

WORDS BY ANTONY HOLTER

PEENS



SITUATED SECONDS FROM BROADSTAIRS LUXURIOUS SANDS LIES PEENS; A WELCOMING VIBRANT GASTRO BAR WITH A REPUTATION THAT COULD RIVAL THE BEST.

On our arrival we were welcomed by a relaxed yet sophisticated décor, before being greeted by chef and proprietor Matt Peen. Matt described to us how before arriving in November 2005, the building was a rundown old ice cream parlour before he decided to undertake the conversion into the popular dining establishment it is today.

Having always had a connection to the local area, Matt felt that it was important to use local produce in his cooking, sourcing his meat, fish and as many ingredients as he can from local suppliers, some of which comes from the harbour mere yards away.

As we sat down we were served a delicious jug of homemade lemonade, which brought back fond memories of summer for me. It wasn't long before the starters arrived; king prawns with a little kick of chilli and a plate of beautifully cooked sardines which were divine. The fish melted in the mouth and offered a great taste of the seaside to start our dining experience.

With a glass of lemonade to freshen up the palate we were ready for the next course and after the quality of the starters, expectations were high.

Our next course was succulent filets of smoked mackerel on a bed of greens, with crispy pancetta and sautéed potatoes. The mackerel was very flavourful and the moist texture perfectly complimented the slight crunch coming from the pancetta.

After sampling some superb fish dishes, it was time for the main event; roasted pork belly with crackling served with mashed potatoes and garlic spinach. The pork was cooked plain and simple - no fuss, just real care and attention to roasting the joint well, which was refreshing to hear. This resulted in very tender pork which just got better with every mouthful. This had to be my personal dish of the day!

Almost full, we ploughed on - it seemed a shame to miss out on the fabulous food Matt was spoiling us with. Next on the agenda was devilled Kidneys on toast. Now, kidneys I have to say are not really one of my favourite things to eat, but I am glad I tried them! The Kidneys were cooked well and accompanied by a lovely rich, strong sauce which had a powerful kick to it. The lovely chunk of toasted bread served well to mop up all that was left of the sauce.

With all the mains sampled, it was time for dessert and I was unsure if I was going to be able to fit it in, but I simply had to - I have never turned down a desert so I am not going to start now!

We were presented with two desserts; one was a wonderfully creamy and light crème brûlée with a pleasantly glazed top, the other a deliciously rich chocolate treat, which served as a perfect way the end the meal.

Peens have built a local reputation with a lot of regular, loyal customers and it's not hard to see why. A friendly atmosphere is combined with a menu where every dish is cooked to perfection, using wonderfully fresh local produce.