

A different way of dining at high table

eating out

SARAH O'MEARA is convinced Sunday lunch is best served at the The Fleur.



foodfile

The Fleur, 73 Humberstone Road, Cambridge, CB4 1JD (01223) 470401 www.Tfdl.co.uk

Bistro opening hours: Monday-Saturday, noon-3pm and 6pm-9.30pm; Sunday noon-3pm

Disabled Access: Yes
Cost of meal: Meal for two, plus drinks and including service: £40

Food: ☆☆☆☆

Service: ☆☆☆☆

Ambience: ☆☆☆☆

Value: ☆☆☆☆

I'm not the only one who thinks Sunday lunch at The Fleur is a great idea.

I can see the owners lurking in one corner, trying not to look suspicious when they see me sit down. I knew I shouldn't have worn my new citrus jacket and jungle print skirt. You can get too carried away with spring/summer trends.

Perching on one of the high brown leather stools, I try and get used to this innovative seating position. It's surprisingly comfortable. Letting my legs dangle beneath, feelings of freedom and youth bubble up. I feel like a girl kicking her legs on a swing. Or perhaps more realistically a greedy baby in her high chair knowing she's about to be fed.

The Fleur's Sunday lunch menu is pleasingly diverse and simple. Just three or four good options per course and an attentive waiter bobbing around: an effective yet surprisingly underused dining combination.

This gastro-pub has been completely refurbished in the last year and now looks like a modern, colonial hideaway. White wood panels, light green walls, a variety of exotic plants and large, ethnic vases are enough to make you reach for a cigar-flavoured herbal tea and a copy of *The Telegraph's* Sunday magazine.



Plenty of room to swing: The Fleur has been tastefully refurbished with an innovative seating arrangement. Pictures: Alex Weatherill

We order homemade winter vegetable soup and stuffed mushrooms filled with pancetta and brie for starters, and gourmet sausage and mash (with Lincolnshire sausages and stilton mash) and tagliatelle with seasonal vegetables, tomatoes and crème fraîche, for mains.

The waiters 'wait' with the panache of an up-market restaurant. Cutlery is changed, glasses removed and replaced, drinks served and first courses served with a showmanship that breeds expectation. Luckily both our starters were delicious – and presented with a similar sense of style.

We then had plenty of time to swing our legs before the second courses arrived. The chef was clearly making an effort, and although I personally wouldn't have drizzled sweet balsamic vinegar anywhere near rustic tagliatelle, my dish was beautifully fresh and satisfying. Apparently the sausages were also terrific and my dining partner and I were most impressed by the cunning balancing of four sausages each on individual mounds of mash.

And finally the desserts. All homemade on the premises, the chocolate waffle meltdown was really excellent. But best eaten alone I think – as fighting over that last bit of toffee crunch ice cream did get sticky.



one to make

Try out chef Valli's spicy stuff

Valli Little's spicy stuffed sausage and cheese croissants (Serves 4)

Ingredients

20ml olive oil
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
350g spicy sausages (such as chorizo), meat removed from casings
200g button mushrooms, chopped
1 heaped tbsp tomato paste

100ml red wine
410g canned chopped tomatoes
75g semi-dried tomatoes
4 large croissants
80g grated Cheddar

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/gas mark 4. Heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, add the onion and cook for two to three minutes to soften. Add the sausage meat and mushrooms and cook

for five minutes, breaking up the meat. Add the tomato paste and wine and cook for two to three minutes, until most of the wine has evaporated. Add all the tomatoes and cook, stirring, for five to six minutes until very little of the liquid remains.

Cut deep slashes in the top of the croissants. Fill with the mixture. Place on a baking tray, top with cheese and bake for five to six minutes, until the croissants are hot and the cheese has melted.

