



SIMON'S SUPPERS



The Ribble Valley is blessed with charming villages and it would seem an endless stream of talented chefs. A visit to the beautiful village of Bolton-by-Bowland with its 'country pub' turned out to be another revelation on our journey discovering great food in the valley. Photography: Phil Garlington

Only when you cross the threshold of the Coach and Horses do you realise this is a pub with a difference. A huge amount of time and effort by new owners Zac and Ross Heywood has created a modern boutique interior with a wonderful friendly atmosphere. Locals sit chatting at the bar and diners excitedly peruse the beautifully presented menus. White walls with bright colourful modern paintings, comfortable leather sofas and stunning black chandeliers all set the scene for the evening which still held a few more surprises!

A lovely Pinot Grigio rose house wine helped us relax as we studied the menus and enjoyed the relaxed ambience. I had a little snoop around and found another dining room, not in use but equally charming and although not advertised, the pub has two en-suite letting bedrooms.

The wine list fascinated me as it contained a number of very unusual offerings including a Chinese wine (not Saki!) and a white Austrian wine which I found too hard to resist. It was crisp and dry with a lovely honeyed

after-taste. We moved to the dining room where a cosy log fire greeted us and our starters awaited.

I had ordered a lobster and champagne cheesecake with Morecambe bay shrimp jelly, the combination sounded intriguing and it was - I thought the delicious sweet lobster cheesecake combined perfectly with the shrimp jelly. Two portions of superb fresh scallops combined with local black pudding and a celeriac puree were praised highly by my guests and a lamb stir fry with spring rolls completed our starters.

The specials board had tempted three of us to venture away from the regular menu with two portions of pan-fried red mullet served with mussels and clams on a bed of mash combining perfectly with the Austrian white wine.

Not surprisingly my vote was cast towards haunch of red deer venison with Scotch broth garnishes. The generous portion of venison was accompanied by a cabbage parcel and my initial disappointment was blown away when I discovered it contained a delicious mixture of juicy vegetables and meat, a delightful accompaniment to the venison.

Needless to say the white wine was not a good choice for the venison so a glass of house Chilean Merlot admirably came to the rescue. Yet again a good example of why a good selection of wines by the glass can really enhance a meal.

We were spoilt with our dessert selection of three homemade delicious puddings, Belgian chocolate bread and butter, Eccles cake with Lancashire cheese ice-cream and baked egg custard with whisky and ginger ice-cream. Ross recommended a bottle of pudding wine. Marmesa Red Harvest Pinot Noir, a heady concoction of liquid strawberry and marmalade flavours - served perfectly chilled, it was delicious.

A final surprise at the end of our evening, chef Cassie popped out to say 'hello' and I recognised her immediately from television's MasterChef - the Professionals. A Master Chef in the Ribble Valley! ■

The Coach and Horses
20 Main Street
Bolton by-Bowland
01200 447202

