

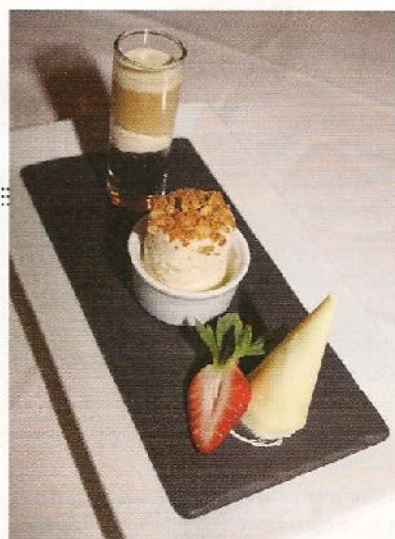
Classic cooking

Everything about Piedaniels is precise, right down to the peppercorns.

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Words: Andy Waple



It's surprising how little things can be so revealing.

At Piedaniels, the smart French restaurant in Bakewell, there are white pepper corns in the mills on the table rather than the typical black ones.

Is it a style thing or a little Gallic swipe at the Italians?

Well it's neither; it is an indication of the precision that goes on in the kitchen.

Proprietor and head chef Eric Piedaniels doesn't like black pepper in his cooking because their annoying little specks when ground ruin the appearance of his dishes.

Top quality presentation is a theme that runs throughout Piedaniels, from the cooking, to the immaculately laid tables and assured service.

Eric and his wife Christiana, who runs the front of house, have had this restaurant in Bakewell for 16 years, but they are not ones to stand still.

The change of name in recent years from the Renaissance to Piedaniels (pronounced p-danielle) was the most radical, yet new this month has been the introduction of the three courses for £15 into weekday evenings. Coming up is an outdoor dining area in the walled garden.

In addition to the £15 set menu an elegant a la carte remains all week to show off Eric's potential to its best.

There were several people enjoying the cheaper offer during our visit and it looked astonishingly good value. But we were here to see what Eric's Normandy roots could conjure.

Saffron and mussel soup seemed to be a good test so that was my choice. My partner

had no hesitation in selecting an avocado and crab terrine.

The supply of shelled mussels in a sea of creamy sauce, delicately coloured by the saffron seemed never ending. A beautiful, piping hot dish, decorated with a tomato and onion coulis and snipped chives, and not a speck of black pepper in sight. I could have been in a seafood restaurant in Arromanches.

I tasted my partner's terrine, which looked delicious in the centre of the plate surrounded by watercress sauce, decoratively highlighted with a sweet tomato sauce. It had a smooth mouth-feel, and the flavour of the crabmeat seemed to appear as a lingering aftertaste. Very impressive.

The high quality of preparation, appearance and taste continued with the main courses. My fish dish – strips of interlaced salmon and lemon sole fillets – was given extra interest by the classic maitaise hollandaise, flashed under the grill producing a nice caramelised finish. The rolled fillet of lamb was stuffed with couscous and again looked as magnificent as it tasted.

With a trio of delicately prepared sweets to share, the meal finished with a flourish.

Classic cooking at its finest.



What we ate:

Starters

Avocado and crab terrine with watercress sauce, £6

Saffron and mussel soup, £6

Mains

Plaited salmon and lemon sole fillet on a bed of fresh spinach glazed with maitaise hollandaise, £16

Best end of fillet of lamb with basil couscous and tomato confit served with cooking juice, £16

Dessert

Trio of Sweets: Apple and plum butterscotch compote, white chocolate mousse and iced praline disaronne soufflé, £6

Piedaniels

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