

It's a couple of years since I last had the pleasure of reviewing this delightful establishment (now with even more accolades and awards) nestled in the heart of the picturesque village of Flaunden. A glorious July evening created the perfect opportunity to sample the Bricklayers Arms' new summer menu.

I had been impressed previously, so I had my antennae on red alert to see if I was to be equally 'knocked out' on this return visit.

The ambience was as welcoming as ever. This is a traditional country pub in every sense of the word, and the restaurant area neatly tucked away from the main bar area.

Award winning chef Claude Paillet is still cooking up a storm. His menu is bold and innovative, and delivered with such panache that it really is hard not to applaud his culinary skills as exceptional.

I started with Brochette of Tiger Prawns on a rosemary stick served with a seasonal vegetable stir fry and a light curry cream. This was everything a starter should be, with a superb array of textures and flavours: the crunch of crisp filo pastry, soft and tasty soft vegetables, fleshy and flavoursome prawns. I could eat it all again now; it was, quite simply, superb. In contrast to my rather flamboyant first course, my wife chose the classic and simple combination of fresh Asparagus served with a light home made Hollandaise sauce – and was delighted with it.

Main course selections are mouth watering, too, and some hard decisions had to be made. My eventual choice was Calves Liver with a chestnut and port jus, served with crispy parsnips, Dauphinoise potatoes and fresh mixed buttered vegetables. The liver was as soft and succulent as you could wish, with a perfectly judged sauce which didn't overpower in the slightest.

My wife's Local Fillet of Pork with a Black Pudding stuffing and a bramley apple and cider jus looked stunning. This trio of beautifully cooked and moist pork fillets, delicately flavoured, was another culinary masterpiece.

Puddings at the Bricklayers Arms are simply to die for. My wife opted for Hot Sticky Toffee Pudding with fresh custard: delicious and decadent. My choice – Lemon Tart with a Grapefruit and Orange Sorbet was just as good: the pastry light, the filling zingy, and the sorbet a wonderfully refreshing accompaniment.

The charming Adam Michaels was a perfect host, and his friendly team of staff ensured that the evening was well paced. Nothing, it seemed, was too much trouble.

I was undoubtedly wowed yet again. The sheer passion and flair for food, and the apparent ease and confidence with which The Bricklayers Arms delivers, are outstanding.

Alan Cox



P R I C E

	STARTERS: £4.95 TO £11.95
	MAIN COURSES: £13.95 TO £22.95
	DESSERTS: £4.95 TO £6.95
	HOUSE WINE: £13.95