

One Enchanted Evening...

On Saturday 1st August 2009 my partner and I managed to escape from the dismal disappointments of the season to spend some time experiencing the many delights awaiting us at the Alderly Edge Hotel in Cheshire.

We knew that we were going to have a wonderful time from the moment that we entered the stunningly beautiful reception area where we were greeted by a warm and friendly receptionist who after very quickly locating our booking pointed us in the direction of the plush and comfortable lounge from where we could make out the welcoming sounds of live piano music. Once shown to some very comfortable seats an order for aperitifs was taken almost immediately. Mouth watering selections of three different kinds of canapés were presented with our drinks. Of the three, my favourite was the light-as-a-feather 'mushroom and parmesan' delight which literally melted in the mouth. While happily indulging in these delicacies we perused the menu for the evening which included the typical mouth watering array of fresh, locally sourced produce for which the restaurant is famed. The beautifully descriptive menu items included a wide range of choices to suit every taste and the inclusion of the 'Market menu' meant that there were superb choices available at a very reasonable rate too. The wine list also included an excellent array of both fine and popular wines from which to choose. To ensure that we were completely happy with our choice of the evening, a sample was presented in order to guarantee that we would be completely satisfied with the selection.

With perfect timing we were escorted away from the comforts of the lounge to our table in the opulently styled dining room. Tables were spaced at exactly the right distance from each other to ensure a happy ambience while facilitating enough privacy for relaxed conversation. The busy but unobtrusive staff helped us to be seated with the minimum of fuss and selections of freshly baked breads together with salted and unsalted butters were presented almost instantly. Even this magnificent start to the evening could not prepare us for the gastronomic delights which were to follow. A lightly foaming emulsion of fresh garden peas was delivered to our table with the compliments of the chef, a small indication of what was yet to come. It was almost heart breaking to have to eat my starter when it arrived. It consisted of a prettily presented double cheese soufflé with a chicken based accompaniment. The lightness of the dish contrasted sharply with the dark slate on which it was arranged with all the dexterity and creativity of a highly skilled artiste. The total effect was as pleasing on the palate as it was easy on the eye. The main course of hake accompanied with scallop and sweet potato was cooked to perfection with all elements of the dish complimenting the

others while remarkably maintaining the unique integrity and fresh flavour of each ingredient, a skill for which the head chef is renowned.

Desert was a completely sublime hot coconut soufflé which was complemented by the icy tones of a wickedly rich sorbet. My partner's choices of fresh scallop, roast beef and an exquisite toffee apple pie were no less pleasing choices. Throughout the meal we were attended to by a highly professional staff. Of particular note was the main server who somehow managed to keep a discreet distance, intervening only when necessary to keep a perfect flow and pace to the meal. The young man in question also managed to interject some charming and welcome humorous observations into the proceedings in such a way as to entertain without being overbearing or intrusive.

The evening was concluded with a refreshing cup of peppermint tea which was accompanied by a truly divine selection of complimentary petit fours, all having unique textures and flavours but the intricately designed white chocolate and orange liqueur, being an absolute favourite.

All too soon this wonderful experience was over but not before we had reassured ourselves that we would be back again very soon. Happily, the memory of this truly enchanted evening will stay with us until the next time!