

Listening Comprehension

MICHAEL SMITH: A MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF FROM THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

In this radio programme you are going to hear some new words. Read and listen to them. Make sure you know what they mean.

accolades: reconeixements/reconocimientos

larder: rebost/despensa

to go for a wander: passejar/pasear

Ready? Now read the questions on the following page. Read them carefully before listening to the radio programme. [Now listen to the interview.]

Interviewer: Michael Smith became head chef of The Three Chimneys restaurant achieving considerable critical acclaim. His style of gastronomy inspired by Scottish tradition and classical techniques has received many accolades. Among them, The Three Chimneys was named by New York Times food critic, Frank Bruni, as one of his top 5 destinations in the world. Michael earned a Michelin star in 2014 as Chef Director of The Three Chimneys. In early 2016, Michael opened his own restaurant, Loch Bay. Situated in Stein in the Waternish peninsula of Skye, the small restaurant is described as serving “contemporary Scottish food with classic French influences”.

Dolores Hill is with us today to let us know a bit more about this renowned Scottish chef. She is a biographer and is currently working on a book about Smith.

How did you become interested in Michael Smith's life?

Dolores: I'd eaten at The Three Chimneys various times when he was head chef and I ate at Loch Bay just after it opened. All the meals were sumptuous and some of the dishes still stand out in my mind. As a writer I felt that I had to learn more about the person behind those dishes.

Interviewer: Can you start by telling us who he is, how he became a chef and about his early career?

Dolores: Sure. Smith defines himself as a 'simple Highland boy'. He's from Inverness, the capital of the Highlands, and it was there that he first started working in the kitchen of a local restaurant when he was 15. From then on, he quickly decided to pursue a career as a chef and this decision was reinforced in 1988 when he started working in the kitchens of Arisaig House on the west coast of Scotland, where he stayed for 3 years.

After that he moved to London. He spent 4 years as Senior Chef with Jeremy Lee at Blue Print Café. He then decided to move back to Scotland, working in and opening up some of Glasgow's best restaurants.

Interviewer: How did he end up on Skye?

Dolores: While he was working in Glasgow he had a chance meeting with Shirley Spear, who as you know was Chef at The Three Chimneys restaurant. Shirley asked him about the possibility of taking over from her in the kitchen. So, Smith and his wife Laurence went to Skye to check the island out. They loved it, they felt it was both a fantastic professional opportunity and lifestyle choice for their young family.

The adventure went well and he stayed at The Three Chimneys for 11 years. He continued to maintain and enhance the reputation of the Three Chimneys, creating and perfecting dishes that reflected the restaurant's surroundings, specifically utilising as much of the superb Skye and Scottish natural larder as possible.

Interviewer: What made him move on to set up his own restaurant?

Dolores: Since he first started to work in local restaurants at the age of 15 it had been his dream to have his own place and he accomplished that in early 2016 with Loch Bay. While he wanted to set up his own restaurant he also wanted to stay on Skye as he had been very happy there and his kids had grown up there. Smith, his wife and children love the Highlands of Scotland. They are never afraid to go for a wander to discover new places and meet people there.

Interviewer: For those who are yet to visit, how would you describe Smith's restaurant?

Dolores: The restaurant is small, welcoming and full of charm. They offer a 5-course seafood degustation and a set 3-course meal. It is contemporary Scottish cuisine, combining local, seasonal ingredients, perfect cooking and a beautiful but simple presentation. It is still a restaurant where locals go and they're very happy to have a Michelin-starred restaurant on their doorstep that also serves chips.

Interviewer: It's a fantastic achievement to get a Michelin star after only 18 months of opening. What was Smith's reaction?

Dolores: In one of my interviews for the book, Smith told me that the Michelin star is just a very happy by-product of creating great food, from fantastic local produce in a beautiful environment. For a small restaurant, it is an important achievement.

Interviewer: Does Smith enjoy his daily routine as a chef?

Dolores: I guess so! He has been at the stoves every day since the restaurant has been open. They have only just hired someone to help in the kitchen lately. Smith says that being a chef is a very rewarding profession. He likes the camaraderie, the excitement of service, and being able to be creative. He thinks that a restaurant is an organic living entity, so there are lots of moving parts and a chef and his team are only

as good as their last service. If he has time, he likes to take a moment during service to hear the sound of a lively and happy restaurant.

Interviewer: We will need to go to Smith's restaurant to get a real slice of traditional Scottish food!

Dolores: Yes! Do let me know when you're going! I would love to join you!

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Adapted from:

Away from the Ordinary (May 25, 2018). Interview with a Michelin starred chef: Michael Smith. <https://awayfromtheordinary.com/2018/05/25/interview-michelin-starred-chef-michael-smith-skye/>

MyCityLifeTV (August 3, 2011). Chef Michael Smith.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPcy04GQSLI>

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