



Susannah Mountfort
with Bernadette Byrne
and Victor Victoria of
Eastend Cabaret

THE SECRET POP-UP

Gingerline is a pop-up restaurant that has appeared at secret locations near the East London underground line. It now has a permanent base. Susannah Mountfort is its co-founder.

'I'd always felt a pop-up should be a bigger experience than the food alone. Working with my partner, Kerry, and our friend Syd, we wanted to collaborate with the artists we knew in order to create the perfect night out. There was no grand business plan – the concept evolved over various kitchen-table conversations.

'Gingerline's point of difference lies in the themes and theatrics, the element of surprise – people register to join us and we drop them a text an hour beforehand to reveal our location. Previous venues included an abandoned costume shop where we put on a Siberian feast under a 'night at the circus' theme. The food had a theatrical twist such as venison goulash with a hint of chocolate. We once took over a church with a strong political history. The theme was 'secret cult' and we hired an actress to stand outside and protest against us (hilariously some people thought she was for real and argued back).

'In the beginning we couldn't pay our performers. But it's now a full-time job and we have a permanent base (though we still ask diners not to reveal it). We charge up to £50 per head for four courses of food created by our head chef Simon Duff.

'What started as an experimental arts project two years ago has grown beyond any of our dreams. I'd love to write a cookbook now.'

gingerline.co.uk; [@gingerline](https://twitter.com/gingerline)

Susannah's tips for making it work

- * **Don't underestimate what hard work a pop-up is.** We've washed up at 2am then had to get up for our day jobs.
- * **If you're borrowing kitchen space, check in advance that the oven works!** Make your mistakes early on (and learn how to correct them) with a trial evening for friends and family.
- * **Collaborate.** Who could you involve to make your pop-up different?
- * **Always talk to your guests.** It makes it more of an experience for both of you.