

MORE THAN MEAT – Past, Present And Future

By Alexander Baron - Feb 7, 2016

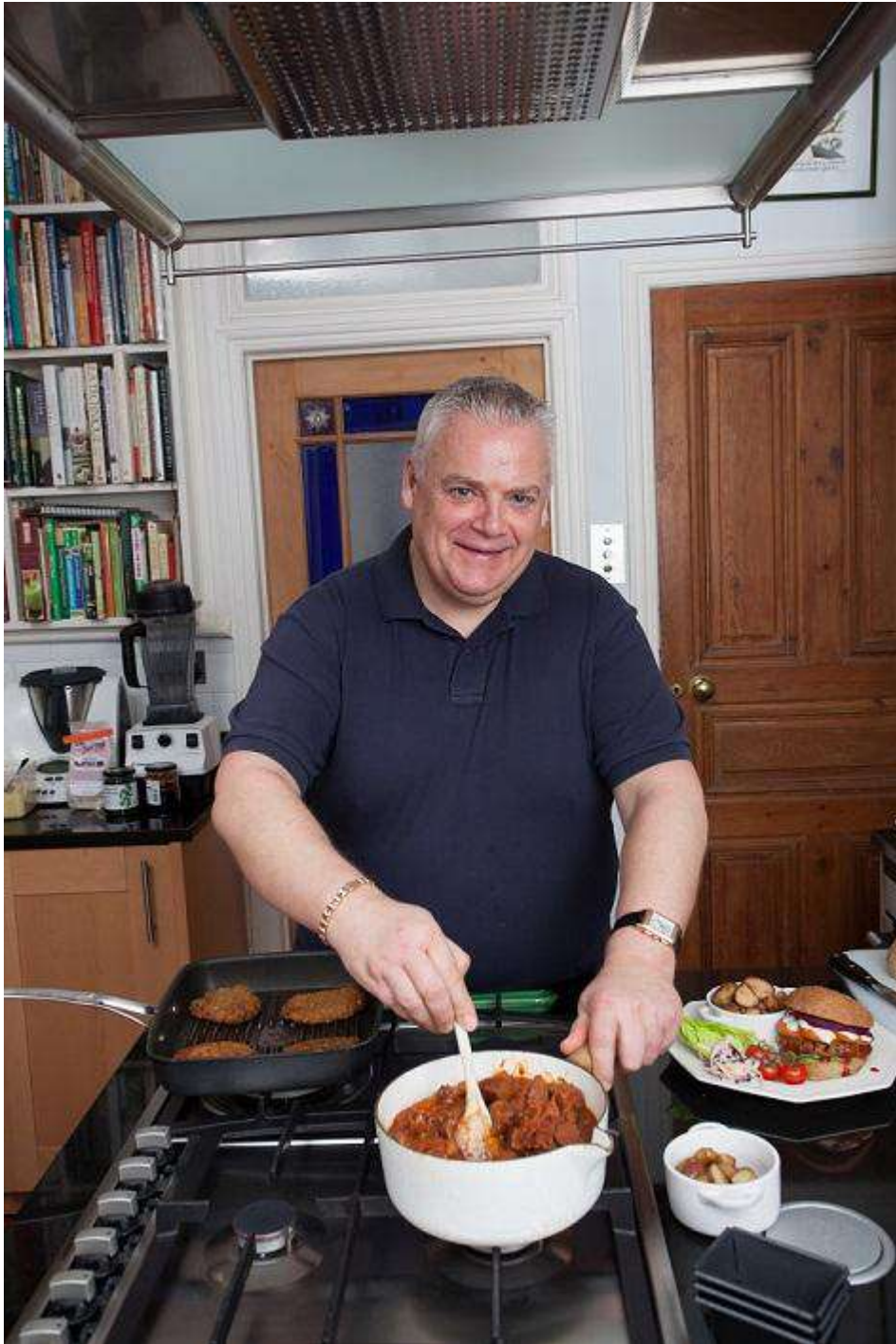


This is what people think of More Than Meat products

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Last month, I sat down with Barry Honeycombe, the man behind MORE THAN MEAT. We had an in-depth discussion about his revolutionary new approach to vegan cookery, his recipes, and his plans for the future. If you have not heard of Sydenham's answer to Colonel Sanders, check out this [earlier article](#). The following day he was off to California as part of his other job, with the international computing firm Nomis Solutions, who he says have been very accommodating of his second profession.



Master chef Barry Honeycombe in his kitchen

As a lifelong fan of cooking, he began looking around several years ago and came up with something extraordinary: wheat protein that gives the texture of meat, a creation he has honed to perfection with a little help from public feedback for his first ever offering – the More Than Meat beefburger.

Most vegetarian products use wheat protein or seitan, known in the Far East as mock duck – there must be a joke there! Barry adds other wholefoods to adjust the texture of his burgers.

His products are typically 40% more protein, 40% less Calories, zero cholesterol and 99% less saturated fat than their meat alternatives. When I asked him why vegetarians much less vegans would want to eat a food that tasted like meat he said “I can only speak for myself, but I miss the texture”.

Of his latest creation he says “When you put it in your mouth, it’s a burger”. It certainly is. Some long term dedicated vegetarians, don’t find his products appealing, but there is clearly an enormous market out there for meat-eaters and what he calls meat-reducers.

Barry has also done his homework for the longer term, namely for when he and many of you reading this are long departed from this Earth. It is, he says, part of the solution to world hunger. Rearing meat the traditional way leaves a massive carbon footprint, is expensive, a drain on resources, and don’t let’s talk about things like BSE, foot and mouth disease, etc.

His team includes a chef, Stefano Cirulli, who was so impressed by the concept of wheat-meat that he came to Sydenham all the way from Italy via Catford. It’s one thing to innovate and prepare delicious new food, it is quite another to market it. On the retail front he has some assistance from a team of independent sales agents, who promote More Than Meat products in other localities, albeit on a small scale. They are also now being stocked locally by *Well Being* in Barry’s high street, Sydenham Road. I noticed that one of his products boasted Vitamin B12 and asked him if he fortified them. He said this was down to the nutritional yeast which is fortified with this vitamin that many vegans supplement.



Stefano Cirulli at work

After studying for a Certificate in Plant Based Nutrition at Cornell University, he established a hobby website called [plantalicious dot com](http://plantalicious.com). Once he made the decision to start making and selling products, he created the domain [morethanmeat dot co dot uk](http://morethanmeat.co.uk).

It has though been no easy road, as a certain [Mr Turner once said](#). Initially he promoted his products himself, mainly at markets. When he promoted at Richmond on the other side of South London, he would be up at 5am, working the whole weekend. This was nothing new for him, he spent two and a half years commuting between London and Toronto at one point, something that left him exhausted. The markets were a great way to get customer feedback and refine the products. After a recent health scare, which turned out to be exhaustion, he has now stopped doing the markets and is concentrating on securing more retail and food service outlets for his products.

Deciding he had to slow down a bit, last year he exhibited at Food Matters Live, (see picture below). That was expensive, but his networking together with his websites appears to be paying off. It is not easy to launch a new food brand, getting established against known players in the market is difficult, and consumers had never heard of More Than Meat. They are working hard on a shoestring budget to get the word out.

I asked him about the legal situation, could he for example patent his recipes? The bad news is no. Nor is it possible to keep the ingredients entirely secret because in the UK they have to be included on the packaging by law. However, while what goes into the food may be a matter of public record, how the products are assembled is a different matter. This is a closely guarded secret known only to the man himself and Stefano.

The good news is that the More Than Meat logo and brand name were trademarked about 18 months ago. That extends to the More Than Meat shirt he wears, something that in the long term might be expanded with mugs, pens, and things, but for the next few years he has more important matters with which to concern himself, like expanding his operation.

How he goes about this we will see, he has certainly seen the right kind of people express an interest in backing More Than Meat, but sensibly is keen to a) retain control and b) avoid investors who will seek to take the company in a direction he doesn't like. The ideal model would might be a country by country franchise, but for the moment he is content to continue operating on a small scale, although somehow I get the impression that More Than Meat won't be "small potatoes" for much longer.



Barry exhibiting his creations with chef Stefano Cirulli



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