

Cheshire Life Lunch
The Alderley Edge Hotel

Truly fine, fine dining

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The chefs; Dave Cleaver, Marco Caires, Matt Randall, Sean Sutton, Samantha Lyndon, Sam Fishwick, Scott Surtees and Chris Holland (Head)

When the canapés include lobster lollipops washed down with Laurent-Perrier champagne from the sublime 1999 vintage it's reasonable to suspect that lunch is going to be rather special.

But then, at the Alderley Edge Hotel's two-AA Rosette Alderley Restaurant, discreetly enhanced as part of a £200,000 improvement programme, the hospitality has never provided less than an exceptional experience. Celebrating the 20th anniversary of its opening in 1989, this award-winning small hotel, commanding panoramic views across the Cheshire Plain and beyond, has ceaselessly striven for the highest quality.

Guests at Cheshire Life's July luncheon gathered for their welcoming

bubbly in the comfortable lounge-bar area of the 157-year-old former cotton merchant's house, now subtly remodelled by the removal of a wall and two fireplaces giving a more spacious feel.

Laurent-Perrier's long association with the Alderley Edge – home of the renowned annual Champagne Oscars – is reflected in the name of the hotel's main function suite and was enthusiastically toasted by guests with flutes of the '99, poured from magnums. And those lobster lollipops came alongside delectable cubes of melon coated in Japanese panko breadcrumbs, mini rocket and goats' cheese tarts, wild mushroom and Parmesan quenelles and dainty nibbles of chicken and foie gras – tantalisingly delicious precursors for Head Chef Chris Holland's main event.

Chris, who leads a brigade of ten



Magnum of Laurent-Perrier Brut 1999 vintage



Carpaccio of veal, liquid truffle croquette, Cheshire asparagus, lemon thyme vinaigrette



Tasting of seafood hot and cold, minestrone of young vegetables



New season Spring lamb, three ways, English peas and broad beans, red wine puree



White chocolate mousse with elderflower and textures of homegrown rhubarb



Left: Nikos Mournouris, Imelda Yates and Stuart Black with a Magnum of Laurent-Perrier Brut 1999 vintage



Cheshire Life Luncheon Menu

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Tasting of seafood hot and cold, minestrone of young vegetables.

Chablis 2006, Laboure-Roi

New season spring lamb three Wwys, English peas and broad beans, red wine purée.

Chateau Blaignan Cru Bourgeois 2004, Haut Médoc

White chocolate mousse with elderflower and textures of homegrown rhubarb
Coffee and petit fours.

chefs, has been nurtured under the careful tutelage of general manager Ahmet Kurcer since entering the Alderley Edge's kitchen 13 years ago and has become one of the most talented chefs in the county. His forte is to take the finest and freshest local ingredients and produce outstanding dishes through a skilled and highly innovative combination of modern and classic cuisine.

The light and airy conservatory housing the 80-cover Alderley Restaurant - now all on one level, enabling dinner parties of up to 25 people to be accommodated - provided the perfect setting for a memorable four courses.

We began, at tables set with a variety of fresh-baked breads and herbed butters, with carpaccio of delicately flavoured veal served with a perfumed liquid truffle croquette and locally-

grown asparagus, dressed with a lovely lemon thyme vinaigrette. The dish looked like spring on a plate; a feast for the eyes and the tastebuds.

The fish course brought a hot and cold tasting of seafood including delicious scallop and seabass, paired with intricately fashioned 'minestrone' of young vegetables. The white wine served with the first two courses, an elegant 2006 Chablis offering crisp green apple fruit with a racy dash of honey, not only complimented them admirably but was perfect for the occasion.

One of fine dining's enduring marriages - lamb and claret - was celebrated with the main course and both 'bride' and 'groom' were absolutely tip-top. New season's spring lamb came three ways - comprising a cutlet and rump, carved pink and beautifully tender, presented alongside a pressed →



Above: Kate Boyer with Spencer Neal and Spencer Hartwell

Right: Helen Alcroft, Karen and Jeremy Makinson and Rhiannon Glanvill



Above: Jo Sanders, Diane Smith, Sarah Furlong and Kate Boyer

Above right: Nigel and Catherine Warren

Right: Jeremy Pace, Richard Brittle and Nick Bailey



Above: Helen Allen, Andrea Beardmore and Rebecca Langford
Right: Wendy Levy, Emma Edwards and Dr Catherine Raines
Below: Kamal Basran, Trudi King and Barbara Spurrell



Above: Joanne Plant with Cathy Blackshaw and Myra Garlick
Right: Francis and Sheila Kirk with Louise Taylor and Ahmet Kurcer
Below: Tracy Bosanko and John Spanton



Fact file

The Alderley Restaurant, Alderley Edge Hotel, Macclesfield Road, Alderley Edge, Cheshire. Tel: 01625 583033; www.alderleyedgehotel.com

Restaurant open Mon-Sat noon-2pm and 7pm-10pm; Sun noon-4pm. Closed Sunday evening.

Lunch menu £14.95 for two courses, £19.95 for three; Market menu £29.95. A la carte Dinner menu: starters from £8.95; mains from £22.95; desserts £8.25. Six-course Tasting menu £49.50/£74 with wines. Sun Lunch £19.95.

tian of slow-braised and gorgeously-flavoured neck. English peas and broad beans with a red wine purée completed the perfect example of what Chris Holland's modern take on classic cooking is all about. The claret, 2004 Chateau Blaignan Cru Bourgeois from the Haut Médoc region of Bordeaux oozed class with its finely structured

berry fruit harmonising with subtly sweet oak.

We rounded off in magical style with wickedly creamy yet wonderfully light white chocolate mousse whose sweetness was deftly counterpointed with the piquant flavours of elderflower and textures of rhubarb, grown in the hotel's garden. ■

“ This award-winning small hotel, commanding panoramic views across the Cheshire Plain and beyond, has ceaselessly striven for the highest quality ”



The elegant lounge has been subtly refurbished in a relaxed, modern style

Cutting Edge

The elegant restaurant at the Alderley Edge Hotel has undergone a facelift and introduced a new menu to celebrate



No more upstairs, downstairs in the restaurant: it's all on one level now

It used to be a case of Upstairs, Downstairs in the famous restaurant at The Alderley Edge Hotel.

The most obvious product of the subtle refurbishment of The Alderley restaurant is that the former split-level room with commanding views of The Edge has been built up to one level. The décor – as you would expect here – is elegant and refined, but definitely modern. Intriguing black and white photographs of local landmarks are a new addition in the bar and restaurant. But one of several 'old' features happily retained is Stephen the pianist at the baby grand. His gentle playing adds to the sophisticated ambience of this establishment.

They have it just right here: as soon as you arrive, the attentive staff make you feel important, but without being fawning. They can advise on the dishes, the ingredients and the wines you might select. This attention to detail is what makes the dining experience here something special.

Surveying head chef Chris Holland's new menu, we zeroed in (on the main courses) on the fillet of Horseshoe

Farm beef 'sous vide', £23.50. Sous vide, we asked? Apparently, during the cooking process the meat is vacuum-packed and placed in a water bath for 14 minutes, emerging rare yet not bloody with a beautifully intense flavour. The meat is complemented by the melting textures of braised smoked ox cheek. It was excellent.

My dinner companion enjoyed 'locally sourced mutton with its own hot pot, with young leeks and organic onion puree', £23. Forget the usual idea of hot pot: this was artistically arranged cuts of meat and vegetables and it tasted far superior to anything you've ever eaten that was described as hot pot.

I'd started the meal with roasted cep mushrooms with crispy chicken, pata negra ham, black truffle syrup and golden egg yolk, £9.50. After the waiter disappeared with our order, I feared I'd chosen something too complex. But, my compliments to the chef, this was a clever balance of flavours which paved the way for that meaty main course.

Across the table, my guest was enjoying his starter of 'liquid centre smoked

haddock croquette with Jerusalem artichoke espuma and sautéed watercress, £8.95. 'Perfect, it's just perfect' he declared.

For desserts, the choice was difficult. After much deliberation we both enjoyed a champagne poached Yorkshire triangle rhubarb with champagne sorbet and rhubarb caviar: a really delightful and light confection. We could not find room for the cheese selection: an impressive collection of regional creations, accompanied by port, if you wish.

We had earlier taken the wine waiter's suggestion and selected a smooth, rich French red to accompany our meal. There is a superb cellar here. You'd go a very long way to see a finer selection of wines and champagnes to satisfy the discerning diner. The Alderley Edge Hotel is a renowned champagne venue – it stages the 'Champagne Oscars' with Cheshire Life every December – and its class certainly showed the night we were there.

Louise Taylor

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