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**THEFT**

## Gun stolen from inside weapons exhibition

Police are investigating after a gun was stolen from inside the recent Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition at the ExCel centre.

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**BIG INTERVIEW**



## Sushi chef brings latest venture to Canary Wharf

Silla Bjerrum introduced Canary Wharf to sushi in the 1990s. Now she's back with a new venture for the area – bringing restaurant chain Feng Sushi to Billingsgate Market.

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**HERITAGE**



■ A visitor looks at a display in the National Maritime Museum's new gallery

## Trade legacy unpacked at maritime museum

The National Maritime opens its new gallery to the public for the first time today. Called Traders: The East India Company and Asia, the gallery will look at the impact the famous trading company left on modern Britain. And visitors will also be able to learn more through Traders Unpacked, a five-month festival celebrating the newest addition to the museum. Traders Unpacked will explore the national, international and personal legacy of the East India Company through music, film, fashion and debate. Leading writers, artists and academics will take part.

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**LIVE SHOW**



## Strictly dance at The O2

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■ Silla Bjerrum with one of the dishes served at Feng Sushi

# Sushi chef serves up a taste of dock land

**Silla Bjerrum**  
Sushi Chef - Feng Sushi

It looks like Silla Bjerrum has spent much of the last decade working her way back to the Docklands.

Sushi is now the meal of choice for thousands of Canary Wharf workers during their lunchtime and Silla proudly says she was the first sushi chef in the area.

But her business ambitions, building up the successful Feng Sushi chain, took her away from the part of London in which she cut her culinary teeth.

The sights, sounds – and definitely smells – of Billingsgate Fish Market have called her back though.

The sprawling hub of activity, the shortest of walks along Upper Bank Street to the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf, is the location for her latest branch of Feng Sushi, which has a major focus on delivery service.

## 'Loyal'

And she is very happy in her new home.

She says: "Markets are the beating heart of any city and they should be kept alive and supported and that's why I want to be close to it."

"If we put all the food markets outside the city, we won't be able to feed ourselves one day."

The 41-year-old Dane set up the Feng Sushi company in 1999 and has since opened six restaurants across the capital, including in Fulham, Borough Market and Kensington.

Her latest venture has brought her to a small unit in Billingsgate which she opened this month.

Though she is considering opening a full restaurant there in the future, for now it is geared towards takeaway deliveries to the E14, E16, EC2 and EC3 postcodes.

East London fans of Feng Sushi's offering, which Silla praises for its seasonality and sustainability and which includes varieties of fish from salmon to cuttlefish, previously relied on deliveries from London Bridge.

She admits that could result in a wait for customers.

She says: "It's been a bit of an issue that customers, faithful, loyal customers, will wait the 45 to 60 minutes but if you're working late and you're hungry and

*"Markets are the beating heart of any city and they should be kept alive and supported and that's why I want to be close to it."*

Silla Bjerrum

you want something to eat that's really healthy, we'd like to reduce that delivery time considerably and that's what we're expecting to do.

"We're aiming at 15 to 30 minutes."

Silla returns to her passion for Billingsgate in explaining the move as well.

Twice a week she now rises before the dawn breaks to pick and choose the best fish she can find amongst the more than 50 merchants who call it home.

She says: "The atmosphere [in Billingsgate] is crazy, it's messy and it's noisy but it's fun and there's banter like I've never seen before."

"I'm in there for 5.30am,

buying from various merchants and it's all about building up relationships.

"I'm considering having a restaurant here.

"I think the whole point of getting in here is to build up our delivery service but we may take on a restaurant upstairs.

## Enticing

"It's a shame Billingsgate is not more utilised by the general public. It's a great market and there should be fish restaurants where people come and have lunch."

A life perfecting the maki, nigiri and tempura that makes its way onto your plate wasn't always on the cards for Silla.

She studied philosophy in Copenhagen, though she admits she has no time for Wittgenstein nowadays, and came to Goldsmiths, University of London, to do a masters degree in sociology.

At the same time, she supported herself by cooking her home country's fare in a Danish-Japanese restaurant but the second half of that gastronomic equation soon proved more enticing.

She says: "When I finished at Goldsmiths, I was offered a job as a sushi chef.

"I think back then there were so few non-Japanese people who knew who to make sushi, so though I wasn't calling myself a sushi chef because I didn't have the full training, I sort of knew the basics.

"I'm not traditionally trained but I do know a fair bit."

She ran the Nippon Tuk concession in Canary Wharf in the 1990s (hence her claim to fame as the area's first sushi chef) and has taken four trips, each of three weeks, to train at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Tokyo.

She was even offered the

opportunity to be taken on there as a trainee, but with training in Japan lasting five to 10 years, she had to turn down the commitment.

Back in London the mum-of-two, who lives in Acton, soon had her hands full building the Feng Sushi brand.

After the company was sold last year to entrepreneur Luke Johnson, the business mind behind Pizza

## Sushi - The Basics

To the uninitiated, a sushi menu can appear slightly intimidating.

Options at Feng Sushi include sashimi, which is raw fish often eaten on its own, maki, which is fish in seaweed or rice rolls, and tempura, which is lightly battered fish served with vegetables or rice.

Silla says: "It's a bit like tapas in the sense in that you order a few different dishes."

"What we try to do is incorporate more vegetarian options, more salads and healthy stuff like that."

And her own favourites? She has two choices – Japanese bean salad and deluxe Californian maki, which comes with soft shell crab.



■ Silla Bjerrum outside Billingsgate Market, the site of her new kitchen aiming to deliver sushi to E14, E16, EC2 and EC3 postcodes within



15 to 30 minutes. Though she does say there is a chance a full restaurant could be opened up there in the future



Food being prepared at Feng Sushi in Billingsgate Fish Market

Express and Giraffe restaurants, further expansion is on the cards.

Silla says: "This is the first thing we've opened up in five years.

**Growth**

"Luke has really good experience and he's had some really strong concepts so he's invested in Feng Sushi and me.

"Now we're going for growth.

We might do more delivery hops depending on the area.

"But we'll also do more half delivery, half eat-in concepts."

There is, of course, plenty of competition in the sushi market.

Brands including Yo! Sushi and Itsu battle for the consumer's cash and a high-end Japanese restaurant such as Roka has its home in Canada Square.

But with her track record in

**Sustainability**

Even before her latest move, Silla had links to Billingsgate market.

She regularly teaches sushi classes at its Seafood Training School and previously spoke at its Sustainable Seafood Awards.

Responsible fishing is a subject she is always keen to turn to.

She says: "Sustainable fish is a better quality and that's one issue, but if I'm in the business of building a sushi brand, it would be very silly to not ensure you've got fish for tomorrow."

The next sushi class by Silla is on Friday.

opening restaurants across the capital, you get the feeling Silla's latest venture is going to be a success.

And beyond that she is very happy to be back in Canary Wharf.

She says: "There are obviously lots of sushi operators in Canary Wharf already.

"But we've been eager to come back out here because we think our offering is slightly different to the competitors. There's a market for us as well.

"To come in here and to start a business off is very exciting."

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