

Gold standard

Chapters Hotel and Restaurant in Stokesley has a cabinet bulging with awards.

Tony Greenway discovers its winning ways



Home to Chapters Hotel and Restaurant, nestling in the North Yorkshire market town of Stokesley, is a handsome 250-year old coaching inn which mixes contemporary interior design with traditional elegance. The service is top notch: general manager Chris Neal and his team are friendly and welcoming and know regulars by name. That genial hospitality gold standard will ensure guests return time and time again.

Chapters' head chef is Sean Wilkinson, a former Yorkshire Life Chef of the Year finalist, who has been with the restaurant since September 2008 and has over 20 years experience on the Continent and in the UK. Sean creates 'modern British and continental cuisine, sometimes with a molecular twist' using locally sourced ingredients.

'Sean has taken care to assemble a fantastic team around him, says Chris. 'So the standard in the kitchen is always high.'

We were expecting a great deal from this dining experience and weren't disappointed. After a delicious complimentary amuse-bouche of black pudding, quail's egg and pea shoots, the first course arrived. For me, this was a fabulous surf and turf of pan roasted sea scallop, home cured pork belly, pancetta crisp cauliflower puree, sautéed black pudding and smoked garlic velouté, served on a slate board. My wife, meanwhile, had the goat's cheese and sage risotto, which was served with fresh sage crisps, black olive tapenade and virgin olive oil. The rice was beautifully fluffy, and there was no mistaking that satisfying goat's cheese flavour.

Then it was onto the main course. My wife had ordered the locally caught monkfish tails, wrapped in air dried ham, with wilted spiced spinach, celeriac pancakes and turned courgettes in a saffron and Chardonnay broth. The monkfish was gloriously meaty and the vivid yellow broth was mellow yet fruity.

My herb crusted venison was a

fine showcase for the talent in the kitchen and, I suspect, the sort of dish which has earned Chapters so many awards in the past. The venison itself, served pink, was just right: slivers of heaven on a base of braised red cabbage, sautéed wild mushroom and shallot salad, confit of parsnip and thyme infused potato fondant with a sherry vinegar dressing. We didn't need it, but we'd also ordered a lightly crispy dish of tempura red onion rings.

Complimentary cherries in kirsch with white chocolate ice cream and a chocolate foam cleansed the palate while we thought about desserts: a more-ishly light apple pie-scented brulle with green apple jelly, Bramley puree, balsamic reduction and lavender cookie tuiles for her; the cheeseboard (featuring a fine stilton and a punchy chilli cheese) for me. We finished with good, sharp espressos. ☺

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