



Ollie Hunter plants a tree at Raithwaite Sandsend



Gardens at Raithwaite Sandsend

Picture: CATHERINE TURNBULL

# Leading a food revolution

**Eco food and drink champion Ollie Hunter is leading a charge for positive change at a Yorkshire estate named the UK sustainable hotel of the year, writes Catherine Turnbull**

**D**ON'T expect to see Insta-friendly breakfast staple avocado on toast if you stay and dine at Raithwaite Sandsend Hotel – instead of the eco-bad avocado your green topping will be smashed peas, served with chilli salsa and poached local eggs. Smoked farmed salmon has also been side-lined in favour of fish from Fortune's Kippers in nearby Whitby. It's the start of an innovative programme to achieve zero waste status by next year and the ambitious plan has already won Raithwaite the UK's most sustainable hotel title at The Catey Awards. Leading the food and drink mission is the 2013 MasterChef semi-finalist Ollie Hunter, alongside head chef Ryan Osborne.

When I meet Ollie in the 100-acre grounds near the sweep of Sandsend beach to hear more about the plans, he's half-way up a steep bank above the ornamental gardens, planting one of 500 fruit and nut trees, to create a forest garden with herb bushes too. He's teamed up with Sapling Vodka, who plant a tree for each bottle sold at the hotel.

"We are getting stuck in and creating kitchen gardens, patches and polytunnels, and using the sustainable no dig method, to grow organic fruit and vegetables designed to feed the hotel throughout the year," he says, offering me a spade to plant a tree myself.

"We aim to source 80 per cent of our food from seasonal, organic and local produce from within a 30-mile radius of the hotel.

"I believe that the more connected and in harmony you are with nature,



Dining at Raithwaite

the better the food. When your ingredients are seasonal, local and organic, you get a much better flavour and much better nutrition. And that means you need less of it, which saves waste."

The Wheatsheaf pub in Chilton Foliat, Wiltshire which Ollie owns with his wife Lauren, was named the UK's most sustainable business in 2019, and he's excited to now explore some of Yorkshire's finest producers. In the evening, after a visit to

roasters and blenders The Baytown Coffee Co in Whitby, Ollie and Sapling Vodka hosted a tasting menu created by Ryan to showcase produce from some of his local food heroes.

They include woodland reared Grassfruits pork belly from Escrick Park Estate, served with cob nut crumb, roast squash and Leeds Blue cheese croquette with spiced cider cream.

Fruit and vegetables supplied by The Organic Pantry at Rudgate, near



Ollie Hunter

Picture: PA

Tadcaster, featured in a beetroot and vodka cured halibut with pickled apple, pear, seaweed tapioca crackers and lemon verbena snow. Mackenzies Yorkshire Smokehouse oak smoked and air-dried venison was served with foraged herb and baked egg tart with a scorched Béarnaise sauce. Raithwaite produces in-house still and sparkling water, to reduce the amount of bottled water bought in and mixes this with Carr's Farm organic cordials, to craft homemade

soft drinks. The cellar system Cask Wide reduces previous Yorkshire ale waste to almost zero, and house wine now comes in kegs to reduce glass bottle waste.

When I ask Ollie why there are plastic sachets with UHT milk in the bedrooms his answer illustrates the scale of the undertaking. "It's one of many things we are addressing. One solution is to have flasks of fresh milk in the rooms, but then I worry about wasting milk. We are working on that one."

"We are making changes gradually as we reimagine the business with sustainability at its core – it's not a quick fix – all decisions consider how to best support people, the planet and deliver pleasure for the guests. Change is all within our grasp."

Maritime Capital, which acquired Raithwaite in 2019, has significantly invested in the process. There is a green leader in every department to lead the conversation and continue to progress positive environmental change. Housekeeping uses eco-friendly products.

The beautiful estate is managed sensitively to increase biodiversity, with some areas remaining wild – 40 species of bird life have been spotted around Raithwaite. The lake is habitat for ducks, kingfishers, buzzards and herons and the woods are home to deer.

There's woodland walks and gardens to explore after a hearty breakfast of smashed peas, pastries from Botham's in Whitby or a full Yorkshire, in a dining room adorned with paintings by local artists.

[raithwaitesandsend.co.uk](http://raithwaitesandsend.co.uk)