**PRESS RELEASE**
**22 October 2015**

**EL GATO NEGRO MANCHESTER TO OPEN IN FEBRUARY 2016**

**RESTAURANT ANNOUNCES KEY APPOINTMENTS**

Acclaimed tapas restaurant, El Gato Negro, has confirmed it will open the doors to its new Manchester home in February 2016. The restaurant, originally set to open at 52 King Street this autumn, has rescheduled the launch to allow renovation work to be completed to its full potential.

Speaking at the site this week, El Gato Negro founder and Chef Patron Simon Shaw said: “Before hoardings went up we were looking to an autumn opening but it’s been delicate work and we want to respect the integrity of the historic building, which will ultimately make ours a truly unique dining experience.

“It’s important to me that we create the very best experience for El Gato Negro’s new home in the heart of Manchester and if that means taking a few extra weeks to get it right, we’ll honour that.”

Works at the restaurant’s new address – part of the King Street conservation area – commenced in July. Formerly a high street fashion retail space, development to date has seen previous fit-outs stripped back to the original Victorian walls, floors and windows.

El Gato Negro Manchester is preparing for the New Year launch with the appointment of a strong senior management team. Phil Bennett joins as General Manager from the Savoy hotel’s Simpson’s-in-the-Strand, one of London’s most celebrated restaurants, where he headed up operations from November 2013 to April 2015. Phil wasted no time in bolstering his team by hiring Beverage Manager Garry Foy, former General Manager of popular Manchester nightspots Elixir and Panacea.

Fresh from a three month sabbatical in South East Asia, Phil said of his new role: “After time out travelling I felt very open to new opportunities. There was an equal pull between both London and Manchester, where I grew up.

“Manchester’s restaurant culture has changed dramatically in the last 10 years; there is so much happening right now with a real depth of quality in restaurants and bars, so it’s a great time to come back home. I was excited at the chance to work with Simon and was delighted when I got the call. Bringing Garry into the team was a great moment and points to the quality we plan to deliver when introducing El Gato Negro to the city centre.”

Founder Simon Shaw added: “It’s a rare opportunity to assemble a team that will work together from the very beginning and to make confident staffing decisions with the luxury of time. I’m thrilled to have both Phil and Garry on board and can’t wait for the restaurant to open.”

The restaurant will now look to recruit a core team of experienced waitstaff and hospitality professionals with applications sought [online](http://www.elgatonegrotapas.com/jobs/).

El Gato Negro is renowned for seasonally-inspired dishes reflecting a mix of modern and traditional Spanish flavours and techniques with influences from closer to home. A select range of Spanish wines completes the offer.

El Gato Negro Manchester is a partnership between Simon Shaw and Mills Hill Developments Ltd.

**Ends**

For further information on the launch please contact Miranda or Chidi at Rule 5 on: firstname@rule-5.co.uk or 0161 686 5727.

For photography and latest news from El Gato Negro Manchester, please visit [www.elgatonegrotapas.com/media](http://www.elgatonegrotapas.com/media)

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**Notes to Editors**

**About El Gato Negro**

Since opening in Ripponden in 2005, Chef Simon Shaw's El Gato Negro garnered both critical acclaim and a succession of accolades, including recognition from Hardens, Michelin, The Times and The Good Food Guide. In 2015 the restaurant was awarded a prestigious Michelin Guide Bib Gourmand for the second year running.

Chef Patron and Creative Director Simon brings El Gato Negro to Manchester in February 2016, when the restaurant opens at 52 King Street. Operating over three floors of a period building in this prestigious thoroughfare, El Gato Negro will incorporate areas for al fresco all-season eating and drinking, as well as an open finishing kitchen where diners will experience the theatre and thrill of tapas in a Spanish style.

**Simon Shaw - Chef Patron / Creative Director**

Simon is a highly experienced and respected restaurateur with over 35 years of experience, most notably as Executive Head Chef at Harvey Nichols and as Chef Patron of El Gato Negro.

Originally from Yorkshire, Simon rapidly worked his way through the ranks at some of the county’s finest establishments before becoming the first Head Chef at Harvey Nichols’ restaurant in Leeds. After a stellar stint there he was seconded to their London operations; first heading up the kitchens at Prism, the company's prestigious City of London restaurant, before moving to the flagship Knightsbridge store as Executive Head Chef. During this time Simon visited Catalonia and the Basque Country, falling in love with the diversity and excitement of modern Spanish cuisine.

In 2005 Simon returned north to open El Gato Negro in the Pennine village of Ripponden. Its reputation grew, gaining awards and accolades galore: winning best local Spanish restaurant on Gordon Ramsay’s F Word; listed annually in the Good Food Guide; Hardens called it ‘best tapas in the north’; the Observer’s Jay Rayner feted it; The Times ranked it number one tapas bar in the country; and finally being awarded the prestigious Michelin Guide Bib Gourmand in both 2014 and 2015.

Simon is also known for promoting his style of modern Spanish cooking to a wider audience; as consultant chef to blue chip companies, cooking for celebrities at private functions, making media appearances and leading sell-out cookery masterclasses. He is truly driven by a passion for his craft.