

# Passionate about fish & chips

north east  
england

When 'One North East', a Government body designed to promote tourism and business in the North East, decided to launch an initiative about passion for the region and its trades, Colmans of South Shields was one of the first traders to become involved. The words 'Passionate about fish and chips' stand proudly outside the shop and appear on the menus and all Colmans advertising materials. They are the only fish and chip outlet to get involved with the scheme.

Colmans, a 125 seater restaurant and takeaway, was established in 1926 and current owners Richard and Frances Ord are fourth generation fryers. It has become a landmark in South Shields and Richard takes every opportunity to use this to promote fish and chips. Colmans has appeared on BBC 1 as One of the Seven Wonders of the North East. Local MP, Foreign Secretary David Milliband is a regular visitor and describes his meal as "probably the best fish and chips in the world". He recently brought Tony Blair and a party of 115 guests to the restaurant and Blair described it as "the best fish and

chips I've ever had" The resultant publicity in both local and national press has enhanced the image of the fish and chip trade. There was even a letter in the local press from an American visitor who wrote "there's no place like Colmans for the best fish and chips" saying that on their three week visit they ate in Colmans at least four times a week. As Richard says "There are 25 eateries within 200 yards of my restaurant yet my fish and chip business continues to grow. Fish and chips is simply the best meal in town."

Success is driven by passion and experience but there is more to it than that. Top of the list is quality. "We source the best ingredients we can and we fry them in Frymax, the best frying medium on the market. Frymax produces an excellent finished product with a great taste and in this business good tasting food is the key to success" The fish is top quality skinless and boneless, frozen at sea and coated with Middleton's batter; the potatoes are Maris Piper sourced locally and delivered daily. The chips are thick cut to enhance taste and absorb less oil. All

our food is cooked to order: "the fresher the better ; people don't mind waiting for quality"

Presentation is also important. "We don't use paper. Every takeaway meal is presented in an attractive four colour Colmans box together with a fork. Quality food deserves a quality presentation which will maintain the quality of the fish and chips." Customer service is an important part of a quality presentation.

Colmans have 12 staff, all trained by Richard and Frances to meet the exacting standards they require. They are all long serving which not only develops good relationships with the customers but makes them more knowledgeable about the trade. "One of the biggest changes I've seen in my 40 years in the trade is the ability to recruit good quality staff. 40 years ago you couldn't get quality staff because of the image of the trade. Now in the good shops it's a reasonable high tech., cleaner and healthier trade with lots of customer contact. Add the passion of the owners and the pride of serving good food and you can now get and retain good quality staff."



Like most fryers Richard feels passionately about the false image of fish and chips being portrayed by the health lobby. "We are selling a meal based on natural ingredients sourced from their natural environment. We are using non hydrogenated vegetable oils with only a trace of harmful trans fats. We need to get this across to the public and I find the publicity material supplied by companies like Frymax to be really helpful in doing this."

Richard and Frances have two children and they are busy promoting the image of fish and chips to make a better future for their fifth generation of fryers.

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