

**Title:** Leading social change through prison fine dining.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter evaluates in-prison dining as a new trend in global tourism. This trend contributes to a wider social purpose of reducing reoffending rates and changing public perceptions of prisoners. The issue of rising crime, incarceration and reoffending rates in the developed world has led to the creation of hospitality training and employment programmes in working prisons to rehabilitate, reduce recidivism, engender social impact, and help offenders find employment in the hospitality industry. Examples of such training programmes include The Clink Charity in the United Kingdom; restaurant INTERNO in Columbia, and the Gate to Plate event in New Zealand (Harkison & McIntosh, 2019; Thomas-Graham, 2019).

The Clink Charity successfully runs four training restaurants open to the public in working prisons in Brixton, Cardiff, High Down and Styal. Since 2009, it has noted a 65.6% reduction in reoffending among its former prisoners who participated in the training programme (The Clink Charity, 2022). This chapter evaluates the success of The Clink Charity's training programme as a means to understand the new trend for fine dining in prison restaurants. The trend for responsible hospitality experiences tackles the concerning issue of recidivism and reveals a niche culinary tourism product. Working prisons are not usually places tourists choose to visit, yet research shows growing demand for these culinary experiences (Gebbers, McIntosh & Harkison, 2021). We draw on our evaluation of 3,951 TripAdvisor online customer reviews to reveal the positive memorable experiences reported by The Clink restaurant customers and the potential to change deep-set negative public assumptions about prisoners and help ameliorate the global dilemma of rising crime rates and recidivism.

### **1. Hospitality training programmes in prisons: a response to the dilemma in the developed world**

Statistics record 11.5 million people being held in penal institutions around the world in 2021 (ICPR, 2021). The focus of this chapter is the dilemma caused by the global issue of rising crime and recidivism. Recidivism, - or reoffending, rearrested, reconvicted, and reentering the prison system, - is a major policy challenge for countries in the developed world. It concerns a repetitive cycle of reoffending and reincarceration for crimes committed. Recidivism is seen as important for improving public safety. Unfortunately, research continues to show that time spent in prison for crimes committed does not successfully rehabilitate offenders. In the UK

for example, statistics show that 75% of inmates reoffend within nine years of release from prison, and 39.3% within the first twelve months (SP&CC, 2020). The reoffending rate for those sentenced to less than 12 months is greater. Reimprisonment of ex-offenders costs the UK taxpayer between £9.5 to £15 billion per year and continues to be a worldwide dilemma (Newton, May, Eames & Ahmad, 2019). This is compounded by continuing increases in the size of the prison population year-on-year, consequently also leading to the problem of overcrowding in prisons and increased costs associated with incarceration and reducing crime rates. As such, rehabilitation is entrenched in social and criminal justice policy throughout the developed world. Reforms to the prison system and national crime prevention strategies or change programmes initiated by government justice departments thus aim to seek solutions through long term programmes that aim to create conditions in which opportunities and motivation for crime will be reduced (Full Fact, 2016). The aim of rehabilitation is to provide learning in order to change debilitating behaviour to live a life free from crime and to stabilise the lives of the formerly incarcerated and their families.

The social situation of the offender, including education, employment, and peer association, is found to have a major influence on increasing the likelihood of recidivism (Buckman, 2015). As such, incorporating education and employment opportunities into incarceration are seen among the suite of proposed rehabilitation methods implemented by national justice systems, alongside support for mental health, addiction counselling and community reintegration services. This comes as a result of policy changes to consider prisons as providing purposeful activity. The main objective of the Prison Reform Programme in England and Wales set out by the government in 2016 is to provide prisoners with access to training and education in prisons. Thus, purposeful activity is such that “prisoners are able, and expected, to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them” (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018, p.6). Examples include vocational training and work, work placements, as well as education, art classes, and peer support (Graham, 2020).

In 2018/19, over 4,500 prisoners in New Zealand participated in vocational short courses or industry qualification training provided through 70 vocational short courses available for prisoners during incarceration by New Zealand’s Department of Corrections, covering skills including first aid, and health and safety (Department of Corrections, 2019). External education providers and private training establishments also deliver a range of qualifications inside prisons to a similar number of prisoners. Education and training programmes during incarceration are shown to increase offenders’ motivation for change, support learning needs

like literacy and numeracy skills, as well as providing them with a formal qualification. They provide practical training, skills and experience before prisoners finish their sentences and re-enter society (McIntosh, Gebbels, Harkison, 2020). They can provide employment pathways to support them economically and socially upon release (Gebbels et al., 2021). Importantly, research shows that prisoners who participate in education and training programmes, combined with counselling, life skills, work experience and post release support are less likely to recidivate (Buck, 2000; Collins, 2011). The delivery of in prison training and education also comes with the challenges posed by the security, policy barriers, and practical confines of a working prison and the potential for changing financial and personnel resourcing (Collins, 2011; Hunter & Boyce, 2009).

Among the types of training and education programmes offered in prisons to rehabilitate prisoners include hospitality and culinary qualifications (Goodger, 2003; Werblow & Dischino, 2015; Peled-Laskov & Timor, 2018). Hospitality and culinary programmes are seen as effective in prisoner rehabilitation because they open up good employment opportunities in an industry where employees are in high demand; provide important social interaction and teamwork skills that the industry requires; and deliver transferable skills to other jobs. One of the main reasons ex-offenders choose to work in hospitality is because of their belief that it enables them to (re)connect socially, act as their true self, and derive a perception of themselves as a “normal” person away from the stigma of their crime (Beier, 2015).

Delivery of such programmes requires cooperation between stakeholders such as government justice departments, prison staff, in-house and/or external training providers, funding agencies, programme mentors, social enterprises and/or wrap-around support service agencies and potential employers. From a stakeholder’s perspective, the Institute of Hospitality UK, for instance, advocates that ex-offenders are a potentially untapped resource for labour challenges experienced within the hospitality industry (Institute of Hospitality, 2022). The Institute promotes hiring an ex-offender as not only a potential and trustworthy labour source but also helps a hospitality business meet their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, and provide financial, moral, and societal benefits to the employee.

One notable in-prison training programme aiming to reduce recidivism was initiated by The Clink Charity in the UK. The original concept of The Clink restaurants in the UK, the case study focus of this chapter, was created by the HMP High Down prison catering manager, Alberto Crisci OBE in collaboration with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, UK. He

recognised the potential of prisoners working in the prison kitchens and introduced training in the form of City & Guilds NVQ accreditation to provide a professional structure to develop prisoners' culinary skills in registered catering college restaurants. The first public Clink training restaurant opened in 2009 in which prisoners began to serve fine dining food to paying customers from the public within the walls of the working prison whilst working toward their hospitality qualification. The Clink Charity training restaurants continue to prove a success in bringing down the reoffending rate among graduates from its programmes, which makes it a worthy case to evaluate.

## **2. In-prison dining: The Clink model**

In-prison dining is certainly not a new concept. Over the last 20 years, many decommissioned prisons, jails and other correctional facilities have been transformed into tourism attractions such as boutique hotels, restaurants and bars. Examples include Hotel Het Arresthuis in the Netherlands, The Good Hotel London, The Jailhouse Craft Beer Bar in Buena Vista, US, and the Malmaison Oxford Prison Hotel, UK. However, dining in working prisons is certainly a new concept. Traditional 'prison tourism' encompasses a varying degree of attractions from 'dark tourism' right through to fine dining restaurants – minus the alcohol and silverware being replaced with plastic cutlery (McIntosh & Harkison, 2022).

As discussed above, high incarceration and reoffending rates have prompted several initiatives in working prisons focusing on prisoner rehabilitation. Many correctional facilities around the world have started initiatives in the form of restaurants within the prison where inmates can work and train while still in prison. An example of this is the Ingalera, Milan, Italy. Initially, this gourmet restaurant was set up to train 1,200 inmates in catering skills; now the public have to book up to two months in advance to get a table. Another example, the Fife and Drum, Concord, Massachusetts, has been offering culinary training for inmates for the past 25 years. They use their own produce for their menu and are currently the only restaurant open to the public in America. One further example, the Idianathi, Cape Town, South Africa, has a casual eatery that serves breakfast and lunch. Although the reviews of this eatery are positive, this prison has been cited as having some of the worst overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions. The Interno, Cartagena, Columbia, is the first restaurant to be located in a woman's prison, helping women to gain valuable skills to help them find work when they are released.

Another example is The Clink Charity, which has restaurants in four locations in working prisons in the United Kingdom, alongside a vast and growing portfolio of other activities (Thomas-Graham, 2019). This example will now be discussed in more detail.

In 2009, while HMP prison High Down, a male Category B prison in Surrey, UK was going through an expansion, Alberto Crisci and his trustees, petitioned to have an under-utilised part of the prison's property turned into a restaurant. As a result, the first Clink restaurant was opened in 2009 in HMP High Down, Surrey. Based on the success of the first Clink, further three training restaurants were established. The second restaurant opened in HMP Cardiff within the grounds of the Category B prison. The third restaurant opened in HMP Brixton, Category C/D prison, and in 2015 the fourth Clink restaurant opened in HMP Styal, category D prison - the only restaurant to train female prisoners (Graham, 2020). To learn more about prison categories, please see Table 1.

Table 1. Prison categories

Category A:	'Prisoners whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or the police or the security of the State and for whom the aim must be to make escape impossible.'
Category B:	'Prisoners for whom the very highest conditions are not necessary but who do not have the resources and will to make a determined escape attempt.'
Category C:	'Prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but who do not have the resources and will to make a determined escape attempt.'
Category D:	'Prisoners who present a low risk; can reasonably be trusted in open conditions and for whom open conditions are appropriate.'

(MoJ, 2011, p.6).

At the time of setting up the first Clink training restaurant, there was a 48% reoffending rate and a 60% recidivism rate within the first year of release for inmates. The initiative aimed to provide more formal training for inmates and the ability to complete formal qualifications. One of the wider aims of this initiative was to provide an alternative option that would aid in the reduction of recidivism within prisons. Secondly, this initiative would provide students who participated an education, that would inevitably lead to job prosperity and a chance for them to enrich and support their lives without resorting to crime again (The Clink Charity, 2022; Harkison & McIntosh, 2019). The Clink Charity has been working in partnership with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) since its inception to deliver a unique integrated training programme for inmates on the inside and on release.

The success of the Clink Charity lies in the well-established formal, five-step integrated programme (Recruit, Train, Support, Employ, Mentor). The Clink works with men and women in prisons who have six to 18 months left to serve. All Clink training projects replicate a real-life working environment on the inside whilst the students work towards gaining their City and Guilds National Vocational Qualifications Levels 1, 2 and 3. Students will gain soft skills such as improving their communication skills, growing in confidence, and learning to work as part of a team. The students will train up to 35 hours per week, preparing them to be ‘work ready’ upon their release. The training restaurants cater for 90–120 customers at a time in each restaurant, providing an excellent training environment. The Clink Charity works and supports Clink Graduates upon release too, helping them to reintegrate back into society and into full-time employment. Thus, the programme goes beyond the sentence period; they continually work with the graduate post release for a minimum of 12 months to help them secure full-time employment and accommodation. Clink Graduates have found successful employment in hospitality establishments ranging from high street catering firms to luxury hotels.

Over the last decade, The Clink Charity has set the scene for using hospitality as a source for good. By replicating this exemplary model four times, they have also started other ventures - Clink Events, Clink Gardens, The Clink Café in Manchester, and Clink@Home, home-delivery service during the pandemic from the Brixton restaurant. The Clink Kitchens is the newest addition to the Clink portfolio, three Clink Kitchen pilot sites (HMP Bristol, HMP Risley and HMP Styal) were set up in 2018. These sites are part of the Clink Integrated Rehabilitation Programme (CIRP). The new programme is delivered in the main prison kitchens by Clink Kitchens trainers and assessors who are all hospitality industry professionals. The course is available for inmates who volunteer for training whilst working in the prison kitchens preparing and cooking meals for their fellow prisoners. In April 2021 HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Send and HMP Downview started to deliver this programme and there will be a steady roll-out of this programme to ultimately have it in 70 prison kitchens (24 by the end of 2021 and 36 by the end of 2022), creating opportunities to help as many as two thousand offenders into employment and away from crime for good. Overall, the Clink Kitchen programme has proven to significantly cut the rates of reoffending of inmates. 32% of inmates who have done this programme so far are less likely to commit further crimes compared to those who did not do the programme (Frazer, 2021).

Research has thus shown that The Clink model works, and that recidivism has dropped for the graduates of the Clink programme. Now is the time for them to maintain and sustain the high quality of food and service. Their reputation and success to date means that The Clink model could also be replicated in other prisons domestically and internationally (McIntosh et al, 2020). A franchise of this model would include the principles, practices and standards of procedure that is needed to run a 'Clink'. However, to ensure that the model is successful, every establishment that 'signs' up to run a 'Clink' would need to follow the package very carefully. At present, this model is a successful social enterprise concept that trains inmates while in prison, giving them invaluable skills, which includes getting them 'work ready' (Gebbels et al., 2021). The hospitality industry has so much to gain from the Clink model as there is a huge skills shortage worldwide and the Clink model could help to produce a well-trained and qualified workforce (The Clink Charity, 2022; Gebbels et al, 2021). In fact, The Clink portfolio of training restaurants is a great way of showcasing hospitality in a different format within prisons: highlighting the range of benefits of hospitality that could be introduced to other prisons, from fine dining to making everyday meals for the inmates. This case provides a new way in which hospitality can be used for social change, through in-prison dining.

### **3. Hospitality and social purpose: Changing public's perceptions**

Based on the above discussion, The Clink Charity has certainly contributed to a new trend toward a form of responsible, socially conscious hospitality (McIntosh et al., 2021). So much so, that visiting a working prison has become a tourist attraction, building on the recognised phenomenon of former prisons, now museums, as popular tourist experiences worldwide (Strange & Kempa, 2003). In this section, we discuss how in-prison dining, apart from helping to tackle the concerning issue of recidivism, is also an example of responsible, conscious hospitality - a vehicle of social change (Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2014). By dining in The Clink restaurants and receiving exceptional hospitality service, we witness a positive change in the public's perception and opinion towards offenders. As such, in-prison dining is conceptualised as a niche culinary tourism product which benefits three stakeholder groups: prisoners, customers, and hospitality employers. These benefits include the opportunity for prisoners to gain qualifications, work experience and employment prospects, a unique fine dining experience for customers and a work ready, qualified workforce for the industry (Table 2).

Table 2. Benefits of employing Clink Graduates

Resolving skills shortage	Working with Clink Graduates makes good business sense, as well as it helps ex-offenders get their lives back on track.
Reducing recruitment costs	The cost to fill the average non-managerial vacancy costs around £2,000. Work inclusion initiatives, such as recruitment of ex-offenders can help reduce those overheads and save organisations substantial sums.
Increasing staff retention	81% of hospitality businesses that employ ex-offenders say they have helped their businesses. The higher value of having a job means a stronger desire to stay out of prisons, which can lead to higher levels of loyalty and retention.
Reducing staff absence	Employers' concern around hiring ex-offenders is a worry that they might be dishonest and untrustworthy. However, over half of employers of ex-offenders would positively rate their attendance at work, as being motivated and reliable.
Making a difference	Over two-fifths of employers say hiring ex-offenders has helped their company become socially responsible. Actively hiring former prisoners as such Clink Graduates is proven to reduce reoffending.

(Institute of Hospitality, 2022, p.2).

With any new trend, tourists are known to share their experiences via social media and user-generated content. One of the most popular platforms for hospitality and specifically dining out is TripAdvisor. It is also considered the most relevant online review site for hospitality (Garrido-Moreno & Locket, 2016). Gebbels et al. (2021)'s research analysed 3951 TripAdvisor reviews on all four Clink restaurants, between June 2011 and October 2019. The article revealed that 1) customer reviews positively support fine dining in prisons, 2) fine dining in prisons creates an outstanding and memorable culinary experience, and 3) customers fully support The Clink's cause of changing public perception of prisoners and giving them a second chance (Gebbels et al., 2021).

The evident success of The Clink Charity and its growing popularity among customers can be attributed to its strong reliance on the concept of hospitality and hospitableness. Broadly defined, hospitality is about making others feel welcome and comfortable, whether guests or customers (Ashness & Lashley, 1995; Farkić & Gebbels, 2022). Hospitableness, according to Telfer (2000, p.39) is "the trait possessed by hospitable people". One can argue that The Clink has become the space where hospitality is practised and delivered, since the feeling of welcome

has been noted by Clink customers. The analysis of the TripAdvisor customer reviews revealed that the main attraction for visiting a Clink restaurant is its high-quality food, professional welcome, and excellent service which contribute to a memorable dining experience. Many customers commented on the professional, friendly, and attentive service delivered by the professional front of house staff (the prisoners). Despite being training restaurants, the high quality of food, drink and service are considered on par with any non-training fine dining restaurant. Gebbels et al. (2021) concluded that prisoners are no longer considered as inmates but as highly trained hospitality employees.

There are many reasons for visiting a Clink restaurant; these ranged from celebrating a birthday, to Christmas parties to wedding anniversaries. What almost all reviews mentioned was being left with a memorable dining experience, despite strict security in place even before entering restaurant premises, the no-alcohol policy, and plastic cutlery. There is certainly an element of curiosity in relation to visiting a working prison and dining inside prison walls, which was also another motivation to dine in one of the Clink restaurants. The physical environment, including sophisticated décor, modern furniture and artwork created by prisoners, and atmosphere – relaxed, friendly, and professional, were also important tangible and intangible factors that were highlighted in the customers' reviews. The desire to share their memorable experiences in the Clink restaurants was evident in the majority of reviews finishing with a phrase 'worth a visit' or 'highly recommend', including details of the booking process, step-by-step explanation of the security screening, as well as details on nearby car parks or public transport. Therefore, visitors to the Clink can potentially be compared to brand ambassadors, who willingly and enthusiastically share their personal dining experiences. The purpose of the Clink Charity and the slogan – 'giving second chances' – are often featured in the reviews as a timely reminder that each customer has an important part to play in equipping prisoners with social and life skills, and a real possibility of employment upon release.

The hospitality industry, centred on customer/staff interaction, is an ideal environment for prisoner rehabilitation because prisoners working in those training restaurants can experience what life outside of the prison walls will be like, through engaging with the public inside the prison. As such, the charity partakes in (re)educating the public and the prisoners in a unique location. The knowledge exchange is possible, because the concept of a fine dining training restaurant has been applied successfully to an irregular location of a prison (Gebbels, et al., 2021). Built on the social capital of customers, the offer of hospitality is being reciprocated, so

much so that hospitality becomes the source for social good (Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2014). The success of the Clink training restaurants and its popularity evident in the large number of positive TripAdvisor reviews allows us to consider in-prison dining as a niche tourism experience. Niche products can make a lasting contribution to meaningful and sustainable tourism (Novelli, 2005), and gastronomy or culinary tourism can help to differentiate tourist experiences within destinations and act as a promotional tool. For many tourists, who might be returning to familiar destinations or visiting new ones, gastronomy and, in particular, sampling different or new food, is a key contributor to their overall tourism experience (UNWTO, 2012). A hostile and unwelcoming environment of a prison has become a destination for a culinary experience. By dining in The Clink restaurants and receiving exceptional hospitality service, we witness not only satisfied customers but more importantly a positive change in public perception and opinion towards offenders.

#### **4. Towards a new trend in global tourism**

This chapter introduced and evaluated in-prison dining as a new trend in global tourism by using the case study of The Clink Charity and its successful running of four fine-dining, training restaurants staffed by prisoners themselves. As discussed in this chapter, the in-prison dining tourism trend contributes to a wider social purpose of reducing reoffending rates and changing public perceptions of prisoners. However, as previously noted by Gebbels et al. (2021), the topic of training restaurants and their delivery of memorable experiences has rarely been researched in the field of hospitality research, notably those based within working prisons. Therefore, there is a need to track and measure these culinary experiences and their contribution to the wider social purposes of how hospitality can rehabilitate prisoners. Furthermore, since many Clink Graduates have found employment upon release, there is a need to understand this issue outside of such a training programme and learn from ex-offenders who have gone on to open their own businesses in hospitality.

Based on the analysis of the TripAdvisor reviews, these fine-dining restaurants certainly deliver exceptional service and a high standard of food. As cuisine can be a reason for tourists to visit a particular destination, it is necessary to better understand the gastro experience of dining in one of the Clink restaurants. Furthermore, there are several dynamic aspects of dining in a prison – the no-alcohol policy, strict security screening, plastic cutlery – all of which coincide with customers interacting with prisoners. It is through those intimate interactions, enabled by

the concept of hospitality, that the public are able to engage with prisoners and learn more about who they are and how this novel hospitality enterprise is changing their lives inside, and later outside the prison walls. Engendered as the 'inside and outside divide' by Gebbels et al. (2021), the physical space of restaurants inside prisons gives customers a chance to get an insight into how the prison functions, whilst for prisoners, the same physical space is the outside, an opportunity to engage with the public to gain confidence before release and integration back into society. Therefore, visiting a Clink restaurant and subsequently supporting the great cause of the Clink Charity is the niche tourism product that becomes a conduit between the inside and outside, contributing to prisons fulfilling their role as spaces for purposeful activity.

This new conceptualisation of in-prison dining as a niche culinary tourism product requires greater investigation and research, especially on the novelty aspect for tourists. For instance, is there going to be a continued trend for such niche experiences, blending dining out for social good? One way to achieve a better understanding of this new global tourism trend is to collate data from other in-prison fine dining restaurants throughout the world and draw on similarities and differences. This is also likely to enable us to look at the social drivers for increased social consciousness through hospitality products, leading to more conversations on bringing to light the social, economic, and cultural links between crime and tourism.

With regards to the Clink model discussed in this chapter, research should also investigate what this new trend means for policy, could the Clink model be rolled out domestically in the UK and internationally? For example, future research could unveil the customer decision-making process for visiting these restaurants with a focus on pre, during, and post dining experiences, and how visitors' perceptions of offenders have changed as a result. Hospitality and tourism researchers have concentrated on the training and education aspect of this new trend using The Clink Charity as the case study, however, there is a lack of literature on this global trend and how it benefits the various stakeholders: prisoners, communities, employers, and prison services. What is yet to be known is whether and how visiting The Clink restaurants may have potentially begun to change public perceptions through the delivery of professional fine dining restaurant experiences by highly trained chefs and front of house staff whose label as 'prisoners' may be otherwise stigmatised. The link between the global trend for fine dining in prisons and its potential to engender wider social change thus requires further investigation.

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