

Client: C4 Consumer and Regional Press
Source: Waitrose Weekend (Main)
Date: 24 March 2016
Page: 7
Reach: 365000
Size: 169cm2
Value: 0



Fans of TV's First Dates are hungry for food of love

Anyone trying to book a table at the Paternoster Chop House in London in the next few months may find it tricky.

That's because the restaurant is the setting for Channel 4's surprise hit show *First Dates* - and many of the programme's 3.7 million fans are hungry for a table.

General manager Samuel Pollard said the show had brought more diners in and changed the type of customer, too.

'We are a City restaurant, so seeing women in here is a nice change,' he said.

'It used to be mainly business diners - we didn't see very much social dining and definitely not couples. But now we are seeing women bringing their boyfriends in because they've seen the show and liked it.'

Pollard said the success of the series now meant booking at 7.30pm or 8pm on Fridays or Saturdays was difficult.

The show, which returned for a sixth series last week, films singles on a blind date and watches their every interaction, no matter how awkward or loving.

It has made a star of Fred Sirieix, the French maitre d'

who, as well as looking after the lovers with grace and comfort, dispenses pearls of wisdom and philosophy. He was described by *The Guardian's* Julia Raeside as 'a cross between Eric Cantona and Lumière the talking candlestick from *Beauty And The Beast*'.

'People like it because it is good at heart,' he explains. 'Everyone can identify with the people there - we all want to find someone.'

Sirieix doesn't work at the restaurant when there is no filming. His day job is as maitre d' at Michelin-starred Park Lane restaurant Galvin At Windows. Over his 20-year career, he has travelled the world - something he believes helps him look after nervous daters.

'I don't want to blow my own trumpet,' he says. 'But I have been doing this a long time. I think I know what people want better than most.'



BLIND LOVE TV daters meet at the bar; maitre d' Fred Sirieix

The wisdom of Fred

The silver-tongued maitre d' shares his philosophy on love with Waitrose Weekend

- You have to learn to love and trust yourself before you can connect with another person.
- It is important that people in relationships stand in the same reality. If you see things differently that's where there are problems.
- You have to go on a journey to know yourself before you can go on a journey with anyone else.
- Don't worry about being seen as strange. There's no such thing as normality, yet we are all normal.
- Food makes no difference to the date. One person can be steak and chips and the other a salad, and they'll still love each other.

