



Ahmet Kurcer, General Manager

I love food. Cooking it, reading about it, watching TV cookery shows and, of course, eating it. So in my book there's little more satisfying than a plate full of amazing food beautifully presented.

I was invited to Alderley Edge Hotel to take a look at the changes they've made lately to the decor and layout in their bar and dining area. Always elegant, it was perhaps looking a little dated, and the steps up and down to the restaurant placed limitations on diners and presented waiters with challenges.

The rooms have certainly been refreshed, with a coolly contemporary bar area providing lots of comfortable seating and a very appealing menu of bar meals.

"This is an innovation for us," explains Ahmet Kurcer, General Manager at the Hotel for over 22 years. "Most of our guests during the week are business travellers, who we felt might not always wish to dine in the slightly more formal atmosphere of the main restaurant. Here they can choose from a range of familiar and comforting meals, including such favourites as club sandwich and welsh rarebit. The prices are comfortable too!"

Familiar favourites these might be, but they have all been given 'the treatment'! The chef at Alderley Edge Hotel should see his name up in lights, as he creates and presents dishes you'd expect to see on menus at restaurants with very famous names. Unlike some chefs however, this guy, Chris Holland, has no interest

in TV fame or book publishing deals, his passion lies with dreaming up incredible meals and presenting them to his grateful clientele.

Ahmet had invited David (INCheshire's illustrious publisher) and me to join him for lunch. I was a little apprehensive about how this might work. It's hard to sit smiling at the big cheese with a mouth full of something you wish you'd never eaten, and I've never been good at pretending something's great when it isn't. On the day however it was all good. Ahmet is a charming gentleman for whom great food is one of life's primary passions, and the meal was exquisite. My biggest problem was uttering anything of any sense beyond, "Oh yum!"

David ordered 'Roasted Cap Mushrooms, Crispy Chicken, Pata Negra Ham, Black Truffle Syrup and Golden Egg Yolk' to start. I was a bit puzzled by the final item, what colour did the chef think the egg yolk would be? However, when it arrived we were both to be seen gazing intently at the egg, making sounds of muttered surprise, as it actually was gold. (It's a food spray apparently, and very pretty it is too!). David then descended into awe-struck silence, uttering nothing more than the occasional contented sigh, as he cleared his plate faster than my toddler can sink a cup cake; now you see it...

I chose duck, but the menu description of 'Corned Reg Johnson's Duck, Beetroot and Fennel Coleslaw, Purée of Sweetcorn and Duck Crackers' actually gave me little indication of the delights to come. Soft ribbons of smoked duck, with a delicately flavoured salad wrapped in wafer thin beetroot; just delicious.

Our main courses were just as amazing. David took little persuasion to try the beef 'sous vide' and I chose pork and black pudding. Both meals were superb, the presentation of all the dishes is just beautiful, and the balance of flavours and textures on the plate is wonderful. It's not something I've ever really thought about before, but the look and feel of food at this level adds something very special to the enjoyment of it.

You can always rely on me to go the extra mile in the interests of good reporting, so as David declined to choose a pudding, I had two. There I sat, trying to look all sophisticated, and failing badly, with two pretty platters of dessert taking up my entire side of the table. There aren't words to describe, to be honest. Pear Tatin to die for and Olive Oil Lemon Cake I'd be prepared to bribe and corrupt anybody for the recipe for.



Food, glorious food

This level of fine dining is not new to Alderley Edge Hotel, Holland has been there for 10 years already, and they've never struggled to fill a dining room, so why make change, and expensive change at that?

"Our objective has always remained the same. To provide our guests and diners with an outstanding dining experience in comfortable surroundings."



Chris Holland, Chef

Ahmet explains. "However, people's expectations of how this can be best achieved change, and we felt that we would be better able to strike that delicate balance between fine dining and a relaxed evening out by making a few changes."

"The trend for small, stylish celebrations has meant we are often

asked for tables of 20-25 people. In our previous dining room we were unable to do this. Now we can seat up to 25 people at one table, and no longer need to disappoint anybody."

I can't imagine anybody being disappointed by dining at Alderley Edge Hotel. Whether it's a bar meal, in what I'm told is a marvellous atmosphere, or a gourmet lunch in the light and airy restaurant, I think you'll be content.

But the most impressive part... the prices. Apologies for bringing it all down to money, but let's face it, blowing the budget on a meal out isn't top of many people's list of things to do, these days especially. You'll be pleased to hear however that while you most definitely get out of this world food, you won't pay sky high prices. We ate a la carte, but I've seen higher prices in Manchester without the joyous food. You could choose from the equally enticing lunch menu though, where you can choose two courses for £14.95 or three for £19.95. Go for the latter option, you'll seriously regret not having that pud!

Ahmet told me that they see themselves as serious contenders for a higher recognition. I doubt their confidence is unfounded, it's a wonderful experience and certainly worth putting on your list of special places to dine in Cheshire.



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