

BRILLIANCE AT THE BULL INN

ARTICLE BY CATHERINE BRADFIELD

Velvet enjoys the tantalising treats on offer at one of our favourite restaurants...



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The Bull Inn has long been at the top of my "foodie list" – the places I still have yet to sample in the area – so I was more than happy to learn that I would be reviewing the unique pub in Barton Mills.

Welcomed by owners Sonia and Cheryl before settling down into the cosy room with the bar at its heart, I lapped up the warm atmosphere after a busy day at Velvet HQ. With a quirky mixture of wing-backed Chesterfield chairs, tartan covered dining chairs and grey snake-print bar stools tastefully filling the room with personality and charm, I could have relaxed there all night. As the menu changes daily, I was unable to predict the delights that would be placed before me and my guest, and having caught a glimpse of the specials board, to say I was excited was an understatement. After much anticipation, our starters arrived, both completely different in composition but equally attractive. The first dish to catch my eye was the spectacular grilled crevettes, majestically balanced atop a pea and parmesan risotto. I couldn't wait to taste the crevettes, whose coral pink hue assured that they would be fresh and succulent. My guest's starter was equally as enticing and beautifully presented; the goat's cheese in peanut crumb with beetroot and orange purée, roasted beetroot and honey mustard coulis and micro herbs proved wonderfully artistic, with the vibrant yellow of the coulis sitting admirably alongside the rich burgundy of the beetroot.

Sneaking a forkful of my guest's dish, I found that the peanut crumb was a stroke of pure genius, perfectly complimenting the slightly nutty, yet creamy, goat's cheese. Made complete by the fresh and moist beetroot and bittersweet touch of honey mustard, the mouthful was a fantastically layered combination of flavours. Turning my attention back to my own dish, I shelled the crevettes and took a forkful of the creamy risotto. As the flavours of the

succulent prawn and the distinctive richness of the parmesan developed on my palate, I realised the complexity of flavours that emanated from this seemingly simple dish. The slight sweetness of the green peas added an extra level; all in all, it was very refreshing and surprisingly light.

Invited by Sonia to discuss the wines to accompany our main courses, which I was more than pleased to discover would consist of côte de boeuf and duck – so, selecting a wine was very easy. A robust and full-bodied red, specifically Tierra Antica Chilean Merlot, was the wine of choice to perfectly complement the richness of the dishes to follow.

When our friendly, polite waitress brought out the côte de boeuf, I simply couldn't believe my eyes. The amazing and incredibly generously sized côte was a real sight to behold, presented on a rustic board with a slate insert alongside oven-roasted tomatoes and portobello mushrooms, a sumptuous stack of onion rings, double-cooked chips, sautéed greens and the chef's special brandy and peppercorn sauce. It was an absolute feast! Usually served as a main course to share given the sheer size of the dish, both myself and my guest were taken back in awe. Drizzling the brandy and peppercorn sauce all over the dish and taking a cut into the côte, the moistness and succulence of the meat surprised me. For

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such a large cut, it had been cooked to perfection, slightly pink in the middle with all the flavour sealed within the tender and quality meat, sourced locally from Riverside Beef in Royston. The peppery, yet sweet and creamy, sauce was the fundamental ingredient that brought all the elements together to form one incredible taste sensation.

My guest's main course, although modest in size compared to the huge sharing main beside it, was also exquisitely presented. The roasted breast of Gressingham duck, potato and thyme rosti, piccolo parsnips, sautéed spinach drizzled with port and onion jus was equally as enticing, offering a completely different combination of flavours. The parsnips and well-reduced jus brought a delicate sweetness to the dish that married with the thyme infused rosti and richness of the duck - ideal with a sip of redolent Merlot.

Having had a sweet tooth ever since I can remember, I can readily say that our final course was the one I was most excited for. Yes, our entrée and main courses had been delicious and very satisfying, but anyone who knows me will vouch that desserts, and anything chocolate related in particular, are my true love. So, when a rich chocolate brownie with chocolate ice cream and fudge crumb, graced the table, I was absolutely overjoyed.

In addition to the delight, my guest's dessert was a lemon meringue pie with raspberry ripple ice cream, decorated with delicately spun sugar. Not only had The Bull Inn selected some delectable desserts for us to sample, they must have also detected my penchant for cocktails, as a fanciful French Martini was

also placed in front of me. What more could a girl ask for than chocolate and cocktails!

Sinking my fork into the sumptuous brownie, I watched with anticipation as the melting centre oozed out. The warmth of the brownie against the coolness of the ice cream was a blend made in heaven! Taking a sip of the French Martini, the fruity and light combination of Chambord, vodka and pineapple juice was delightful.

Opposite, my guest's lemon meringue pie looked like a work of art; the soft and fluffy Italian meringue had been torched to set it with spun sugar, giving it a refined elegance. As a contrast to the rich brownie, the tartness of the lemon almost acted as a palate cleanser; the pie was really light and zesty

and the ripple of raspberry within the sweet, creamy ice cream just added the finishing touch.

Overall, I enjoyed a wonderful evening with friendly service and a lovely atmosphere, with the winning dishes making it a great experience that I would recommend to all.

