

James Freeman

Head Chef, Scotch Malt Whisky Society Biography

James Freeman has been the head chef at the Scotch Malt Whisky Society's venue at The Vaults in Leith for five years and has been running The Dining Room at 28 Queen Street since the venue was opened in May 2005.

James is completely self-taught, his interest in food ignited when he helped his grandmother – a professional cook for a wealthy English household – bake in the 1970s. A short-lived career studying law at university convinced James that gastronomy was where his heart truly lay, so he spent a couple of years travelling France, Spain and Greece where he further developed his interest in foreign food. On returning to England, he took up various chef positions in both London and Glasgow.

A true believer in the concept of 'slow food' and an urge to be his own boss saw James launch himself as an independent caterer in 2000 at the age of 30. The contract at The Vaults followed soon after, where James' ability and vision for fine dining soon gained a reputation.

James believes that the essential ingredient in fine dining is the quality of produce: organic salmon, free range eggs and pork, quality assured meat and fish, and fresh locally grown vegetables supplied by small independent Scottish suppliers form the basis of his menus, which have a contemporary French influence.

Everything on The Dining Room's menu is home-made from the 'amuse bouche' served as an appetiser with a corresponding dram, to soups, puddings and sauces, which are often served with lesser known cuts of meat, such as sausages made from the hind legs of rabbits.