

SIMPLICITY KEY TO SUCCESS

IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD BRASSERIE, DANEET STEFFENS FINDS FINE DINING.

THE RECENTLY refurbished Jesmond Brasserie – a convenient stone's throw from the trendy bars of Osborne Road – is a cheerful restaurant to walk into: the staff offer a warm welcome, the dining room is open and bright, with lovely touches of elegance in the table settings and the cosy bar tucked into one corner. And the food on offer is the perfect match: the menu defines “brasserie” as “an unpretentious restaurant serving simple or hearty food”, and this Brasserie offers plenty of both. From the pre-dinner drinks – a tall glass of Peroni and a luscious Argentinian Shiraz Malbec – to the final spoonfuls of dessert, everything about this eatery oozes comfort and joy.

The menu offers a terrific range of seasonal dishes – they change monthly, but the ingredients are always locally-sourced. At the time of our visit, we could have had anything from a finely-cooked shoulder of beef; a roast loin of venison on spiced red cabbage, smoked bacon and juniper berry sauce; classic fish and chips, with twice-cooked chunky hand-cut chips; pan-seared sirloin steak; or a goat cheese and red onion tart.

As it was, I selected the tempura king prawn appetiser while my companion chose the chicken and apricot terrine. Both arrived looking absolutely smashing, two mini visual feasts. The prawns were indeed battered with a light hand, tasty and crunchy on the outside. The prawns themselves were proper kings,



big, fat specimens, plump and delicious, and were nicely complemented by an Asian salad of leaves, red onion, peppers and carrots. The terrine was equally scrumptious, served with a coarse grain mustard vinaigrette, crisp leaves and toasted brioche. It had a sweet density to it that made it the perfect starter, beautifully served by the savory toast.

For mains, we chose the pan-seared guinea fowl served on creamy mash with green vegetables with café au lait sauce, and braised lamb shank, also accompanied by the lovely mash, fine beans and red wine jus. Both plates arrived with generous portions – and we noticed this consistently with other diners' orders as well, whether it was the sirloin steak, the herb-crusted cod or the shoulder of beef being carried

past our table – and proved equally satisfying: the rich lamb was slipping off the bone, caught on the luscious bed of mash and beans. The guinea fowl was lovely – the café au lait sauce had the barest hint of its coffee-inspired moniker, and was warm, rich and moreish.

We were nearly too full for dessert, but soldiered bravely on, bypassing the Black Forest Gateau topped with brandy-soaked cherries for a mixed cheese plate and festive Christmas pudding. Both arrived with seasonal panache: the cheese plate was served with nuts as well as crackers – a nice touch – and the Christmas pudding was a revelation with plenty of brandy infusing its sauce, creating a dish that was intense and moist, sweet and tangy. It was the perfect way to round off a lovely meal.

ON THE MENU

On the menu:

Starters: Chicken and apricot terrine.....	£6
Lightly battered king prawns.....	£6
Mains: Pan seared guinea fowl.....	£13.95
Braised lamb shank.....	£13.95
Afters: Cheese plate.....	£5
Christmas pudding.....	£5

Verdict: Cosy, classic and delicious

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