

Blanc TV winners vow to be success

The couple who triumphed in a BBC programme contest say their Oxfordshire venture will be no flash in the pan

BY CHRISTOPHER WALTON

The winners of Raymond Blanc's reality TV show *The Restaurant* have vowed that their Oxfordshire eaterie, which opens its doors next month, will not be "a flash in the pan".

Jeremy Hooper, a former Royal Marine cook, and his wife, Jane, a one-time trainee teacher, will open Eight at the Thatch on 6 November after winning the nine-week-long competition to go into business with the chef-patron of the two-Michelin-starred Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons.

Their site in Thame, based on the fine-dining concept the couple ran while making the BBC2 programme, will have 74 seats, increasing to 100 during the summer. It was selected by Blanc, who will develop the menu with chef Jeremy.

Speaking to *Caterer* this week, Jane admitted that the early opening date created a challenge, but said that they had no option. "As much as we would have loved to have taken six months to really take control,"



Jane and Jeremy Hooper open the doors of Eight at the Thatch on 6 November

she said, "we just did not have the time because of the momentum of the show."

However, she said that the couple wanted to establish themselves as more than merely the programme winners. "If we were to just go off the publicity of the show, that would be silly," she said. "We are definitely making contact with the community, and we are asking the locals what they want from it. We will use

local produce and make sure we offer a good selection of food at different times of day to different parts of the public."

She added: "We are not looking at this as a quick flash in the pan. We want to feel at home now in Thame, and make our mark on the restaurant."

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