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POSH NOSH AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION

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With its bright pink calling cards, luxurious leather sofas, and standard issue fashionistas on the door, you would be hard pressed to distinguish “*Fifteen*” from the host of other high class Shoreditch eateries. And yet, here in one of the most deprived areas of the Capital, we are witnessing an attempt to do just a little bit more than cater for the high class heels that click their way eastwards on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday night.

I am referring of course to “*Jamie’s Kitchen*” – the latest creation to emerge from the Cheeky Chops stable, which sees our hero, Mr Oliver, championing the cause for really good grub. The day that I visited was no exception. Pan seared scallops sprouting broccoli jostled alongside roast partridge basted in Chianti to win the affections of a group of diners plucked from *Hello!* celebrity listings. No surprise then, that even the sharp tongued Fay Maschler has nothing but praise for Jamie’s efforts.

The real triumph of course is that all these delicacies have been prepared not by a team of top class chefs but by a band of “disadvantaged youths” hand picked and reared by Jamie himself, as a way of putting something back into the community. For any of you who have followed the path of this project – and yes, in customary Oliver fashion there is a book, a TV series and no doubt a series of small plastic figurines to collect – it is probably the best example of real regeneration to flash in front of the public consciousness for many months.

In total, three of the fifteen who began the original training course have already walked. Put off by the long hours, the hard graft or just the sight of so many guzzling glitterati. But the rest have remained, and are now turning out meals which compare favourably with the best restaurants in London. In terms of targets, outputs and outcomes, you have to hand it to him, Jamie can tick every box.



Nevertheless, there remains one rather thorny issue which even our blue-eyed chef has not managed to address. A meal for two comes at a price – £85 to be exact – putting it rather outside the budget of most of those living in the two New Deal areas to either side of the restaurant. Like so many other award winners, ***Fifteen*** tells us not only how far people have come, but also how much further we still need to go. It's time to do more to challenge even the best examples of regeneration. How about 25% affordable dinners, Jamie? Wouldn't that be just too "pukka" for words?