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In search of star quality

Michelin has recently published its 100th Guide to Great Britain & Ireland – but is a printed guide still relevant in the 21st century? We ask former editor Derek Bulmer

Michelin still has a very strong readership that buys the guide every year. Do I think there's a future for printed guides in ten or 20 years' time? I don't know. Information technology is moving on so fast and people want information so quickly nowadays. In the future it may be that the guide is downloadable four times a year or monthly.

Commentators who say the guide is outdated clearly haven't studied it in any great detail recently. Do they not know we give stars for pubs now? There has been a move towards informality and flexibility in dining for some time. People don't necessarily want the very formal

experience any more and the guide has changed to reflect that.

If you look at the stars awarded over the past ten years there has been more for that type of restaurant than there would be for the Alain Ducasse or Hélène Darroze type restaurant. The current guide includes about 1,700 restaurants, of which 143 have got stars, and a lot of those are quite informal. The other 1,500 are normal, straightforward restaurants anyone would go to any time. The day when the first gastropub

breaks through to the two-star level is not very far away – within the next year or two. It's inevitable.

My new role as a restaurant consultant for MyJam is to help chefs improve their food. It's all about working with chefs and giving them feedback on what they're doing to make the food better for their customers. Chefs never know when to leave a dish alone – overcomplication is the biggest problem I've come across in my time so I'll be telling them to keep it simple.

