

# In Good Company

Entertaining clients is part and parcel of our business life. Choosing where to take business associates can often be a difficult choice. With restaurants from London to Sydney, we visit Jason Atherton's The Social Company to find out if this group can offer the type of experience our Directors are looking for.

Words > Joanne Jeyes



Atherton earned his Michelin star in 2011 and has the chefs 'Oscar' - Chef of the Year



Jason Atherton is a chef on a mission it seems. A mission to open restaurants globally that showcase not only his huge talent but also offer food you want to eat, in spaces in which you want to eat. Be that refined British food in historic buildings or authentic tapas in industrial style spaces. As a Michelin starred chef, it's no surprise that Atherton's standards are high after having worked with the elites including Pierre Koffman, Gordon Ramsay and Marco Pierre White.

What is a surprise though is the sheer number of restaurants Atherton opened over the past five years under his brand - The Social Company. Even more surprising is the fact that each one stands on its own as a must visit restaurant - from Singapore to New York, Dubai to Sydney - he appears to have many bases covered. We tried out a few to see if this is one social night out we should all join.



Mouth watering tapas

## SOCIAL WINE & TAPAS, LONDON



A grown up ice cream

Just a stone's throw from Selfridges in the hip St. Christopher's Place is Social Wine & Tapas, a buzzy restaurant on two levels. The first floor offers a tapas bar, wine shop and banquet seating for up to nine covers. There is also an elevated wine tasting table for eight people.

In the basement, the cellar bar has more seating, another tasting area and a corner bar. The wooden tables edged in rose gold and comfortable leather chairs give the place a warm feel. We sat tucked away on what seemed like a mezzanine level - although we were overlooking diners sitting just below us, we didn't feel we were encroaching on each other - which is crucial when talking business.



A wine shop and tapas bar

The name of the restaurant soon becomes obvious from the paraphernalia around the room. Bottles, carafes, magnums, decanters; anything wine related is displayed artfully in every nook and cranny, giving a feel of almost being in someone else's private space. This intimate feeling made for a relaxed atmosphere and the background music and noise of other diners talking encouraged conversation. The bar looked like a good spot to enjoy an aperitif and the open prep kitchen behind us showed off the tempting range of meats.

Laure Patre, the executive head sommelier has created a dynamic wine list offering quality, rare and fine wines sourced from around the world. She was more than happy to share her knowledge with us and I was delighted to discover an old favourite - a Portuguese wine I

had long forgotten about. This is the time to sit back and let the experts talk, let your clients be impressed with their knowledge and passion. It will lead to some very interesting dinner conversation, that's for sure. The wine flights in particular were tempting and an interesting idea - it offered a selection of wines to try throughout your dinner for one set price. A great way to try wines you wouldn't usually try, it is also perfect if you and your fellow diners have different tastes.

At first glance, it doesn't seem to be an extensive menu but with choices such as crispy duck egg, roasted artichoke, pork cheek and truffle and Teruel Serrano it was actually difficult to make a choice. We opted to start with a few dishes including salt-baked beetroot, saris and honey-glazed figs (delicious!), Norfolk suckling pig with mead glazed turnips and sardines on toast. We were not disappointed. Large enough portions to share it would be easy to over order, so take your time and savour the amazing flavours. Take suggestions from the staff who know their food selection.

The service was relaxed, friendly and efficient and the waiting staff were happy to recommend both food and drink. This isn't the place to go if you want to impress clients with silver service or have a five course dinner brought to you with great aplomb. But for amazing, tasty food and a huge selection of wine (not to mention spirits, champagne and cocktails) this is a good choice. An ideal spot for a relaxed business dinner when you want to discuss something without the formality of a three or five course affair.

39 JAMES STREET  
**SOCIAL**  
WINE & TAPAS  
LONDON

**Social Wine & Tapas**  
39 James Street, London W1U 1DL  
Tel: +44 (0)207 993 3257  
[www.socialwineandtapas.com](http://www.socialwineandtapas.com)



Executive Chef Carlos Montobbio creating some of his culinary masterpieces

**ESQUINA - SINGAPORE**

Still one of Atherton's Tapas restaurants, but in Singapore and with a whole different feel is Esquina - which translates as 'the corner' in Spanish. The restaurant is a joint venture with acclaimed Singapore hotelier Loh Lik Peng and is a good place to go if you want to celebrate with colleagues or clients. It has a noisy, buzzy atmosphere that offers seating at the communal bar overlooking the open kitchen. There are also a few tables outside if you prefer (and can get one).

The food, created by newly appointed Executive Chef Carlos Montobbio, has

an emphasis on creativity, freshness and authentic Spanish dining. The menu is themed into six 'sections' - snacks, soil, sea, land, dessert and classics with choices including the Spanish Nigiri, a quirky twist on the Asian classic and of course, the ever popular Spanish Omelette. Highlights for us were the Padron peppers with ponzu dressing and gigantic prawns cooked to perfection.

If you are looking to host a dinner for a number of guests, Esquina does offer its second floor - Esq 2.0 - as a dining option too. Able to accommodate around 25 guests, it

also offers bespoke chef's tasting menus and sommelier wine pairing. Of course, this would need to be booked in advance.

Overall we had great food and a relaxed evening. It was a bit rushed and the bar stools aren't exactly comfortable, but the experience is one we hadn't had in Singapore. Conversation was noisy and most of the guests sat at the bar were enjoying the display from the kitchen; Chef Montobbio was there showing off his culinary art. Trying to close a deal or discuss contracts is not going to happen here - go for the fun and social side of this place.



Spanish Nigiri, a modern twist on a Japanese classic



Hearty portions - Wagyu Intercostals

**ESQUINA**  
Esquina  
16 Jiak Chuan Road, Singapore 089267  
Tel: +65 6222 161  
[www.esquina.com](http://www.esquina.com)



The stunning setting of Pollen inside the Flower Dome

**POLLEN - SINGAPORE**

Situated inside the flower dome at Gardens by the Bay, Pollen is one sure way to impress any client. Not only does it provide a unique dining experience being within the biggest greenhouse in the world, you can also offer clients the option of visiting this iconic landmark as dinner includes entry to the flower dome itself.

Atherton actually stepped away from his involvement in Pollen very recently, but the restaurant is still led by Executive Chef Colin Buchan who trained in both Marco Pierre White and Gordon Ramsay's kitchens. Along with General Manager and one of the leading sommeliers in Asia, Amir Solay.

With the option of a tasting menu or à la carte you really can be as decadent as you - or your clients - wish. This is high-end dining at its best.

How does raw Hokkaido scallops, with dash jelly, wasabi, avocado puree and chilli Japanese cucumber sound? Or seared foie gras, poached quince, walnut cream? Just two of the mouth-watering dishes from the seven course tasting menu. There is also the chance to savour some of the finest - and most suited - wines alongside each dish with the wine pairing option.

We opted for the à la carte menu and each plate we were served was beautiful to look at; even the canapés that were presented before the meal. The roasted quail with white peach, pickled yellow mustard seeds, chicken liver parfait and hazelnuts was not just visually stunning, it tasted divine too. As it was truffle season, many of the dishes featured truffle

including our Director's Angus beef short rib, which was accompanied by truffle potato (and baby leek, chicory and caramelised onion).

The choice of white wine isn't extensive with a larger choice of red, but it was a good selection. The sommeliers were knowledgeable and keen to advise. We took advice and changed our first choice after he explained that maybe it would be too heavy (we had mentioned we were in the mood for something light). He allowed us both to taste and then decide - the sign of a confident and experienced guide. Worth their weight in gold should your wine choosing skills need a little honing when entertaining.

The seating is carefully arranged and as you would expect, there is a feeling of being outdoors. It was a bit chilly due to the fact that the dome has to maintain a certain temperature, so take a wrap or jacket to keep off the chill. There were larger tables in the centre of the room should you be hosting a dinner for a number of guests.

To finish off the evening perfectly we were offered raspberry bonbons and orange madeleines (we had declined dessert). These were some of the best I've tried, in and outside France. Light, fluffy, buttery and with enough zesty orange to tingle the taste buds. We complimented the chef who was busy making a batch at the dessert bar. The perfect flavourful end to a tasteful evening.

The only downside to this spectacular setting is that it can get pretty busy around Gardens by

the Bay and parking is often difficult. You can't park that close, so Pollen offers a buggy service to take you from the entrance to the restaurant. Make sure you book a cab home so that once the restaurant's buggy drops you at the exit, you don't have to join the huge queues of tourists.

If it's an impressive dinner to thank business guests or to entertain a new client travelling with their partner you are looking for, this is a good place to take them.



Sumptuous dishes tempt your tastebuds

**POLLEN**

**Pollen**

Flower Dome, Gardens by the Bay,  
18 Marina Gardens Drive, 01-09,  
Singapore, 018953  
Tel: +65 6604 9988  
[www.pollen.com.sg](http://www.pollen.com.sg)