

The perfect chip

Few issues divide opinion as much as what constitutes the perfect chip. **John Porter** asked a range of industry figures where and when they ate their favourite fries

William Lees-Jones, managing director, JW Lees:

"I love chips. My favourites are Chris Holland's at The Alderley Edge Hotel for posh triple-fried gourmet chips that melt in the mouth, or Lisa Gilmartin's at The Lancashire Fold in Middleton for proper hand-cut pub chips. For less partisan chips - not in JW Lees' establishments - there's always Mike's Chippie in Crosby after a walk on the beach with Anthony Gormley's 'Another Place' sculptures."

Giles Fry, managing director, Snug Bars:

"I'm a sucker for the 'Jenga Chip'. The best I've eaten were in a seafood restaurant in Boston. Stacked high, slightly crispy on the outside with white fluffy potato on the inside, ready to burn your gums. Nowadays, of course, I'm a touch biased, as at The Snug guests get to choose from three different types of chip; skinny, chunky and now on our new menu, sweet potato chips!"

Erin Ali, chief executive, Las Iguanas:

"My favourite chips were served to me in Swanage at the local chippie following a gruelling hike one summers evening; cooked in beef dripping, and served in newspaper with lots of salt and vinegar. That was 35 years ago and I swear when I think about them I still taste them in my mouth now. Nothing has compared before or since."

Carol Haime, co-owner of the award-winning Sandrock pub in Farnham, and food development chef for the tenanted trade at Shepherd Neame:

"At The Sandrock, we thrice-cook Maris Pipers, but we don't call them anything fancy, just chunky chips. We let the quality of the chip speak for itself - fluffy potato, crunchy on the outside and cooked in crystal-clear oil. I've been spreading the word, cooking these chips as well as a myriad of other dishes, at my food development workshops for Shepherd Neame, where we invite enthusiastic tenants to come and experiment with dish presentation and cooking. Watch out for fantastic chips coming soon, all over Kent!"

Jonathon Swaine, managing director, Fuller's Inns:

"Chips are a really important part of the pub food mix and our customers have very high expectations of the chips served in our pubs. They're all somebody's favourite, but for me, the best chips are the freshly-cut, thin chips, triple-cooked in fresh oil, which are served at the Hand and Flower, Olympia."

Oliver Devine, head of marketing, Instore at Compass Group:

"My story about the best chips I've had isn't about the best chips I've eaten - which were at the Ivy, by the way - but remain in my memory for other reasons. Bag of chips with the family on a slightly wet and windy seafront at Tywyn; we shared pretty good chips, laughed at the weather and remembered how great families are together. Speaking science: best chip just for eating is skinny, skin on, seasoned and served with homemade mayo. Tywyn chips were great for other reasons."



Gary Anderson, former director of operations for Fuller's City pubs, now based in Sydney:

"During my constant international wanderings over the last two years, I've constantly craved the opportunity to be sat in a warm London gastro pub eating hand-cut double-cooked chips sprinkled with rock salt. There is nothing like it anywhere in the world."

Ali Carter, pub industry consultant and former BII licensee of the year:

"My best chips ever were at a Cornish Fish and Chip Shop near Mullion in 1989. As with all things foodie, the context of the chip is vital. For me it was early in my time in deepest Cornwall. I can't even remember the name of the fish and chip shop, but it was near the Lizard. We had a long appetite-inducing walk, a pint or two of ale and real spud chips, cooked in fresh hot oil and with all those little crispy bits of batter mixed in. I'm still salivating even now."

Ron Hickey director of catering at Booker:

"The best chips I've had were from the Rose and Crown pub in Yardley Hastings, Northants. Cooked from freshly-cut potatoes, which had then been par-boiled, left to dry and then cooked. Big, fat and well-cooked, with lashings of salt and dipped in French mustard - it's their own recipe, I understand. They were even better eaten outside in their beer garden on a cold February day. Simply sublime!"

Sebastian Snow, award-winning chef and restaurateur, and lessee with Brakspear of the Five Alls at Filkins, Gloucestershire:

"I don't eat many chips, but I always find myself going back to our own home-made thrice cooked chips. They're boiled until soft and fluffy, deep fried in cool oil and then re-fried in hot oil. The chips are very crisp on outside and soft in the middle - and taste best with some garlic mayo."

Paul Charity, editor, Propel Quarterly:

"There's a tradition in Lincolnshire, where I hail from, of fish and chip shops advertising externally when they are frying new potatoes. The reason is that chips taste sublime when they are made from fresh new-season potatoes. No-one has ever provided a convincing reason for why this is, but somebody once told me that new potatoes absorb more fat, which is semi-believable. I don't like the current trend for fat Jenga chips - they're not chips, they're potato wedges masquerading as chips."