

A crazy idea, a derelict beach café, and a wood-fired pizza oven

Find out how Piers and Ali created an idyllic seaside café on one of Jersey's most beautiful beaches.



Portelet Bay Café

Portelet Bay Café is a family run café situated right on Portelet Bay beach between the conservation areas of Noirmont and Portelet Common. It's a true beach café experience, serving authentic wood-fired pizzas, that can only be accessed via boat or by 100 steps down to the beach. Ali and Piers Ostroumoff, have transformed the café from a derelict ruin into a unique and special eatery that has become a hotspot for tourists and locals alike.

Dough, dreams, and dilapidation

Ali and Piers both grew up in Jersey but spent many years working and living in London and then Somerset. Piers is a specialist in architectural ironwork, and a few years ago, he was asked by a friend to build and design a pop-up pizza restaurant for the Glastonbury Festival. This foray into running a food outlet was fun and successful and gave them some insight into the running of food business. The couple then decided it was time to move back to Jersey to be closer to their families and live by the sea.

Ali explains: “The first summer we returned to Jersey, Piers built a moveable pizza wagon and we travelled around the Island and sold our pizzas at festivals and events. Then, at the end of the summer in 2014, a friend told us about the old dilapidated building in Portelet Bay. There was no electricity, no water, barely a roof and it was still full of old furniture from when it had opened 15 years before. It was madness, but suddenly it seemed like the natural thing to do.”

Jersey Business helped us make sense of what we were doing

In January of 2015, Ali and Piers contacted Jersey Business to discuss the possibility of applying for some funding. “The idea of taking on this project was daunting, to say the least,” said Ali. “We were looking for any help we could get to make re-opening the beach café a reality. Nick Steel at Jersey Business was on our side right from the start. He immediately shared our enthusiasm and vision. Nick Helped us put in an application for funding from the Tourism Development Fund. This involved a lot of work and Nick helped us put together a full set of detailed figures. This meant we had to look at every aspect of the business and think through the all the details of what we wanted to sell, the prices, all the costs, plus factoring in the seasonality aspect of the venture.”

Thanks to Nick’s hard work, our funding application was successful, and we were able to move forward. Piers put his architectural skills into play, and the café was transformed.”

The café opened in July 2015, and it very quickly became a success.

Ali explains: “We were delighted with the way the first season went. We’re not offering a slick restaurant experience. It’s rustic, casual and the pizzas are authentic. There was a real buzz about it around the island, and people were genuinely positive and enthusiastic about eating at a café on such a beautiful beach.”

Adding an alcohol license made a massive difference

“When we opened, we didn’t have an alcohol license, we let people bring their own wine. It meant we could open quickly and it seemed like a good way to get started. It worked ok, but we weren’t maximizing our profit potential. Around that time, Nick at Jersey Business encouraged us to apply for an alcohol license. He has a lot of experience in the food & beverage industry and convinced us that it would make a significant difference to our profitability. He helped us with the application, and thanks to him, we got our license, and we

were able to serve alcohol for the summer 2016 season. Nick was absolutely right, it transformed the business, and we are so glad we took his advice.”

Jersey Business is a friend and ally to our business

“I’d recommend anyone starting a business on the island to contact Jersey Business. They have been invaluable in helping us realise our vision. We walked in with an idea to re-open a ruin of a café on the beach, and 6 months later we opened for business. Also, we now have a successful business model that can be replicated in the future. Jersey has a very particular way of doing things, and Jersey Business knows how it all works, who to talk to, and how to get things done. We still keep in touch with Nick. He has been a good friend and ally to our business and has supported all our crazy ideas. I daresay we’ll be speaking to him again when we come up with our next business idea.”

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