

Talking 'bout a revolution! Cans of fizz and greasy burgers... can't we get better street food than this? Richard Johnson thinks so—and here's what he's doing about it

Find Our Street Food Stars



I'm a food critic. And I've travelled all over the world. But the best food I've ever eaten hasn't been in a restaurant. It's been on the streets—the streets of Bethlehem, where hole-in-the-wall falafel shacks serve up fat pitas, stuffed with hummus, pickle and broad beans. And the streets of Mandalay, where I first had fishy noodles, still salty from the sea. Coming back to Britain was always a disappointment.

Shame really. Our restaurant food is the envy of the world. So why not our street food? It's the food we all eat, the food we can all afford. Why are we restricted to a diet of Mr Whippy? Or cheap sausages and overfried onions, served off rusty metal handcarts? We deserve better, which is why I'm launching the first British Street Food Awards.



It was Marco Pierre White who gave me the idea. It was a summer lunchtime in a New York park and we'd had a very late night. We were sitting on the grass, eating a street vendor's high-quality burgers slathered with ketchup and mustard, and wondering why we couldn't offer up the same sort of thing in Britain. I decided, then and there, that I would try and do something about it. Once I had ordered another burger.

In my search for Britain's best mobilers (as they're known) I've found some real stars.

BORIS KARPINSKI/ALAMY; SAM FROST; COURTESY OF STOATSPORRIDGEBARS.CO.UK

There's Tony, who runs porridge bars on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. And Petra, a professional chocolatier who sells everything from Jimmy, a Mr Whippy van that she bought (sight unseen) from eBay. And Roland, who sells burritos from a customised Airstream trailer. But I want more.

To a man (and woman) they are entrepreneurs—men and women who have learned to make their living on the streets. They are larger-than-life characters who love food and who care about food, but don't have the money to open a restaurant. I hope that they are all going to be entering the First British Street Food Awards next summer.

Food heroes: Petra with her chocolate treats (left) and Tony's porridge oats bars in Edinburgh

WHO GETS YOUR VOTE?



By nominating your favourites at britishstreetfood.co.uk you can help recognise the best mobilers in Britain. A panel of the biggest figures in British food (including Marco) will be judging

them, come rain or shine, in readiness for the big cook off at Ludlow, home of the country's most prestigious food festival. It won't be white tie. It will be white apron. And it will start a revolution in the way we eat.