

Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit 2020

Day 1, Session 1 featuring Laure Patry, Social Company

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Session highlights and takeaways

- As a restaurant, you may not need to lower your prices.
- Staff, take advantage of the learning experiences that are available
- You may need to look outside of London for opportunities.

Full Session Transcript

Laure Patry [00:00:00] And people have been spending very well. It's not been a difference. It's not been. You don't have to reduce your price. You don't have to do that. If you're a certain category of restaurant, you just carry on what you are doing and you have your product.

Lawrence Francis [00:00:19] The Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit was recorded in September 2020, with the world recovering from the global pandemic and the hospitality sector still particularly challenged. Allow me Interpreting Wine founder Lawrence Francis to be your guide to this series of seven episodes featuring some of the UK's most respected voices discussing the impacts of the pandemic on food, wine, cocktails, bars, retail and events. Listen, share ideas and reconnect during this four day virtual summit held across web, podcast and social media. Please do share content and ideas using the hashtag #iwsummit and encourage anyone who might be interested to sign up at www.interpretingwine.com/summit.

Lawrence Francis [00:01:21] You heard the man. It gives me fantastic pleasure to welcome you to Day one Session one of the Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit 2020. Day one is all about wine and we start with Laure Patry, Executive Head Sommelier for Jason Atherton Social Company. She is a former guest on Interpreting Wine, previously appearing in April 2018 in episode 66. So she starts this conversation by bringing us up to speed with the last 28 months, the openings she's been involved with and how her role has changed. I was then keen for her to describe the early days of the pandemic and how they mobilised as a team to first close sites and ultimately make the most of the lockdown and the unexpected learning opportunities presented. Laure describes

how suppliers and producers embraced technology and were extremely generous in the face of uncertainty. In a wide ranging discussion, we then talk about price sensitivity in the wake of the pandemic. Eat Out To Help Out and government support. Innovation in the sector and how this has heightened the customer experience. Before we finish looking ahead to the end of the furlough scheme in October 2020 and finish on a positive note discussing the various opportunities that are available to sommeliers. Enjoy.

Laure Patry [00:02:55] So basically, I've been still around the group. We've been doing openings. So we've been opening in Shanghai a couple of years ago. I think that was one of the last opening that I did. And then we did a pop up in Saudi Arabia, which was quite interesting. And, uh, after that, I've been back to Pollen Street to help the team through January. And then after that, I was I came straight to City Social again to support the team and obviously been one of the biggest wine lists to take care as well of the restaurant. So usually I work around all the restaurants and I was here in February and then looking for a Head Sommelier to set up and then unfortunately the lockdown. So obviously we closed the restaurant and then now just come back the uncertain future. So for the moment, we're not recruiting. You know, as many of the restaurants in London and then we are just looking at what's happening. We were supposed to open actually in Mykonos in the summer, obviously then we could not go to Greece and so we decided to postpone. So I'm not sure exactly when Jason's planned that for. I believe it will be probably next summer. We do actually also have a restaurant in Switzerland, which I went as well in the end of November. So I support every other reopening of the Winter Social if you want, which is our our restaurant just for the winter season in St Moritz. So I was there for a week, so that should be the next, I think, reopening because they open all year for the summer. But our little restaurant there is only for the winter. So I think November I'll probably go out, support them to reopen. So that's the next future.

Lawrence Francis [00:04:52] Okay. I mean, a large part of why I'm doing this series and we again discussed is is really, I think, to give people who are really working first hand in hospitality, primarily in London, a chance to reflect. I mean, it seems strange thinking that here we are at the start of September 2020. Really, how much has changed in the last sort of six months, you know, since since March. I'm just curious to ask you to almost put your mind back and look back on yourself in March and and just reflect on what were kind of some of the what some of the reactions really I guess to to what was coming when people I guess realised that the pandemic was going to have a huge impact and it wasn't just going to be something overseas, it was actually going to be something. So I'm just curious to just sort of ask it as quite an open question, just just to ask you to sort of reflect on, you know, what were you seeing, what were you kind of hearing, I guess, at the outset?

Laure Patry [00:06:13] So the last week before we closed, we closed before the government told us to close. Obviously, there was very little guest because the government said to not go to restaurants and also obviously was a bit shocking for us because we didn't know what to do. So we actually decided because I think when you

look at the numbers, you decide that, is it worth to stay open or is it was actually to close. And, you know, you have to pay the staff. And if you're only going to do two tables it, it doesn't match. So the first one was Pollen Street. So it was Jason. And then basically I think he had a chat and he said, let's close it and then we will take it from there. So we didn't know we didn't know if we're going to reopen. We have no idea. Obviously, the flagship is Pollen Street. So Jason decided to close that first, so that was on the Wednesday afternoon. So he decided not to reopen for the dinner. And then at the same time was Social Eating House, which is the one in Soho, which is a bit more casual a bit more easy going. But again, it's one Michelin star on a different style. And then Berner's Tavern so the hotels obviously they had to close also. So again, a bit more fine dining and then here City Social. So we close the next day. So they were very close together like within a day or so. So basically we just go home and the first time you don't have a job really. So it's. Yeah. It was a bit shocking. And then after a week we were listening to the news and you know what's going to happen.

Laure Patry [00:07:51] And thank God, you know, the furlough came in and then we get supported because I think a lot of restaurants didn't know where to stand and some people were making their team redundant. And, you know, it was it was going quite fast I think because there was not reaction from the government. So it was very scary to think, you know, so many people lost their job. And what were they going to go? There's nowhere to go. You can go home. You can't you know, everything was was closed.

Laure Patry [00:08:22] So, yeah, I think that one week was very stressful for everyone. And then after that, we were thinking, OK, then, now we are safe. We're going to be at home. We just stay at home. And me, I just focus on training with my team, with the sommeliers, so a lot of everyday or every two days we did a zoom visit as well of vineyards, you know, try to take our mind away and keep on the wine and it was really nice. I met some producers on zoom for the first time, you know, so we did some tours in Alsace... In Beaujolais with Matthieu LaPierre. You know, with some super small producer and as well Chateau d'Yquem . So it was the first time they were doing this as well. So but then they were all very kind and, you know, they wanted to do it for us because obviously we are the ones selling the wine. So so you just focus on them, on the training. And, you know, at the beginning I thought I'm gonna wake up in the morning and then do my routine because otherwise you it's very easy to you know, you do nothing afterwards. So wake up and then have the call with the team at 10:00 for an hour and then someone decided another training in the afternoon. She was basically almost every day or two days for three months. So it was quite intense. But we never had the time to do so much training for the sommeliers. So I think it was the time to study for us. I understand some people some other people need a work and they cannot sustain themselves with just the furlough. But for the people that could I think it was 11 of us altogether between all the restaurants. So it was a good team. And, yeah, we wanted to do that to support them and to take them away from what was happening. And obviously we have to stay at home. So there's not a lot of other things you could do. Yeah, yeah.

Lawrence Francis [00:10:08] And it's really it's I think it's really sounds really positive that the producers were so involved. And I'm curious then, I mean, looking back, you know, when were there particular trends in terms of were they anticipating your needs? Were you reaching out to them? Was this sort of a, you know, body in the middle who was sort of saying, you know, you guys need you know.

Laure Patry [00:10:36] It was a mix to be honest. Some suppliers, we asked them, we said, could you organise a zoom with us? So and then we tell them we want to see the vineyards, you know, we want to be taken down. So. So and then one producer and I think I didn't tell him that we want to see the vineyards but you know, they went in with their phones because you could do the zoom on your phone. So they went, they went in the car and then they went to the vineyards, to show us the Grand Cru vineyards. Yeah. It was really nice. Was it really takes you away. And then you keep on learning and and then they say next time, come and visit us. So it's open doors as well for the sommeliers I think to come and visit them. Some of them were suppliers driven, so some suppliers say we're gonna do the zoom we're gonna do a visit in Domaine LeFlaive for example. So I did quite a bit of that as well. But we are not on video, so it's just the supplier with the producer and I think in that way it's a lot more control and then you can have a nice video of the vineyard and then you can ask question at the end. But you're not on video. That was the webinar.

Lawrence Francis [00:11:44] I'm sure there were loads of incredible experiences across that. But I'm curious, you know, you're I guess somewhat of an expert now and in zoom calls and the kind of virtual experience would out of any of those experiences, you like to perhaps shine a light on a particular experience that you had that you thought, okay, wow that really kind of brought me something and brought my team something really unique that, you know, I wasn't expecting.

Laure Patry [00:12:17] Yes, I think the zoom for me was definitely something that, you know, I will keep in mind. And I'm still doing a few. I mean, I did one a couple of weeks ago on organic and biodynamic and natural wine.

Lawrence Francis [00:12:30] And so this is where you're actually on the other side. You're kind of hosting.

Laure Patry [00:12:35] Yes. And I like that because I said before, I mean, I managed to have an hour with talking to the guests. You know, they were they were customer there. It was not sommelier it was customer, it was the general public. And I get time to talk for an hour to these people. And then usually in the restaurant, you get ten minutes at the table or fifteen minutes. It is not the same. So I like that aspect of it. And I think of course, the tour of the vineyards I love it as well. I think it's amazing to be able to be transported there. And I think it's something people should keep doing for their customer because it makes them you know, you see, the vineyard is very different than just seeing the bottle of wine and just reading about, it makes it a different experience. So, yeah, for me the online was a definitely a positive. Yeah. Really something I enjoyed. And I and I think some people I keep on doing it. Obviously when you work in a

restaurants a bit more difficult with the hours to be on doing something like that. But I think for the guests at home, I think it's it's a great thing. I know 67 Pall Mall did quite a lot and I watched quite a lot as well and they record it. So you can watch them later, which I, I enjoy that as well because I can not go always on the lives or you can always watch it back. And I think it's it's really good. You know, if they do a specific region, you know, not not always talking about producer, but as a specific region. And and you learn very quickly when someone to talk to you rather than sometimes reading a book. I mean, I feel like that in in my experience.

Lawrence Francis [00:14:07] Yeah, this is and this is it. I guess wine is one of those areas where even if you if you kind of, you know, left your job and was just studying every day, then you probably you wouldn't learn everything. You know, there's there's so much learn. And I feel like there's so many different ways to slice the information. Yeah. And yeah, I think I think it's I would argue that because there's been so many zoom and virtual I would imagine that people have had to kind of step up their game as well. It's like you've got a lot of competition. You've got people on Instagram live, you've got people like zoom. And it's like a lot of times it's free and it's it's more a question of you want them at your zoom meeting you.

Laure Patry [00:14:55] A lot of suppliers were very generous and they support you and they sent you the wine, you know. So of course, it attracts you a little bit more on this. Okay. I want to be with the producer. I want to taste their wine. So there was a lot of generosity, I think from supplier in the wine trade that, you know, send a sample and say you can do the training with us. You know, we will support you. And then always the only time is is a good time that we had. We could learn. We don't know the future, so we don't know if we're gonna be able to reopen. So it's a bit scary. But I think that they knew that it was going to the support was it was there. You know, it was important for us.

Lawrence Francis [00:15:32] And it is absolutely great. And I'm very happy that you've you've chosen to shine a light on, I guess people all along the supply chain, the producers, the suppliers yourselves, the sommeliers as well, I guess responding very positively, you know, to to what is obviously a you know a very difficult situation. But what I also want to do, I do want to, I guess, present a balanced view as well for for, I guess, your friends and people that you've come up with and people that you probably mentor and you've been mentored by in London and more widely, I'm sure. And I'm just curious, were there were there either particular parts of the industry, particular parts of the supply chain that you saw and and you maybe, you know, had first hand experience of who were who were actually really, you know, negatively affected. And they were sort of kind of hit sideways by by what what's happened? Because I you know, I know there's there's been a lot of people that have been forced to close or have gone out of business. And I think it's fair, actually, to to reflect on some of those stories as well. And, you know, in some some of those people.

Laure Patry [00:16:55] Yeah, I mean, I was shocked as well when I saw for example the Ledbury closing. You know, this was one of probably one of my favourite restaurant.

I used to go there all the time at some points. And, you know, it's quite devastating to hear that they were one of the first one to go. You know, they decided that maybe that style of service, I think, wouldn't work for them. So, yeah, that's that was quite shocking. But I think the and then some of the sommelierstop as well contacted me that they've lost their job, you know, top position I'm talking about Head Sommelier, had lost lost their job if I knew anything. So obviously I always said, look, I keep your CV. I tried to as soon as I hear something, I send the message. These people are looking, you know, because some people very quickly afterwards, some people started to re-employ. So some people made a lot of people redundant. And then afterwards they realise the demand is there, actually. So we need some of those people back. But you for if you've been made redundant for months, what do you do? You're going to move back or, you know, you have to make a decision because you know they're going to call you back in a month. So you make a decision and then and then you move on. So, yeah, it was, a few people, I would say. Yeah, I heard that to change. But I think most of the restaurant. I mean all of the top restaurants just went back with it and you know, because that's our passion, that's what we love to do. And then we we were given a second chance, you know. So we really hope that that this time, you know, it's it's gonna work. But so far, I mean, when we opened Pollen Street, in August, I went a couple of days to help them and prep and then I saw it was so busy. It was so busy. And the people.

Lawrence Francis [00:18:48] And what was the state of the restaurant in terms of was it then fully opened? This is post July and services.

Laure Patry [00:19:00] Yes, it was open. I saw the beginning of August. So basically because of the social distancing, I mean, that was one of the thing that why some people close, obviously, because the two metre. But then they reduce to one metre so Jason decided OK we're just going to do one metre. But then we change the tabletop. We make the table bigger, so it's more comfortable for the customer. It doesn't feel like you've got a really big space, you know, and he did some like a little refurb and then did some work downstairs. Well, so basically he stepped up his game in the restaurant and change the entire menu. Made the dessert bar, a chef counter so now he's there on the chef counter. He's doing now the main course from there and then he's basically in the middle of his restaurant so he can see all the guests, all the guests can see him and he serves the customer. So he loves that. We didn't know. I mean we adapted. We looked at all the restaurant. You know, you always look at what people doing. Are they wearing masks are they not wearing mask and then we wanted to do what was the best for the guests, you know, having the little sanitiser on the table and making them feel comfortable. So we all wear mask. And it went very well. You know, I think people now are used to it. I mean, some people wear masks, some people don't wear masks. You don't know what to what people want. But obviously, I'm very happy to wear mask because, you know, when you see 130, 200 people per day, you pass next to in a restaurant. It's an enclosed place, even though you have the space. But I just think there's still a risk, you know, I mean, we're still in pandemic, so we can have fun, you know, and everything. And we want the customer to have fun. And then the staff can wear the mask to protect themselves. I don't see any problem. And then and then your customer, are just really happy and Pollen Street has just been so busy, so full the

entire of August and people have been spending very well. It's not been a difference. It's not been you don't have to reduce your price. You don't have to do that. If you're a certain category of restaurant, you just to carry on what you are doing and you have your product. You know the food, it costs a lot of money. It's something I realise a lot about that during the lockdown is the food costs a lot of money because when you research a little bit, you know what you eat. Because I research a lot of that because, you know, usually you don't have time. So you're like, OK. And then I research and it was hard to get food from supermarket in London. In Central London was nice. Yeah, totally. So I learned a lot too with the suppliers from the restaurant. And then I watch a lot of Instagram. And then I saw this person is making this for this supplier on and this supplier is selling to general public. So I started to order a little bit and then obviously bigger order and then, you know, freeze and then do this kind of thing. But the product was so much higher standard that what you get, you know, in supermarkets. And and then I discover next to where I live, there is the very nice, you know, fruit and veg places, it's all organic and obviously a little bit more expensive. But the quality of the product, you know, you don't need to eat as much, you know, is it's really good. So. So I think for the restaurant is the same people have learnt that they've learnt the price of the food. So they should not, you know, reduce too much their price or, you know, the people know that if you have a top product, you know, it's it's going to be like that.

Lawrence Francis [00:22:28] And I guess it's interesting, we're sitting here in the city, but Pollen Street is in Mayfair. And the thing that really comes to mind then is we've had a much lower amount of tourists coming in. Yes. Maybe in the last 20 years, I don't know. I don't have the figures. But I'm just curious, what what did that do to the to the restaurant then? You know, in in your sense, you know, the what were our people? Am I wrong or, you know, my sort of misguided? Are people still coming in the way that they were before for business to visit? Is this more now locals, as you know? What's this done to the customer mix.

Laure Patry [00:23:15] At Pollen Street, when I was there, it was basically our regulars that. And people have been waiting and people are celebrating, you know, a birthday or something. So it was not you know, it was a different crowd. It was not the business people. But look, now we're back in September. Here at City Social we have some business people. I see them. I'm very happy to see them for sure for lunch and for dinner. But but I guess the weekend is always a different crowd. But what we see, we don't get the people from obviously the people are coming for the weekend. Because of the quarantine is just too complicated, especially because in France, you know, you go to Paris for a weekend and then vice versa. But, yeah, unfortunately, the quarantine, I think will affect. But I think mostly hotels as well. That's why I think some of the hotels I mean, we haven't reopened the Biltmore yet, but Berner's Tavern is opening in a few days now. Next week I think they're reopening Berner's Tavern, but I think the hotels will get a bit more affected by that because a lot of the hotels have you know, it's it's not going to be people from the North of London, you know, maybe for weekend, but most of the time it will be foreigners, or people on business. So, I think it will affect a lot of the hotels. Yeah. And some of them may be reopening a bit later. But the restaurant, you know, everyone that's been opening, I mean, I've been to a few restaurants, maybe

some of them in August were not so busy, but I think now people are busy. And the weekend. A lot of places I go to weekends is really busy.

Lawrence Francis [00:24:52] You read my mind, too, because that was actually one of the burning questions I had as well. Is has the flow then completely changed? I mean, it's probably not relevant for you guys. The kind of Eat Out to Help Out. And, I guess the kind of anecdotes around that pushing a lot of weekend trade, and Thursday and Friday trade into Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. But I'm again, I'm just I'll ask it as an open question, have you noticed through takings or just through looking around, you know, have you have the actual the flows, the busy days, the busy times, are people kind of spreading out their visits across the day? You know what, if anything, has changed?

Laure Patry [00:25:42] I think the Eat Out to Help Out has worked very well for us as well, even though if you're a top Michelin Star, or if you are a bit more easy, I mean, Social Eating House I mean, we did quite a bit of ad for that. But the lunch menu, I mean, they want to carry on doing it, you know. We are one of the restaurant, like some of the restaurant that wants to keep on giving that £10 off, maximum £10 or 50 percent of the food. So at least you you feel like you're getting, you know, something back and it's to support us as well. And, you know, they feel like they're helping us as well. And like, Social Eating House..

Lawrence Francis [00:26:20] But that didn't take away from the weekend, as it were. It was buoyant Monday to Wednesday. And you still had the same.

Laure Patry [00:26:29] You were very busy and I think it was really good. It was so appreciated that that they did that because it's to build up the confidence for the customer to come out. You know, they feel like we'll come after we will after maybe the lunch menu because I don't know if I'm gonna feel comfortable and if I don't maybe I'm gonna go, you know, because you don't know how the people are gonna feel and you don't know they don't know how the spacing is in the restaurant. So maybe they come and they feel like, I don't really like, I don't want to stay or, you know, so. So I think it was as well a way to get the people to come out and build their confidence that we will look after them, that there is the space in the restaurant. And, you know, if you look at the restaurant where you go all the time. I mean, I supported, you know, my friends, the people that I like, the restaurant, that I like to go. That was the first place I went out and you see, they've made efforts. You know, they're trying to stay away from you and then they've got space in between tables. So obviously, they have to reduce the number of covers so they maybe have to do more covers or maybe they just say, okay, we'll just do less covers and then see how it goes. So I think everyone is taking a chance and everyone is willing to do it. But definitely the Eat Out to Help Out was just like amazing for us. Yeah. It was just really gave that confidence to the customer to give it, give it a try.

Lawrence Francis [00:27:49] I'm not surprised that you've used the word confidence and you know another word that people use, I think, as well is feeling safe. You know, and feeling able to go out there. And this is something that does really come to mind.

I'm curious, like all people are actually telling you that. Are they kind of talking to you about that or is that just something that you infer? I mean, because I imagine that no one's going to be sitting down smiling, you know, enjoying themselves if they don't feel safe. So I'm curious is that more something you're seeing and you just kind of getting the vibe from people? Or are people actually giving you verbal feedback in the moment?

Laure Patry [00:28:34] Well, I think because we were a little bit later to reopen, we only reopened in August and September. So I went out quite a few times and so I was in the shoes of the guest, basically. And I wanted to see I would feel as well of going out, how comfortable with my partner. And then and then, to be honest, I felt really confident and felt comfortable and I felt safe, you know, and and the customers they're not going to tell you, I mean, I think some of some people in the industry might tell you because they're your friends and they said, this is great, what you are you doing. You know, but most of the guests don't say anything. You know, we were amazed that some of them say, are you okay to wear mask or, you know. Is it not hurting you? No, actually, I say, me I'm quite fine. I'm actually quite feeling quite safe. So you know I've got no problem with it.

Laure Patry [00:29:28] And of course, at the beginning is something a bit different. But no, other than that, they don't say I feel safe or I feel comfortable in a restaurant or they don't really say they just embrace it. Basically, they're just they're out there. They want to enjoy themselves. And. And a lot of people, they're just really happy. And we want to keep on doing that. Even though they can't see us smiling. We just want to make sure they're happy. So we still, you know, talk to them and and recommend and, you know, we're still topping up the wine. You know, I know you know it's all fine. Of course, if they want to be left alone, we will do that as what we have to accommodate. Yeah. The guests need but most most people, they've we have the QR code, you know, if you do want to take the menu. But we have the menu and I would say a lot of people just want the menu and even at Pollen Street everyone wants the menu. Everyone wants to feel the wine list. You know, they don't wanna read through their phone. So it's it's just been very well accepted. And and it's it's so nice to see. So nice, because you just don't know how the people are going to be and if they're going to be scared.

Lawrence Francis [00:30:39] I guess every night you throw your doors open and you never know.

Laure Patry [00:30:45] Yeah. I mean now we get used to.

Lawrence Francis [00:30:47] It's more uncertainty. Yes. Obviously earlier on when you when you had had that break and yeah. It was like what's, what's going to be the feel of what's the atmosphere going to be.

Laure Patry [00:30:56] And you know, you have to, you have to as well use sanitiser or, you know, do things that people see you doing. So at least they know you're you know, you're looking after after them, you know, and it's a way to to keep that level because that's what we did. We need to make sure people, you know, like stay clean and stay on top of on top of themselves to make them feel safe.

Lawrence Francis [00:31:19] Yeah, sure. Sure, sure. And actually, again, we're obviously in tune mentally because the thing I was thinking about and the word I was thinking about was innovation. And, you know, the I guess the the stories of the changes and the differences that we might see in Pollen Street Social, I guess some of them have been forced by necessity. But but there's been innovation. There's been adaptation. And I'm just curious, you know, you mentioned there the QR code and this I mean, and potentially beyond the other changes that you made, I mean, have been innovation. And it can be a broader question, really, innovation you've seen in the sector or innovation that you've you've seen and you've take it in-house yourself. And maybe when you were a guest in those settings that you've seen that you'd like to shine a light on.

Laure Patry [00:32:14] Yeah. I mean, you know Jason was quite active on Instagram during the lockdown, which was great, which I really enjoyed as well. And I think we can all take some tips. And he actually reflected a lot on what was going on and he had the time to do that because, you know, opening restaurant is into a quite challenging. We opened so many restaurants on in this small amount of years. Plus having Pollen Street and he's been moving a lot. So sometimes you don't have time to reflect and think and when he thought about it and he thought okay, we are gonna have to do only this number of covers, that means, we're gonna be able to make that money. We have to let you know when you look at all of these he thought. Obviously, you have to lose some of the staff, which is quite sad as well. But you have to look at the business at that stage, you know, and and the keeping it safe. And then decided he said, now I know what I want to do, I will obviously spend a bit of money to some refurb. And I know I want to drive my restaurant to have two stars. I'm going to change all the food. I'm going to do that. And I'm going to be there, you know, and then he knows in his head what he wants. So now he's really driven by that and all the changes and everything. And he had time to think and I think that's why I think, you know, why not? This is his little baby and. And you know, it would be amazing, you know. And then and when you look at the way that they've changed everything, you know, is is just gone one step up. So I think some people have had time to do that. To be honest, here we've changed the entire menu as well. The chef we've changed the whole team in the kitchen is different. Most of them are different. So the Executive Head Chef that used to be for all our restaurant is now only here because he wanted a different project. So this is something new again. So we've again changed the food and obviously the level is aswell is one Michelin star. So we're gonna do a different project in the private dining room so I can't talk about it now because it's kind of a secret. And no-one's ever done that before in London. So we definitely find some, some ideas and how can we improve and how can we be different and why we're gonna attract the people to come here. So, yeah, I think a lot of people have got more ideas and changed a bit their business. Yeah, definitely.

Lawrence Francis [00:34:53] Okay. And, I won't I won't force you to share the innovation or the unique thing there. But, I'm curious also just about the kind of the thought processes. Is it a combination of I guess, the constraints that the pandemic is putting in? With looking at what other people are doing, with having, I guess, the time to

to think and to look, I'm just I'm just curious here inside that kind of a bit differently. You have to think differently.

Laure Patry [00:35:34] Do people want to be more with the QR code? You know, looking only from their phone. It's a lot of almost futuristic, basically. Do we want that? Are we ready for that? Some restaurant, much more than others. You know, it's very difficult to for me as well. To have a wine list, which you cannot see the size when you take it. You know, you don't know what you're waiting for when you take your phone and you say okay how many pages or you know, when you see the size of the wine list you have an idea already when you arrive in the restaurant, how long is it going to take me?

Laure Patry [00:36:06] But yeah, I think we have to, you know, I know for some very fine dining and old style restaurant, it's difficult and I get it, you know, but I think we have to work a little bit different now and we have to embrace that. Okay. And we have to maybe use our phone and get that QR code and read the menu on our phone. And you know, it's kind of about, you know, look at it is going to be less paper wasted. It is much better for the environment when you look at it. Now, the streets, it's a lot more for walking, a lot more for bicycle. When I commute everyday, you know, there's no not too many cars, not too many buses. It's much better and what happen during lockdown. Obviously, no one could drive. So it was it's amazing for the environment. I just found that it's incredible. So if we can walk a bit more towards that way, not say forget everything about papers, but, you know, it's much better for the future of the planet as well. So it's you know, we have to look at that.

Lawrence Francis [00:37:06] I can't remember if we mentioned it before we turned on the mic, but I think it's that for me, it's keeping the humanity and also keeping the things that maybe we've been collectively we've been kind of forced into into doing. But that do have very positive side effects and I don't I mean, my my my speculation would be that it's it's a question of of of pace, you know, not going too fast.

Laure Patry [00:37:40] We were all so busy for many years. We are so busy. We forgot, you know, we forgot that, you know, we're we're damaging the planet on the even the thing we eating because we we promote the people to make more of this food because we're buying it. But when we look at what you buy and what you if you don't go to buy anymore from a supermarket, I'm not saying everything but if you don't buy certain products, it's going to help. You know, the industry is gonna have everything and you're gonna feel much better as well. You know, I'd say it's a circle, but we've been so busy, that's for sure. And I think the good thing we can take away from the lockdown is that we've we've had time to to realise and we've been forced to kind of find another way to feed ourself. Are we gonna be planting our own veg? I mean, me, I've got a small balcony, but I'm planting my own veg now. I wasn't before and I didn't have any herbs. Now I've got, you know, all my herbs everything and and I've learnt that. And and I think we all because now we realise what am I eating what's inside, you know, I do for the wine. You know, I'm I'm very conscious of it. But we have to think for the food as well when we are sommeliers we don't think so much, you know, we think yeah, of course. A great product. You know, your your your top restaurant, they've got really

great products. But when you buy actually from the farmers and when you buy from the supermarket, even the taste is is so much difference. Yeah. Yeah. And yeah. So I think it's some I think we, we, we will learn a lot from it.

Lawrence Francis [00:39:11] Okay. Amazing. And I think. Yeah. Really. Last question for me. And you know I, I, I will and I do like to leave you the final word and always I think, invite you to be a little bit speculative and to kind of look ahead. And I will just say, you know me where I'm sitting here in September 2020, I guess the potentially the biggest challenge, short term challenge for the industry is coming in only next month is the end of furlough. And I think we've almost come full circle now because right at the very start of the conversation, you were saying what a what a relief and what a help that was in all of the other sort of government support. So I guess, you know, we do have to and I would, you know, ask you to to address that and just, you know, your sense of that and its potential impact more widely, I guess. But then also, of course, to to potentially look. Look forward and to, you know, to to to kind of, you know. How do you how do you feel more broadly as well? But as I say, maybe starting with that hurdle I guess that's coming next month.

Laure Patry [00:40:31] Yes. I mean, obviously not everyone's gone back to work. I think it will be hard because our industry was one of the worst hit with the lockdown and the virus. So I do think there's going to be a lot more redundancy and more people are gonna lose their job. But again, I'm really hoping usually it's the busy season for us, you know, November, December, when people start to go out even more. And so I'm really hoping that now people come out a bit more and then the restaurants feel like they're gonna be able to keep their staff. They're gonna be able to carry on. So. It's a bit uncertain at the moment because he's right here every week is a different scenario. But and I I kind of pray for no lockdown anymore. But yeah, we take a week at the time. But I do think, unfortunately, more people will be losing their job.

Laure Patry [00:41:31] But again, some other people are reemploying and doing something different. So maybe they have to look at what else they can do in their industry because there's a lot of different things you can do. You know, okay, we work here in the restaurant, but, you know, maybe you can find work in the wine shop, when you're sommelier because people are still buying takeaway, you know. So there is that in there is always something you can find. And I didn't mention before, adaptation. Many restaurants did take away as well. I mean, it's this was incredible. It was. But, you know, you could do it as well for the wine. Why not some restaurants did takeaway for food. You can do delivery for the wine, a lot of things that people don't don't think about that can be done, you know, that people want because people want some people want to stay at home. So you need to give them that service that you're going to be, you know, the online sommelier for home or you know, you could you could do a lot of things.

Laure Patry [00:42:30] There's as well wineries, you know, I mean, we sent quite a few people during the harvest, you know, the harvest was very early this year. End of August, September, some supplier asked for some of the team if they want to go and do the harvest for a month. You know, and there's plenty of you need to think a bit outside

the box. But as a sommelier there is a lot of thing you can do because you you have your wine, you know, experience, not just the service. Is your wine knowledge and there's a lot more that can be done.

Laure Patry [00:42:58] But there's you know, there's always things to do and, you know, if it's not in London, you could be going to. I know in Cornwall was really busy in the summer. Lot of people were offering job. You know, it could be somewhere else. You could be doing something different. So I would say, you know, I would hope people that, you know, stay positive and keep their hopes up and then, you know, focus on, you know, maybe doing something a little bit different. But, you know, that's the the future. And the end of the furlough. And I mean, I want to stay positive for for the customer, for the team. We have to get back to it. And and. Yeah, just be what it was before, you know, try to bring back all of these.

Laure Patry [00:43:49] Maybe just want to say that, you know, I think you see a lot more people coming out as well now because I think people are tired to be at home, and they want to enjoy themselves. I mean, you know, that that's what you see and people want to have these two hours in the restaurant where they're there to, you know, have fun or meet their friends, and I'm the same as well, you know. So at the end of the week or, you know, after a couple of weeks, I want to go out. I want you to be with, you know, the the very nice staff in the restaurants that I really like. And I want to them to recommend me something they've been tasting or, you know, and is supporting the business, of course. But it's as well, I want to have my my time as well. And I think people they want to have fun, you know. So and that's what they do in the restaurant. They're there to enjoy themselves.

Lawrence Francis [00:44:44] A huge thank you to you, Laure. I really feel as though the words that you shared that will help a great many people. If you're listening on the Interpreting Wine website, you can of course, check below for the full transcript of this session, as well as my key takeaway learning points. And I've, of course, included the website and main social media handles for the Social Company.

Lawrence Francis [00:45:13] Day One of the Interpreting Wine Hospitality Summit continues with wine. And In Session two, I speak with Gus Gluck of G.B. Wine Shippers. The session is live below. So for an alternative wine based perspective on the pandemic. Head over to his session. See you there.