

A man of passions

Paul Doull is one of Orkney's top chefs, and a man who just loves his food: preparing it, talking about it and eating it! Here he highlights some of his favourite Orkney ingredients, and recommends some of his favourite places to visit.



Paul Doull

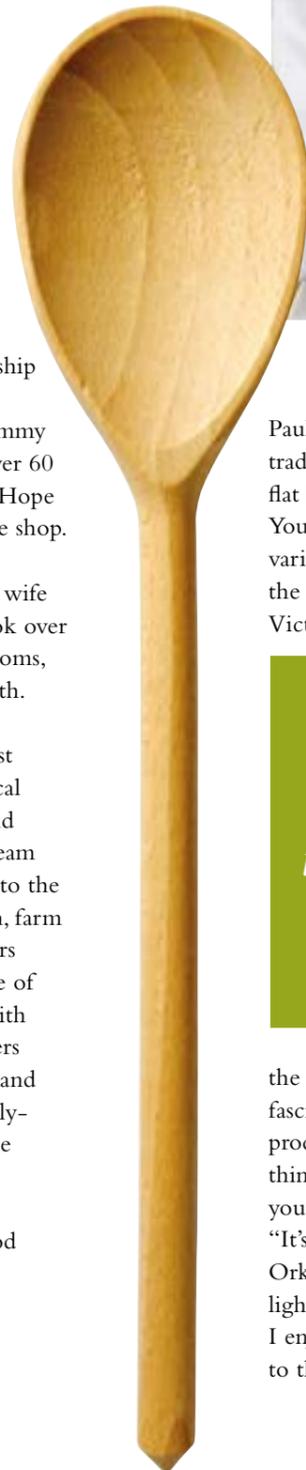
Paul Doull is one of life's enthusiasts, and never more so than when talking about his two favourite subjects: food and Orkney!

Paul is passionate about food, and it's a relationship which goes way back. He grew up in South Ronaldsay, the son of celebrated local grocer Jimmy Doull, who served the people of Orkney for over 60 years at his store in the village of St Margaret's Hope and, until recently, running Orkney's last mobile shop.

Paul's big break came in 2000 when he and his wife Helen, his brother Hamish and wife Shirley took over the Foveran Hotel. Now a Restaurant with Rooms, the operation has gone from strength-to-strength.

Paul's enthusiasm for food is shared with the rest of his kitchen team. They work closely with local suppliers to ensure only the best ingredients find their way onto the plate. One member of the team supplies homegrown herbs and free range eggs to the kitchen. "It's all about that journey from garden, farm or fishing boat to fork", he says. With long hours of daylight in summer, there's a surprising range of fruit and vegetables grown locally (especially with the benefit of a polytunnel!). Seasonal food offers plenty of scope for new dishes: warming soups and rich steak sauces for winter comfort or delicately-flavoured hand-dived scallops to savour on those long northern evenings.

As interest in the provenance and quality of food has grown, so has the reputation of Orkney produce. Local beef, lamb, pork and dairy produce have attracted numerous awards for their flavour and texture.

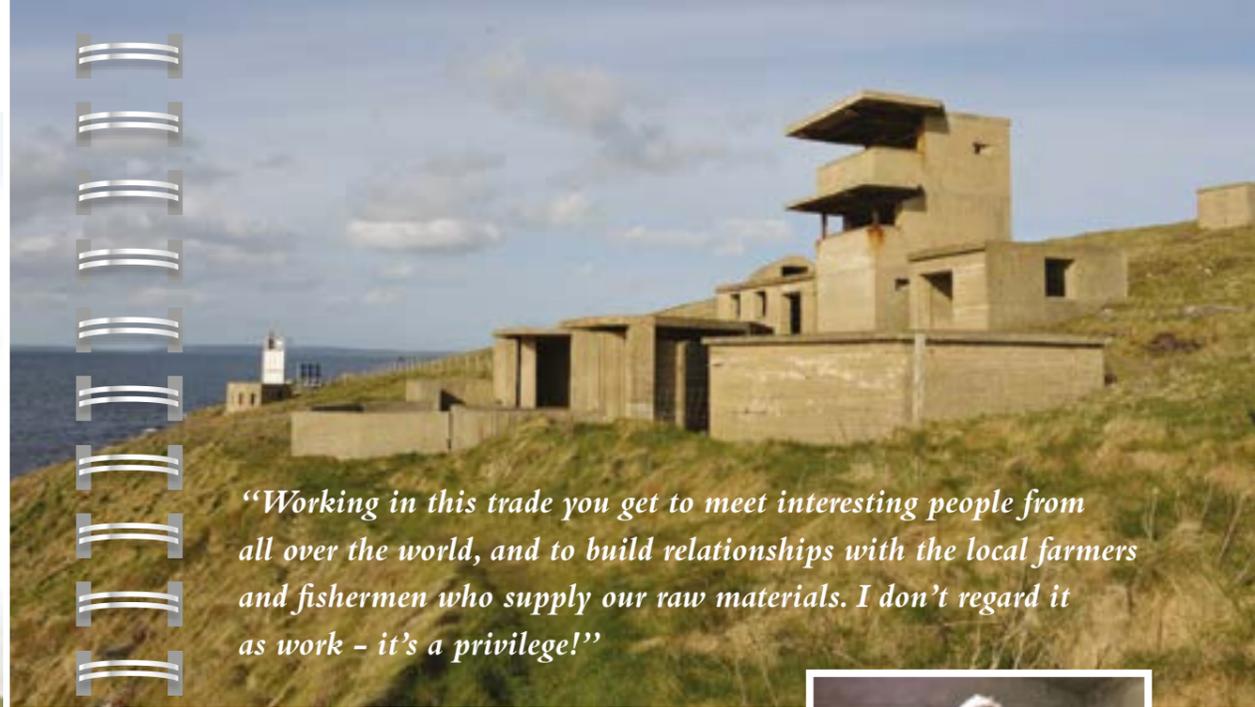


Paul is especially keen to retain local culinary traditions. His 'bere bunno' or bannock (a traditional flat bread) uses local stone-ground beremeal flour. You can buy locally-made beremeal products in various local shops including Judith Glue opposite the Cathedral in Kirkwall and Bruce's Stores on Victoria Street.

Orkney's fertile landscape has drawn people to live and farm here for thousands of years

The distinctive flavour of Highland Park whisky (twice a 'Best Spirit in the World' winner) adds a local twist to a number of Paul's dishes, such as his prime Orkney fillet steak with haggis and creamy Highland Park sauce.

The Distillery on the edge of Kirkwall has a five-star visitor centre and fascinating guided tours showing the whisky-making process from start to finish (see page 7). "One of the things about working in the restaurant trade is that you get to meet all sorts of people", Paul explains. "It's great to hear what other people enjoy about Orkney. It can make you see your home in a new light. You learn to appreciate it in different ways. I enjoy suggesting places people can go, and talking to them about where they've been."



"Working in this trade you get to meet interesting people from all over the world, and to build relationships with the local farmers and fishermen who supply our raw materials. I don't regard it as work - it's a privilege!"

A drive south to the Tomb of the Eagles gives a feel for what much of mainland Orkney used to be like, as it is less populated than elsewhere. Right down at the south end, near Burwick, the Tomb of the Eagles visitor centre is run by the family of the man who first uncovered that Stone Age and Bronze Age sites on his land. It's well worth the trip - fascinating archaeology, wonderful views, wildflowers and wildlife aplenty!

Paul is a keen supporter of local art and craft workshops, and likes to visit when he can. Like Paul, many people in Orkney are inspired by the landscape, light and colours. While Paul creates mouth-watering dishes, they create music, art poetry and crafts!

A number of artists and makers open their studios and workshops so visitors can see them at work. While you're in South Ronaldsay, as well as visiting the gallery at Hoxa there is Christina Sargeant's gallery at Wheems, close to one of Paul's favourite beaches, at Eastside.

Like many local restaurants and cafes, The Foveran showcases local art and crafts. They have recently acquired a stunning tapestry by Leila Thompson, Paul's cousin from Hoxa in South Ronaldsay, which adorns the restaurant wall alongside her daughter Johan's photography. Family connections and weaving together different threads of community life are some of the many things which make Orkney so special. People are proud of their home and want to share it. Paul is no exception.

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Bannocks have been a staple Orkney food for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years. Traditionally made from beremeal, an ancient grain which may first have been brought here by the vikings. Try them at local bakeries and restaurants with a generous serving of Orkney farm cheese.



Paul recommends...

The Hoxa Tapestry Gallery

See page 46

The Tomb of the Eagles

See page 50

Hoxa Tearooms

See page 58