

Leon Aarts - Media Kit

“No one to go to bed hungry and there is always enough food to share” Leon Aarts

Bios [Short Bio]

Leon Aarts is a visionary humanitarian and philanthropist who creates impact at scale. He is committed to helping transform people’s lives for the better through food. Chef, restaurateur, entrepreneur, author and TEDx speaker, he first founded Calais Kitchens feeding up to 10,000 refugees every day in ‘the Jungle’ refugee camp and then set-up With Compassion, eventually feeding up to 4,000 Londoners in need every day during the pandemic. Leon’s work has been recognised in the 2022 BBC Radio London’s Make a Difference Awards when he won The Fundraiser category.

[Longer Bio]

Leon Aarts is a visionary humanitarian and philanthropist, with a proven track record of creating impact at scale. He is committed to helping transform people’s lives for the better through food. Originally from the Netherlands, he grew up in a family where everything revolved around food, it shaped his lifelong mission that no one should go to bed hungry and the power of sharing a meal.

Trained as a chef, Leon owned a restaurant, then worked as the executive chef in Le Garage, the Dutch equivalent of the British ‘The Ivy’. He moved to the UK to set-up a fine food wholesale company.

In 2009, Leon stepped into his humanitarian-led philanthropy work, always influenced by the universal power of food. Since then, he’s founded three charities, helping feed and educate children in the Global South (Fill the Cup by Extraordinary Ones), being instrumental in the collaborative effort to feed up to 10,000 refugees daily in ‘the Jungle’ refugee camp in Calais (Calais Kitchens) and fed 4,000 Londoners in need every day during the pandemic (With Compassion). He then joined forces with The Felix Project, a surplus food distributor, to set-up Felix’s Kitchen which continued the work started by With Compassion.

He’s a TEDx speaker, written several books and was recognised in the 2022 BBC Radio London’s Make a Difference Awards when he won The Fundraiser category for his volunteering work during the pandemic. He regularly appears in the media, including being featured alongside actor and political activist, Miriam Margoyles OBE (Professor Sprout in the Harry Potter film series), in Miriam’s Dickensian Christmas, when he cooked a Christmas dinner entirely out of surplus food. He has also been invited onto BBC1’s Saturday Kitchen, where he cooked his signature banana peel curry whilst on air, highlighting volunteering in the run up to King Charles’ Coronation Celebrations and the Big Help Out, a one-day national volunteering initiative.

Key Achievements

- **Feeding Londoners during the pandemic and beyond** - In September 2022, Leon was awarded the BBC Radio London’s Make a Difference Award - The Fundraiser category for leading a volunteer team to feed up to 4,000 Londoners every day in lockdown during the pandemic through the charity he founded, With Compassion.

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Under Leon's leadership through With Compassion and Felix's Kitchen, 2.3M meals have been cooked and redistributed from 2020 to 2023.

- **Supporting refugees** - Providing daily nourishment for up to 10,000 refugees in 'the Jungle' refugee camp in France through his charity, Calais Kitchens, and then becoming a TEDx speaker talking about this experience.
- **Entrepreneur** - Being successful in the hospitality space and food sector - owning a restaurant, being a head chef at celebrity owned Le Garage restaurant, the equivalent of the British, 'The Ivy', and launching a fine food business, TFC Express, worth £3.5M which grew to be #1 in the niche market.

Images

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In the media

- **[BBC1 - Saturday Kitchen]** Leon joins Matt Tebbutt and company on BBC's Saturday Kitchen (29th April 2023), cooking up his signature [banana peel curry](#), while chatting about using waste and surplus food, feeding Londoners during lockdown and the King's Coronation Big Help Out to encourage volunteering.
 - https://youtu.be/iZF902Cd_XQ
- **[TEDx Maastricht]** The Power of Sharing a Meal - insights from Calais Refugee Camp
 - <https://youtu.be/ZGj05lPCtds>
- **[Miriam's Dickensian Christmas]** Leon with Miriam Margoyles OBE, writer, political activist and television personality on Miriam's Dickensian Christmas (screened on Channel 4, December, 2023) as he creates a Christmas dinner from surplus food.
 - <https://youtu.be/mQOlxVv7Btl>
- **[Love This Food Thing podcast]** Episode 39 (26.09 - 41.48 mins) to hear more about Leon's food activism.
 - <https://www.lovethisfoodthing.com/podcast/food-hunger-and-manifestation-with-leon-aarts>

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- **[BBC Radio London's Make a Difference Awards]** - Leon won the Fundraiser Award category for cooking thousands of meals for NHS staff, charities and families throughout the pandemic.
 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-63033645>
- **[Ocado]** Leon's Banana Peel Curry Recipe (via the Felix Project)
 - Ocado website - <https://www.ocado.com/webshop/recipe/Banana-Peel-Curry/228098>
 - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/p/CpcVqCZoqg4/>

Social Media

- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/leonaarts1/>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/leonaarts1/>

Contact Leon

- E: leon [at] leon-aarts [dot] com
- M | WhatsApp +44 (0) 7783 575722
- W: www.leon-aarts.com