

CASE STUDY

The Ox Barn at Thyme:

A Luxury Boutique Hotel in the Cotswolds



A £400,000 Kitchen Project

Thyme is a restored Cotswold manor and farm. It is a family story where a passion for the land, food and entertaining merges with a love of local heritage, beauty and conservation.

The estate dates from Roman times but is first clearly defined in the Domesday Book of 1086. The Manor House remains a private home and sits on the eastern side of its ancient Norman church. To the west of the church lie the manorial barns, houses and cottages, which are at the heart of this medieval estate.

Caryn and Jerry Hibbert moved into Southrop Manor in 2002, and soon after acquired the derelict farm buildings that sat adjacent to their new home.

The restoration has been slow and considered. Thyme Manor has evolved organically with an understanding that conservation is about sustainability – not only preserving the past but, more importantly, securing the future.

The restoration of Thyme began with a collaborative effort between Caryn Hibbert, Thyme's founder, and her father Michael Bertoli, a physicist and engineer, combining their passions for architecture, conservation, and design.

Introductions from the Architect

Thyme is a restored Cotswold manor and farm. It is a family story where a passion for the land and food merges with a love of local heritage, beauty and conservation. KCM were tasked with designing and outfitting a theatre kitchen and bar within the cavernous space of the widest single-span beam barn in the UK, as well as a back-of-house prep kitchen.

KCM was first put in touch with Thyme's founder and creative director, Caryn Hibbert via the project's original architect, having previously worked together on a pub near the site in Southrop, Gloucestershire. But while another architect subsequently completed the project, the hotel owners were more than happy to keep KCM on.

KCM liaised with both Caryn, who was responsible for the overall concept, and her son Charlie, who would take on the head chef role and guided the kitchen design development from an operational point of view. KCM director Alistair White and project specialist Steve Shepherd spearheaded the efforts.



A Bespoke Bar from Lithuania

The circular stainless steel bar within the restaurant space had to complement the featured show cooking. With the idea being that diners could sit at the bar before or after their meal, aesthetics were once again at the fore, with one of the main item specifications being the high-end IMC Ventus Eco bottle coolers.

KCM chose Novameta, a Lithuanian fabricator, for the bespoke bar and kitchen fabrications due to their extremely high-quality workmanship, attention to detail and 3D drawings of the Fabrications issued prior to production.

An element added as the project progressed was a glasswash area around the back of the bar. KCM worked with the Hibberts to change the design, bringing the bar and front kitchen forward slightly so that these were no longer against the wall, which also created a walkway for waiting staff. This enabled a Meiko FV to be discreetly tucked behind the bar area, and the double-skin construction throughout ensured it would be quiet during operation.

The 7.5 Meter Showpiece Cooking Suite

The showpiece of the project was a front-of-house finishing kitchen, adjacent to a circular bar area. As these were located within the venue's huge Ox Barn, aesthetics were a key consideration, as well as ventilation. Steve Shepherd explained: "We used HVAC Ltd as a specialist to review the ventilation for the room, including how it interfaced with all the other systems, and the company is very much used to working on larger schemes that don't just involve the kitchen."

The suite's two steel planchas enable the chef team to cook directly, or with pots and pans, while the central chrome plancha is positioned for show cooking. Furthermore, the Charvet accommodated twin fryers, three general-purpose ovens, an Adande refrigerated drawer and storage space. Project specialist Steve Shepherd commented: "The suite provides the chefs with a space to be creative and to have enough workspace to finish their dishes."

"There was quite a lot we had to consider behind the scenes, with the suite needing water and waste connections, and trying to fit in all the electronics. Thyme has an inceptor tank as they are not connected to mains waste, so we had to fit GreaseShield grease removal systems everywhere and these also needed to be incorporated with the Charvet."



Choosing The Made-to-Measure Masterpiece

Caryn and her son Charlie wanted something that reflected the high-end nature of the venue, so KCM presented them with several options, both modular and bespoke. It quickly became clear that the Hibberts would only be satisfied with a made-to-measure cookline with no visible joins, and so KCM took them to see some reference sites for leading high-end cooking equipment brands, including Charvet. When Caryn saw the suite at Jamie Oliver's, there was nothing else she was going to buy; it looked absolutely stunning.

Caryn Hibbert chose green panelling for the suite, which was particularly apt for Thyme. "It's on brand, as we grow as many ingredients as we can in our own garden and we have our on-site farm too."

During production, head chef Charlie visited the Charvet factory in Charavines, France, along with Alistair White and Steve Shepherd from KCM and Ian Clow, UK Sales Director at Charvet, who commented that he believed it was "the longest continual one-piece bespoke suite that Charvet has created for the UK".

The Charvet suite was delivered in three pieces, and its 3mm top was welded seamlessly and polished on site.



Freshly Picked Produce Demanded A Diverse Prep Kitchen

The choice of cooking and food preparation equipment in the back-of-house kitchen was geared towards catering for Thyme's farm-to-fork and sustainability ethos. The venue tries to grow as many ingredients as possible in its on-site garden and farm; therefore the equipment needed to be flexible to be able to manage the food Thyme is currently offering as well as different options the restaurant may want to try in the future.

Multifunctional kit was the order of the day, with the prep kitchen housing a Retigo Blue Vision combi oven, twin-deck Zanolli refractory stone ovens (set up for bread, but able to be adapted to pizza or lasagne), a Falcon F900 induction oven and twin stacked Turbofan convection ovens, which include humidification and can be used for overnight roasting, bake-off or any general-purpose oven cooking. KCM provided a number of accessories with the Retigo for further versatility, including a smoker, combi fry baskets, and ribbed and smooth griddle plates for an extra chargrill option. Precision was chosen for general refrigeration provision, as the manufacturer uses stainless steel inside and out as standard, along with CoolSmart technology for precise temperature control.

KCM again utilised Meiko with a DV80 pass-through dishwasher with reverse osmosis for the back-of-house, choosing it for its reliability, coupled with Meiko's 95% first-time fix rate and 24-hour call-out.



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I am really happy with the relationship, they were really supportive from the start.

My mother Caryn has got a lot of experience designing the overall layout of a hotel, but when it came to putting in a brand new kitchen that was a whole other challenge. I've worked in kitchens and I know what I like, but KCM helped us lay it out in a way that works.

Charlie Hibbert, Head Chef – Tyme

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Working with Caryn and Charlie was a genuine pleasure. Their vision for enhancing the already exceptional Thyme experience was clear from our very first meeting. The setting is beautiful, and their holistic approach, considering every element of the operation made it inspiring to support their ambition for a truly outstanding new restaurant and kitchen facility.

The project presented several unique challenges, from unexpected delays due to bats discovered on site to the complexities that come with renovating an older, unpredictable building. Despite this, our in house teams and subcontractors collaborated seamlessly to resolve each issue, maintain programme timelines, and deliver a space that reflects the high standards and character of Thyme. The finished result is something we are incredibly proud of.

Alistair White, Director – KCM



About KCM

KCM are specialists in the design, installation and refurbishment of all types of foodservice and bar premises offering a complete set of building and shopfitting services alongside equipment to provide a true, in-house, one-stop solution.

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