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FOOD & DRINK

Eating OUT



There's not a turkey in sight as Nicholas Jones recommends some December dining



THE RESTAURANT AT ST PAUL'S

A few months ago I told you all that I had taken the plunge and got married to my lovely wife. Well I'm not sure that you really care all that much, but my brother - also a journalist - is getting married too. He and his lovely fiancée are to tie the knot, and the venue they have managed to acquire needs no introduction. Due to the fact that she is related to an MBE, they are entitled to get married in the crypt at, of all places, St Paul's Cathedral no less! Quite impressive I'm sure you'll agree, and also a big surprise to me as I had no idea that anyone, bar royalty, got married at this landmark London venue.

Last month I learnt something else about St Paul's too - they have a really good restaurant on site. The restaurant is down the stairs - on the same level as the crypt - and it has been serving up a very British inspired menu for around six months. The meal we had made quite an impression and we're likely to be back for more before the big day.

We started off with the appropriately titled 'Britain in a glass' - a glass of fizz mixed with rhubarb and apple juice, simply delicious, then tucked into some fabulous high-end Scotch Quails Eggs, before getting into the main three courses. You've got to love any restaurant that serves up Pork Pie and Piccalilli as a starter, and that went down extremely well with the Jones brigade. My plate of Roast Pigeon and Beetroot wasn't half bad either. The main courses - including

Beef with Bone Marrow and a Roast Marrow & Herb Salad, a Red Gurnard and Pepper Stew and a lovely piece of Grey Mullet with Cauliflower, Shallots and Raisins - kept this trend going.

I opted for the English cheeseboard for afters, whilst the others enjoyed a superb 'Regent's Park' honey ice and gingerbread sandwich. It was all terrific, good enough for even a royal entourage we thought. Let's hope the wedding catering reaches somewhere close to the same standard.

Three course lunch at St Paul's costs approximately £20 per person excluding wine and service.

The Restaurant at St Paul's, St Paul's Cathedral, EC4M 8AD; 020 7248 2469. www.restaurantatstpauls.co.uk



THE LONDESBOROUGH

On the look out for venues for a good family lunch, with it being the Christmas season and all, I took the family out for a Sunday roast at new gastro-pub, The Londesborough. The latest venture from those clever people behind successful EC1 pub, The Peasant, sees this old local turned into a comfortable, airy dining space, perfect for whittling away the hours over lunch, dinner or a few drinks in the bar. Look out for the owners' unique beer can collection all over the walls.

Their Sunday roasts are not quite the finished article, but there are many more good points to this new gastro-pub than bad. Both the beef and belly pork were cooked fairly well, but serving cream with beef is most certainly not a good idea. I expected at least a gesture of horseradish in the horseradish cream, but all we got was a little pot of whipped cream, the kind of which you usually find in a can. I ordered some mustard and decided to move on, but neither the roasties, gravy or Yorkshire puds were up to scratch when compared with the prices.

The starters and desserts were far better. An individual Home Cooked Pork Pie with Mustard proved a real hit, and the Butternut Squash, Rocket and Goat's Curd also got a unanimous thumbs-up. The desserts were terrific too. An excellent Pear and Berry Crumble and generous cheese plate were well received by the panel. My slice of Bakewell Tart and Caramelized Plums was the clear winner, and it left me with both a smile on my face and the confidence to recommend The Londesborough for dinner. There are a few issues that I think will be ironed out as the place finds its feet, and I can see them becoming a real hit for a festive lunch this Christmas.

Dinner for four including wine and service costs approximately £100.

The Londesborough, 36 Barbould Road, N16 0SS; 020 7254 5865. www.thelondesborough.com