

Fine dining fit for a King

THE KINGS ARMS INN

Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey
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Do not let the Kings Arms Inn's modest surroundings fool you into thinking the restaurant serves standard pub grub.

Its classic pub décor and traditional surroundings are a cunning ruse and leaving us unprepared for the stunning plethora of mouth-watering dishes, paired over by innovative head chef David Wickenden.

The experienced chef, who joined just eight months ago and in the last few weeks has been promoted to restaurant manager, prides himself on using as much locally sourced produce as possible – including pork farmed in nearby Bucks Farm and ice cream from St Joan's Farm, based in the neighbouring village of Leigh.

The 29-year-old is also eager to appeal to red meat lovers with a menu offering a tempting array of steaks from English rib-eye, Scottish rump, hand cut T-bone to English veal.

Non meat-eaters need not fret, for a selection of lighter dishes includes roast skate wing, with creamed corn and buttered kale and a cap mushroom, pea and parmesan fricassee with garlic and thyme rosti.

We approached the 16th Century coach house, discreetly poised off the A29 in the pretty village of Ockley, via Dorking, as we drove up to the restaurant on a cold and damp autumnal night.

We settled down in the cosy surroundings taking in the open fire place, low oak beams and collection of trinkets and knick knacks associated with the pub's long history as a former coach

house.

A thorough discussion on which starters to choose, from a selection which all sounded delightful, finally led us to sample the intriguing twice baked butternut squash soufflé and classic grilled field mushroom with caramelised onion, mascarpone and goats cheese.

The soufflé had a deep, rich and slightly sweet flavour which was offset by the accompanying vanilla buerre noisette. Although full of flavour it was not in the least bit overpowering – leaving my dining partner raring for his next course.

The combination of goat's cheese, mushroom and caramelised onion is always a winner and did not disappoint. The earthy mushrooms providing a perfect vehicle for creamy goat's cheese and sweet and savoury onions all presented beautifully and tasting as good as it looked.

On to mains and our affable chef recommended the butter roasted chicken leg with pumpkin and sage mash accompanied with mushroom and parmesan sauce and my fellow diner plumped for the 10oz Scottish rump steak with green peppercorn and brandy sauce with hand cut chips.

While my companion tucked into his perfectly cooked steak and chunky homemade chips, my taste-buds were in heaven as they sampled the succulent chicken and perfectly seasoned pumpkin mash.

Just when we thought things could not get any better, we were presented with the tantalising dessert menu, featuring diet-busting treats.

I was eventually swayed by the chef's cheesecake of the day, which was a sweet, creamy and



exotic-tasting passionfruit version of the dish, while my dining partner sampled the locally sourced ice cream (£4.75), from St Joan's Farm, that boasts 'from cow to ice cream in less than an hour'.

The welcoming and homely atmosphere of The Kings Arms Inn made us feel as though we had dined and been treated like royalty ourselves; with a dining experience fit for the monarchy and at a price that didn't cost a king's ransom.

Lisa Boardman

At a glance

Rating: ★★★★★

Food: Sophisticated, classic, European

Cost (without drinks and service): £45

Vegetarian choice: satisfactory

Service: Impeccable

Parking: Dedicated free car park

Bonus: Six rooms available

