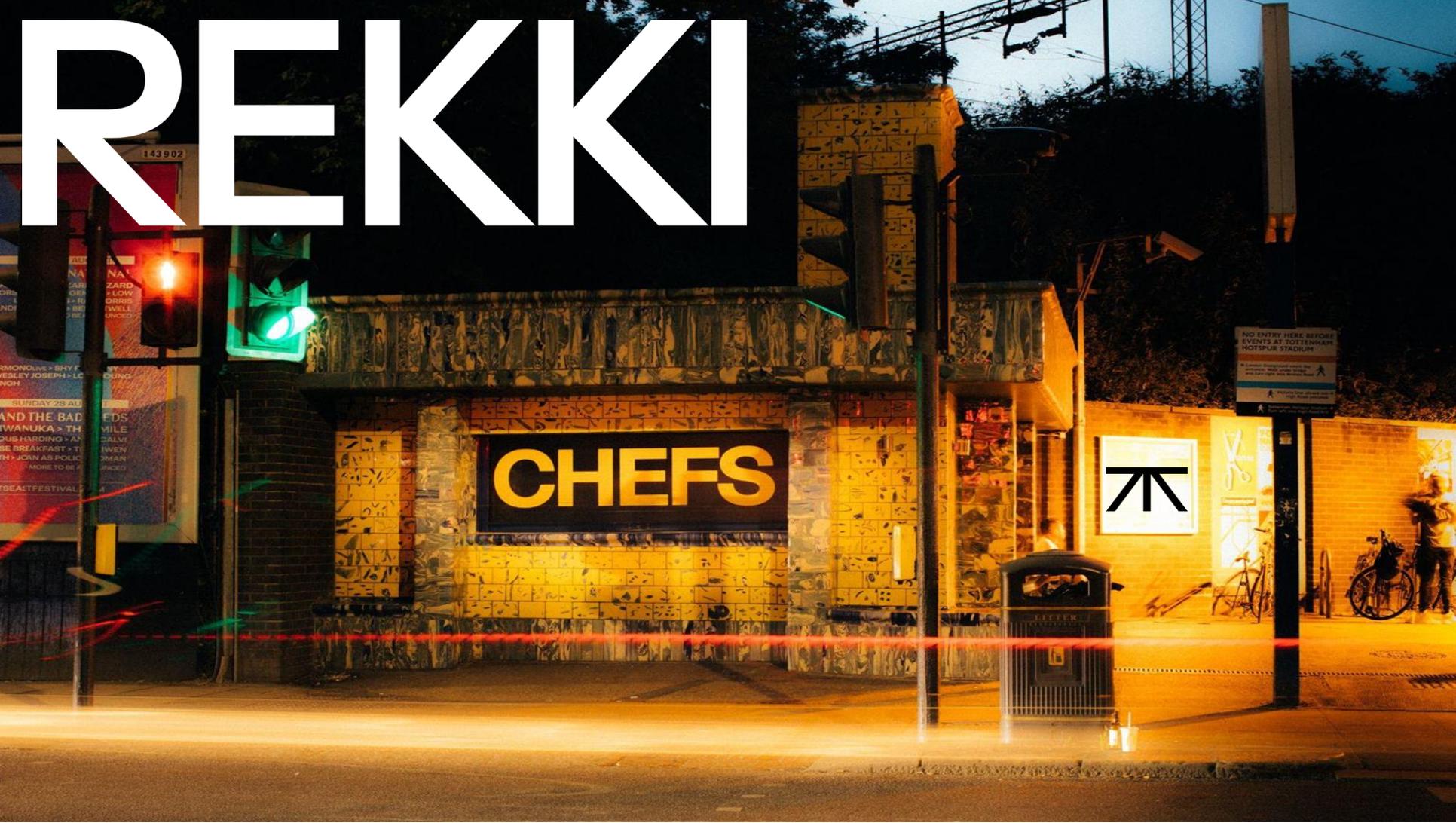


REKKI



INTRODUCING REKKI & RONEN



RONEN GIVON
CEO, REKKI

Born and bred in the countryside of Israel, Ronen Givon was surrounded by good produce – from orchards to a dairy farm – and so an innate understanding of what good food is, was prevalent in his childhood, although a career in food was not his immediate instinct.

Ronen moved to the UK to go to university, gaining an MA in computer science and economics at the University of Cambridge, followed by a stint as an analyst at Bank of America after graduation. The corporate environment didn't offer Ronen a broad enough challenge and he knew that he had always wanted to run his own business.

“I was a very happy restaurant customer and perhaps naively I decided to go into restaurants!”. And thus began, in 2005, Ronen's foray into the world of hospitality which he has never left.





CREATIVITY + EFFICIENCY

Along with fellow computer scientist Christian Mouysset and his brother Noam, Ronen launched Hummus Bros, a high street restaurant concept that sold quick and healthy Levantine-inspired dishes. Their first site was in Soho, London and the next ten years saw them opening six sites across the city. They were all very hands on with the business throughout their time, including painting walls and setting up that first site.

Hummus Bros venture also led to two books *Hummus Bros Levantine Kitchen: delicious, healthy recipes inspired by the ancient Mediterranean* (2014) and *Hummus to Halva: recipes from a Levantine kitchen* (2020) published by Pavilion Books.

Although drawn to the food world both Christian and Ronen were computer scientists and so it was in their nature to develop systems and technology to assist with the business. The restaurant space allowed Ronen to combine a sense of creativity with efficiency and problem solving, and it is with this insider knowledge that he eventually developed REKKI.

Understanding the industry is ultimately understanding the people that work in it, because technology and systems is not how restaurants work, it is a space about people. Part of that is knowing how individuals use the tools they have around them to get the job done.

“Whilst we were running these restaurants, we were building lots of computerised systems such as POS [point of sales] systems; we were building them all ourselves! Which also meant we knew the kind of people working in restaurants, how they use these systems, and what drove them.” Ronen says.

Ronen further explains that people are in this industry for a number of different reasons – from those whom it is a career, to those whom it is a transient job or something that is to pay the bills. The common theme though was that the systems that were being used, were the ones that made jobs quicker and easier. **“It can be extremely hard work and very underappreciated – restaurant work – and so the faster you make certain processes, the easier that work becomes.”**



Food is something that everyone knows about because we eat it every day, and Ronen is conscious about the idea that guests can walk into a restaurant or café and be knowledgeable but often they don't see or understand the labour behind the food.

“I’m not just talking about Michelin starred places, in run of the mill, normal kitchens it is also hard graft; and after you’ve cooked the food you then have to scrub the entire kitchen – it’s unbelievable sometimes” he says.

And of course, understanding the people and the labour also comes with understanding of the need to create a sustainable business so that everyone can earn good wages, but also spend time in work doing the things they actually enjoy.



INGREDIENTS

A key moment in Ronen's time at Hummus Bros, which led directly to the building of REKKI, was to do with ingredients. **“You’d work for a month, and half that month is for your employees wages, another quarter for your landlord and then the government and then at 3pm on the last day you would be making money for yourself – if it had been a good month. We were two computer science graduates, working full time for eight years, obviously passionate about it and still enjoying it, but we couldn’t make a profit. There were of course a lot of mistakes along the way, but we were constantly trying to make things better. And I thought something has to change dramatically.”** Ronen explains..

“I remember it like it was yesterday. I shut myself off in our central kitchen on the mezzanine, and the kitchen staff were working underneath listening to Polish songs, and I looked at where we were buying all our ingredients.” Ronen explained that they had about 300 ingredients from spices to tomatoes and he went through with a fine tooth comb and managed to get the net revenue from 33% down to 26%. It wasn't about finding cheaper ingredients, it was about buying in bulk, re-looking at suppliers and how they organised themselves, and checking costs on a weekly and monthly basis.

“It was a real revelation to me, I was trying to fight with all the operational costs, but it was all about looking at our food costs in an intelligent and different way.”

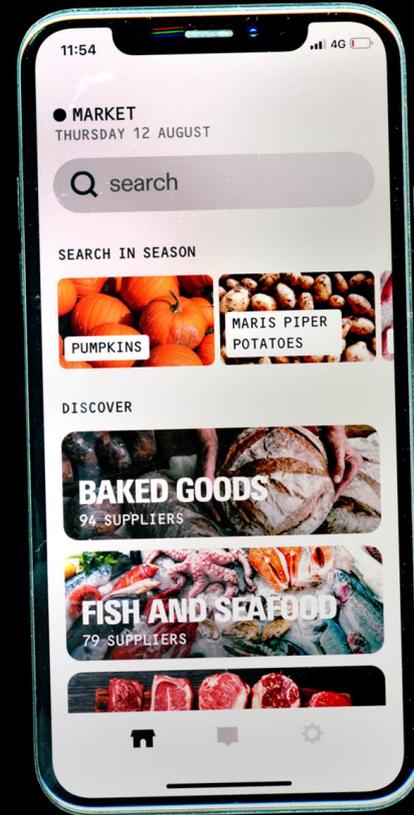


GETTING DIGITAL

Ronen explains **“there is something in tech that we call ‘context switch’, which is when you move from one type of task to another. The cost of context switching in the kitchen is very high – if you’re dealing with food and cooking all day and then to suddenly switch to an excel spreadsheet on a screen, it feels almost impossible.”**

It is the physical nature of the work that Ronen believes is why hospitality and kitchens are the last spaces to be truly digitalised. Most of the time is spent problem solving in service or in the run up to. Or it's about building relationships and working towards creating environments for people to spend leisure time in, which means the administrative side of the business is often left at the end of the list. Most of the time offices are small spaces as well, which are not conducive to spending any length of time in to organise and re-think operations and costs.

With REKKI he wanted to create something that fitted naturally into the path of the chef's daily routine. It had to be something that was practical and added value.



REKKI

REKKI, a spin on the word 'recce' (the process of scouting for information of a place), is an efficient tool for a food service business, which also allows for creativity and new connections.

Its key element is that it allows for chefs to order from their suppliers quickly, they can easily set up their existing suppliers on the app and one account is created per venue with logins from individuals so that any senior chef is able to take ownership in ensuring the kitchen is fully stocked, so the next service can run efficiently.

But, as Ronen discovered at Hummus Bros, running a successful business that is financially sustainable isn't just about ordering and sourcing ingredients in a time-efficient way. It is also about always being aware of the full possibilities of where, how and what you're ordering. Therefore REKKI offers a marketplace; here buyers – chefs – are able to look and browse through other suppliers, view ingredients that are in season or are trending, and research easily what other options are available. It is a space to cross reference.



This creates creativity, as chefs can be much more reactive in their planning, building menus that can change daily or weekly. In the marketplace chefs can even see ingredients or products that are hyper local to their location, meaning delivery is cheaper or even done on bike if simply around the corner! Through the rating system there is also a sense of trust so chefs can feel confident in purchasing from a new supplier.

This marketplace is crucial to suppliers. It allows them to meet new buyers, and because of the nature of the marketplace small producers and makers are able to build up a client base without too much overhead. A great example of this is **Sean's Loaf**, a micro bakery in Cricklewood that makes sourdough, pastries and pizza with organic flour and cultured butter.

Sean delivers to just a handful of postcodes, and can manage his business efficiently by reaching an engaged and knowledgeable audience without outlay investment into marketing or advertising to get the word out. He can focus on doing the things he does best: making great bakes.

Ultimately this is what REKKI does – lets people focus on what they do best, whether that is cooking, designing menus or ensuring their products are the best they can be.

And, most importantly, it is a robust tool that can withstand the complexities that a modern kitchen, in any establishment, throws up:

“There is no domestic level equipment in professional kitchens, it’s all heavy duty; you can batter it left and right and it will continue to work. Software needs to do the same thing, it needs to be hard wearing and cope with the rough and tumble, it has to really solve a problem. If your knife doesn’t cut properly, you’re not going to use it.” Ronen says, about the way REKKI is built.



THE DETAILS

Originally launched in 2016 there are now over 4,000 restaurants using REKKI globally, and are currently in London, Paris, NYC, Toronto, Berlin, Amsterdam, Chicago and Copenhagen.

London was the city they originally launched the app as this is the city they know best and Ronen believes that it has a special relationship with independent restaurants and suppliers – the range of both allow for it being the best city in the world for food, in Ronen's opinion. The next stage is to roll out REKKI to other UK cities which they think will have a similar appetite for thoughtful sourcing as London does.

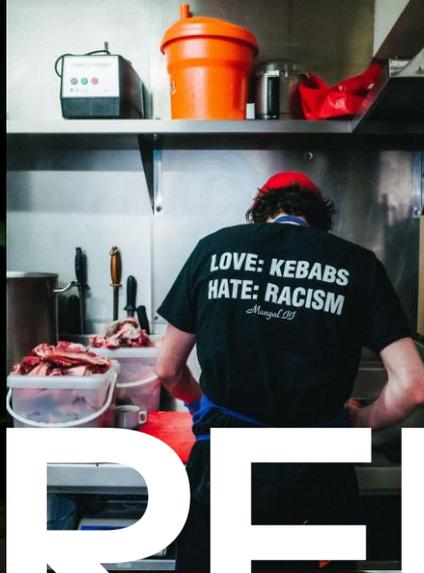
REKKI gathers the best suppliers in a city into one spot so that chefs can save time, forgoing Google searches and undertaking quality and price comparisons across multiple sites. Once a supplier is selected, through the REKKI app, an order is placed and organised to be delivered with speed and efficiency.

Through the app a chef can make multiple orders, across different suppliers, accessing a wider variety of produce. All invoicing is done through the app and suppliers get paid through the app with speed as well. REKKI can be used on a desktop or laptop.

The range of suppliers include the likes of Penshurst Fine Foods, Ted's Veg - Borough Market, Woods Foodservice, JO Showa, O'Shea's Butchers, Wright Bros Fish, and Seven Seeded Artisan Bakery.

REKKI has a screening process for suppliers as well as a probation period. Users review the supplier regularly and if quality is consistently high the suppliers move beyond the probationary period.





REKKI



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