Wherever we operate, our commitment is unwavering, to provide food that is healthy, delicious, sustainable, and tailored to the needs of our guests, while respecting the planet. As data, sustainability, and personalisation converge, food is evolving into a smarter, more engaging, and responsible experience.

“Our culinary leadership team is at the heart of this transformation, guiding our people and shaping the future of food services, from simply serving meals to delivering intelligent and exceptional food experiences.”

Matt Hay, head of culinary for Sodexo UK & Ireland leads the company’s culinary leadership team which includes a select team of ten senior chefs from across Sodexo’s different business areas.

Matt is an accomplished culinary leader with over twenty years’ experience. His early career saw him honing his craft working for some of the industry’ greats Gordon Ramsay, Marcus Wareing and John Campbell before moving into contract catering. Matt has built a reputation for strategic culinary thinking, sustainability-driven innovation, and a leadership style that develops high-performing teams while elevating the guest experience.

Matt Hay adds: “In the UK and Ireland we have incredibly talented chefs and through the renewed focus of this leadership team we will be focusing on instilling a culture of innovation, culinary development, ownership and operational excellence in every kitchen operated by Sodexo. Our culinary leadership team represents our top talent and are all committed to nurturing and developing our chefs through training and mentoring, bringing them together into one community.”

The culinary leadership team members include:

- Stu Bowman – regional executive chef (central shared services): Stu began his career in the hotel and restaurant business before joining Sodexo in 2014 where he oversees early careers and apprenticeships. He is a judge for Springboard’s Future Chef, both the national and the SEND competitions.
- Keith Burton – culinary director, Schools (state and independents): Keith has extensive experience across hotels, restaurants, contract catering, and retail. He leads the strategic culinary vision for independent schools, championing innovation, nutritional excellence, and student engagement through food.
- Matt Byne – culinary lead (Fooditude): Matt joined Fooditude in 2015. He is classically trained and has wide experience across the business & industry and hospitality sectors. Matt is passionate about building a sustainable, future-focused food culture that supports teams, clients and the planet.
- Darren Deadman – culinary director (Sodexo Live!): Darren has over a decade of experience in the contract catering industry where he has led on a variety of innovative food programmes and overseen strategic menu development for diverse hospitality settings.
- Ernest D’Souza – executive development chef (Government/Energy & Resources): Ernest’s career has spanned continents, from hotels to cruise ships. His 40 plus years as a chef has seen him rise from apprentice through to P&O’s executive development chef. He joined Sodexo in 2022 and is a Springboard judge and mentor to young chefs.
- Niall Hill – head of food (Ireland): Niall has over 30 years’ experience working as a chef at the highest levels both nationally and internationally, across a variety of sectors. Before joining Sodexo,

he was head of food at the award-winning food company The Butler's Pantry for 16 years.

- Tony Holland - culinary lead, (Energy & Resources): Before joining Sodexo Tony spend 12 years serving in the Royal Navy. He now leads culinary operations and food strategy for Sodexo's offshore and remote energy sector sites.
- Darren Thompson, culinary director (Corporate Services): Darren is an award-winning executive chef with over 25 years' experience, leading food innovation and development for Sodexo UK & Ireland, renowned for operational excellence and staff development.
- Max McKenzie - culinary director (The Good Eating Company) - Max joined The Good Eating Company as a development chef in 2018 having previously worked at Marcus Wareing's Petrus and St John as well as running his own private dining and events business for five years.
- Robin Turner - senior exec chef (central shared services): Over the 15 years Robin has worked at Sodexo he has played a key role in menu development, craft development and operational support.