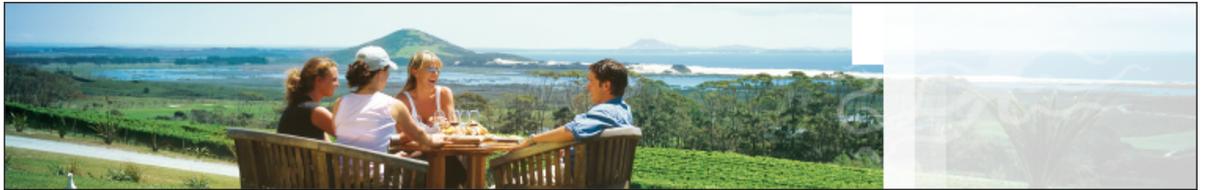


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## The Master at the MasterClasses: Fernando Peire



### John Clarke went and learnt something

It has to be said: the Restaurant Association of New Zealand scored something of a culinary coup, with Fernando Peire, director of London's famous The Ivy Restaurant, headlining this year's Telecom MasterClasses.

Renowned for reviving London's most-loved and enduring theatre restaurant not once, but twice, Peire shared his experience with appreciative audiences from New Zealand's hospitality industry.

"Fernando Peire has an unrivalled understanding of the restaurant business, and an instinctive feel for how to create a broad and loyal customer base - crucial to any successful restaurant," says Steve McKenzie, chief executive of the Restaurant Association. And so it proved. At ease, engaged and engaging, Peire interacted with his well-attended audiences and them with him - with the happy result that the classes became more a forum than a lecture.

Peire's focus on attention to detail and practicality reminded us of the things we know but push to the background due to constant day-to-day operational dramas - that those fussy pain-in-the-ass customers will be your best customers if you treat them as special - and that's what we are there for after all. And he touched on a few things we maybe just never thought of - such as how many of us have actually sat at every setting in our dining areas and considered whether we would want to be seated here? 'Not many if any' as Scribe would say!

Anyone who didn't come away from these sessions a better restaurateur would have to have been deaf, dumb, blind - and stupid. For the first time the Restaurant Association also took its Telecom MasterClasses to Wellington and if in future years the Restaurant Association can do half as well as it has done in the past couple of years then it will have to consider extending the sessions even further.

#### Fernando Peire

And not only has he built the legendary The Ivy up twice, he has also rescued and re-launched many other renowned restaurants and hotels.

Peire began in the restaurant trade while putting himself through a degree in law and French at Manchester University. After graduating, he moved into the industry fulltime, first managing, and becoming a shareholder in, Manchester's S&K Restaurant, and then operating The Left Bank restaurant with a business partner in London's Chelsea.

In 1990 he joined the newly re-opened The Ivy restaurant as senior Maitre d', eventually becoming a shareholder and board member. When The Ivy's parent company was bought by the Belgo chain, he left to become a consultant, turning around some of the world's once grand, but now struggling, restaurants and hotels, and launching others. Soho's Quo Vadis, Holland Park's The Halcyon, Morton's Berkeley Square, Villa Nova in Barbados and Paddington's The Frontline Club and Restaurant all benefited from Peire's attention.

When Belgo sold Caprice Holdings, The Ivy's parent company, to a new owner in 2007, Peire was invited back as director.

Peire explained his approach to creating a successful restaurant to Bentley Magazine: "If I am eating in Rome, Geneva or Paris, I love to go to a regulars' restaurant, even if I don't know anyone there. The prices are fair and you feel as if you are being looked after properly. That is what The Ivy is about."

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