

Getting a taste of the Pie life



Left above: Eric Piedaniel in the kitchen

WE booked our Sunday lunch at that charming little restaurant in Bakewell called Renaissance but ate at Restaurant Piedaniel.

Had they upset us? Heavens no, Eric and Christiana Piedaniel, have changed the name of their Bath Street eatery but Eric had forgot to mention the fact when we booked.

Not that it makes any difference to the food on your plate but the couple have dissolved a previous financial partnership and have gone their own way.

The dining room with its exposed beams is no longer chintzy but now looks lighter and bigger with whitewashed wall and lime green touches.

The little Bistro next door, where we would eat fish sausage and crepes Suzette on Bakewell Farmers' Market Saturdays, is now a private dining room and Bistro diners now eat in the main dining room.

The couple moved in 14 years ago. Eric, a quiet Frenchman from Normandy had been at the Cowditch in nearby Haslow. Christiana was patisserie at Fischers at Haslow Hall, who incidentally had started out in the same Bath Street premises.

The night we first called there was a revolution being fermented in the dining room. It was packed, Eric was on his own in the kitchen, service was slow, diners were grumpy and Christiana was about to give birth and not on duty.

But when the food came it was such a revelation - very French, very classical and very good.

It's stayed that way although now Eric says he is simpler and cheaper. With a nod to le credit crunch mains are now £12 a head, with starters and sweets at a fiver.

Judging by our Sunday lunch - only on the first two Sundays of the month - standards have not slipped although Eric has unaccountably been omitted from recent editions of the Good Food Guide.

Sunday lunch costs £16. We happened to go on Mothering Sunday, when it was £20.

The rolls are home made with a nice, crisp crust and moist crumb and they get offered more than once, which is a nice touch.

Cabbage soup, one of the starters, might not appeal at first thought. You think of frightful things like the cabbage soup diet.

It sounds a little more tempting as described on the menu, cream of Savoy cabbage soup with a dill cream. It was great to eat. It certainly tasted cabbagey, but not at the rocky end of the spectrum, was quite lustrous



Bold move: Eric and Christiana Piedaniel in their Bakewell restaurant

Picture: Barry Richardson

in texture and, although it seems an odd word to use about cabbage, quite an elegant dish. And it almost matched the walls!

A mushroom risotto, made with cops, was a small but tasty portion and very rich. There was one roast and that was pork. Naturally, I was having that.

There were two thick slices with a very piggy taste. So much pork these days tends to be bland. It had very crisp skin, a slightly sharp apple sauce to offset the greasiness and a deep, rich gravy.

The women in the party were having fish. Black bream, one of those fish we are going to see a lot more of on menus now fish stocks are depleting, was served baked, cooked accurately to make the most of its firm, sweetish flesh, although the skin was limp, not crisp.

A word of warning. The boeur' bourignonne at Piedaniel's is not a man's dish, at least not in the portion we were served.

Our diner reported it

excellent in quality if not quantity. Normally, if reviewing in a party I demand a forkful before commenting on it, but the portion was so small I didn't have the heart to rob him.

Eric has a way with vegetables. I can never get my honest roast parsnips quite like he does - not caramelised to oblivion - and his roast potatoes aren't bad either. Service here is pleasant and relaxed. We were given plenty of time to choose our desserts but for me there wasn't any doubt, the crepe Suzette. I just can't get past it on the menu.

It's light, ultra-orangey and leaves you wanting more. Sticky toffee pudding with a treacle sauce is very English and, in Eric's hands, very light so you don't end up feeling stuffed.

We paid £40 for food, £2.50 each for decent coffee and £11.95 for a bottle of house white. Whatever they call it, this is one of those restaurants which manage to be consistently enjoyable and a pleasure to visit.



Exterior view: Piedaniel's restaurant

FOOD REVIEW

■ Bath Street, Bakewell. Tel: 01629 612 687.

■ Closed Mondays. Open Tues-Sat 12-2 and 7-10pm. Sunday lunch first two Sundays of the month. House wine £11.95.

■ Credit cards. Disabled access and toilets. Street parking or car parks nearby.

■ My star ratings (out of five):

Food ★★★★★

Atmosphere ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Sunday lunch category



New look: The revamped Piedaniel's restaurant