

the hare

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Opulence isn't something usually associated with rural pubs, but among the imposing, ceiling-high bookcases in the impressively spacious dining room of The Hare in Langton Green, one can't help but imagine its grand heritage. KUDOS, for its own part, can see the vast drawing room of some eccentric retired corporal; sucking on his age-old pipe, carefully curling his rigid moustache and furiously bellowing at an idle chamber-maid on the rare occasion his glass of port becomes distressingly low. In fact, the original building on the site was a private home upon its completion in 1733, and the current structure (erected in 1901 after a fire destroyed much of the 18th century pub) has always been part of the service industry; first as a hotel, then evolving into the welcoming, locally-revered country inn of today.

“Many dishes demonstrate the chef’s clever ability to blend and balance seemingly opposing flavours”

Of late, The Hare's bread and butter (so to speak) has been to walk a fine line between “traditional pub” and “gastro-pub” without inviting the inevitable accusations of snobbery that the latter label tends to attract. Whilst the menu is composed of many familiar favourites, there are also unconventional flourishes; combinations of competing flavours and food types. The all-important menu decision, then, becomes a choice between the reliable and the adventurous; a choice that KUDOS threw itself into accordingly. On yet another windswept, rain-battered evening

(see November issue – Ed.), a cosy, inviting pub was descended on, long-awaited pints were gratefully imbibed and taste-buds were treated to a mixture of new and familiar delights.

Generous size in a Starter course is always mixed blessing; but The Hare's selection struck the correct balance between substantial and lightweight. The Tempura Batter Bream Fillet with Sake dressed Asian salad (£7.75) was the first evidence of the chef's fusion ambitions; a soft, cleansing piece of fish with a tangy, exciting salad. The Sticky Pork, Pecan and

Grape Salad (£5.50) advanced this ambition and demonstrated a keen knack for blending seemingly opposite flavours (the bitterness of the rocket and the sweetness of the pork glaze).

There's a strange unwritten law about which cuts of meat make for the tastiest dishes; so far as beef is concerned, rump and sirloin have long been crowned kings of the steak world and some of the lesser cuts tend to be sadly forgotten. One of The Hare's current signature

dishes is Slow Cooked Beef with Dauphinoise Potatoes, Garlic & Thyme Gravy (£12.00), and for this dish the less familiar “blade” meat is used; a tough meat whose flavoursome attributes can only be unlocked by braising. This led to a compact but easy crumbling portion, accompanied by the kind of mysterious gravy only great chefs, and your mum, can make. Enjoyment of the dish was best expressed by one member of the KUDOS team's assertion that “I would drive from Cranbrook to Langton for

that beef”: for those who don't know, that's nearly 18 miles.

Rounding off with a selection of desserts that once again showed a clever use of sweetness (especially the delicate Sticky Toffee Pudding, £5.25), the meal was a truly memorable one; thanks in no small part to the attentive and ever-smiley waiting staff. The Hare continues to justify its place as among the finest establishments of its kind in the South East.



eat out

a breath of fresh hare

