

FROM ROYAL MARINES TO RESTAURATEUR

Jeremy and Jane Hooper

Little more than a year ago, Royal Marine Jeremy Hooper was dishing up 2,000 meals a day from a tent in Afghanistan. At home in north Devon, his wife Jane saw an advertisement for participants in a reality television programme.

Now the couple are the proud proprietors of Eight at the Thatch, the restaurant they opened with Raymond Blanc after winning BBC Two series, *The Restaurant*.

'It's taking every ounce of our energy and brainpower,' admits Jane. Everything about running a restaurant was new to the couple—staff management, menu planning, ordering, health and safety, back of house, wage control and forecasts, rotas, profit and loss spreadsheets.

Working 19-hour days to transform themselves into instant

restaurateurs has been demanding. 'From the minute the doors open at midday until 1am there's no time to stop and get my head around anything,' says Jane. And although she's found some of her skills as a former trainer for the Prince's Trust transferable, it's been an uphill struggle for both of them. With his tough marine background, Jeremy has had to make the adjustment to civilian life the hard way with two commis chefs leaving within the first month because they weren't made of stern enough stuff.

'It really is like being swept up in a whirlwind,' muses Jeremy. So, any regrets? 'We wanted something radically different and we got it,' says Jane.

Eight at The Thatch, 29-30 Lower High Street, Thame, Oxfordshire (01844 214 340; thethatchthame.co.uk) 📍

📌 For more on *The Restaurant* or to apply for the new series go to bbc.co.uk/restaurant

