



In this instalment of our People Behind the Business we chat to Michael Flannery, who along with his family own and run the Fish Box in Dingle, one of the town's newest and now best known fish restaurants.

Why do you do what you do?

I come from a traditional fishing family, my great Grand-father was fishing in 1920 and then my grandfather Mickey Flannery took over from him. He was a very successful man who was held in very high regard in the fishing community. He was an innovator, and was continually trying new ideas. In 2000 my Dad bought his own boat and over the next few years there were highs and lows, as with any business, and then in 2016 my brother Patrick took over and we bought our present boat the Cu na Mara. In my family there is a tradition of the eldest and the youngest brother being fisherman and this has endured for generations. I had a decision to make at that point in my life either to join Patrick on the boat or to do something else that would complement the fishing business. We had a vision that we wanted people to eat local food and more fish. We wanted a sustainable business that would support our family and other local producers all year round. We then decided to buy a building and after total remodelling we opened the Fish Box in August 2018. Patrick supplies the fish from our own boat and I run the restaurant. The styling of the restaurant was an important consideration for me as I wanted it to tell our family story. The logo is a nod to my grandfather as are the colours of our boat, the Cu na Mara, and the restaurant. It's nice to think that he is still involved and that we are continuing to build on his tradition.

What is it like to work with family?

It's really cool ! My brother Patrick and I, my sister Emer, and my Mum and Dad are all involved in the business. It's a really nice arrangement. Your family never let you down and you get to build something really special with them and with our staff also.

How would you describe the ethos and style of food?

We offer both a takeaway and a sit down option to our customers and we also have an outdoor seating area which is really airy. We want to offer a really great experience. We aim to bring local food in a warm friendly informative environment. This business is about us, our family, the restaurant staff, our boat, the crew of the boat, adding more value to the catch and fishing in a much more sustainable way. We fish from Dingle and land our catch in Dingle which then goes directly to our restaurant in Dingle. There is no travel. I know who catches the fish, who handles it, who fillets it, who cooks it and finally who eats it. We can literally offer a Sea to Fork experience.

What is the signature dish in the Fish Box ?

I would say that there are three signature dishes

Deep Fried - the Fish Box

From The Kitchen - Langoustines which we cook in parsley and garlic - there is nothing in the world to compare the flavour. A few years ago 90% of langoustines were exported but that has changes as our tastes have changed and because we have no transport costs we can offer really excellent value

My third signature dish would be the Crispy Chilli Monkfish which is really popular.

We don't really follow trends in the Fish Box and do our own thing, offering local food. I do feel that there is a swing back to the comfort food of the 70's, 80;'s and 90's.

What is your own favourite food and what restaurants do you take like ?

I love Bunsen Burger, Goldie in Cork or Claw in Dublin - I adore Niall Sabongi's food. My tastes are pretty simple and I like food that is local to an area.

What is your favourite ingredient?

Apart from fish it has to be Olive Oil - it is a natural accompaniment to seafood. Years ago we discovered Megrin a local delicacy from Northern Spain, which the fishermen eat which is amazing. I love experimenting and making butters and oils and trying them out with different seafood.

Who is your greatest culinary influence ?

Firstly my Mum Deirdre, who runs the kitchen in the Fish Box. She had run her own café for years and had previously been Head Chef in the Dingle Bay Hotel. I love Rick Stein, Neven Maguire and Gordon Ramsay, chefs who really respect food and want the customer to experience the very best.

What is your favourite part of the day ?

I'm definitely a night owl ! I do a lot of exercise every day and use that time to think. I also try to be organised in my life and I'm a list maker - it helps me keep track and keeps all the plates spinning. I have also written a journal every day which I find really helpful.

Tell us about one thing that inspires you ?

Monet doesn't drive me - I really love giving back - being able to help people. To be part of, not apart from our community. We always try and give something back and benefit our

community to make things better. We have been through very hard times as a family in the fishing industry but we keep getting back up together and have always been supported by the community. Living and running our business here inspires me and drives me to leave my mark and to make this wonderful place even better for the next generation.

What is your favorite part of the Dingle Peninsula ?

My most favourite place on the Dingle Peninsula is Doonsheen. I take the dog and we get out in the fresh sea air, its just magical !

Finally Michael, what would you do if you won the Lottery ?

I would just clear any debts and look after my family but apart from that I wouldn't change a thing - I 'm a very happy person.

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