

Dining DUET

THE CORNER HOUSE IN MINSTER, KENT WAS AWARDED THE TASTE OF KENT BEST RESTAURANT 2015 AND IS LISTED IN BOTH THE GOOD FOOD AND MICHELIN GUIDES. NOW, CHEF PROPRIETOR MATT SWORDER IS TAKING OVER A CORNER IN CANTERBURY. GISELLE WHITEAKER SEEKS DELICACIES IN KENT.



ABOVE:
One of the dining areas at The Corner House, Minster

Blink and you could easily miss Minster in Kent. The small village to the west of Ramsgate and northeast of Canterbury houses less than 4,000 residents, but along with Minster Abbey, there's a reason to keep your eyes peeled – and that's The Corner House.

Matt Sworder opened this quirky eatery in 2013, at the tender age of 27, and within a year, the restaurant appeared in *The Waitrose Good Food Guide* and was listed in the *Michelin Guide*. More recently, it was named Best Kent Restaurant of the Year in the 2015 Taste of Kent Awards. Whatever Matt and Head Chef Predrag Kostic are doing, they're clearly doing it right.

Matt is passionate about supporting the local area, sourcing much of his produce from a 20-mile radius, and this ethos, combined with straightforward, unpretentious, yet well-prepared and presented food, has kept punters coming back for more – so much so that the second Corner House recently opened its doors in Canterbury.

Given the accolades this establishment has received, I was keen to try the fare myself. Checked in to one of the two cosy, upstairs rooms in the original Minster version – complete with a decadently deep, free-standing bathtub – I made my way down to the almost-hourglass-shaped restaurant, the two main dining areas joined at the middle by the bar. My usual aperitif might be a Prosecco, or a glass of white, but tonight, the cocktail menu caught my eye and I

found myself ordering a Toffee Apple Martini. The amber concoction composed of Thunder toffee vodka and local apple juice was sweet, but not cloying, whetting my appetite for the meal to come.

Moving into the front dining section of the hourglass, I was seated at a simple, wooden table, set with a red rose and brass candlestick. Slim slices of deliciously crusty bread appeared as I deliberated over the menu, finally sacrificing the goat cheese mousse starter in exchange for the chicken liver parfait with port jelly. Presented in a glass, the deep mahogany jelly hugged the smooth paste below, both accompanied by slices of crispy toasted bread. The parfait had an impressive depth of flavour that forced me to consider ordering it again the next day for lunch.

With laughter spilling from the semi-private attached dining space nearby, packed with a group of friends, I sipped a crisp white wine and watched a steady stream of customers walk through the door. All were greeted like old friends, making it impossible to determine who were locals, and who, like me, were just passing through and tempted by the chance to sample local fare.

My main dish was superbly presented: a generous wedge of pork belly, with mashed potato and cauliflower two ways, on a bed of spring greens. A wafer of crackling protruded from the dish, exploding in a puff of salted air when I bit into its light middle.



ABOVE:
Dining delights from The Corner House

The belly was tender and succulent and the top layer was the perfect combination of stickiness and crunch, pairing beautifully with the moderately sweet apple sauce. It embodied the comfort of grandma's roast pork, partnered with the flavours of an extraordinary chef.

I love a menu that has a page devoted to cheese, but I couldn't relinquish the desire to sample the caramelised banana sponge with salted caramel and peanut butter ice cream. I knew I'd made the right choice when the spoonful of soft sponge landed on my tongue, melting into sweet, caramel goodness with a burnt toffee aftertaste. If paradise had a flavour, this would be it.

The Corner House Canterbury may be the newcomer on the dining block, but with an older sister like The Corner House Minster, it's destined for success. Dishing up the best Kent has to offer in a welcoming atmosphere, both restaurants are a dining delight.

For more information about The Corner House Minster – or Canterbury – see www.thecornerhouseminster.co.uk

The Corner House's Beetroot Cured Salmon

Beetroot cured salmon

1 side of salmon (trimmed, sliced in two)
3 beetroots
10 juniper berries
300g caster sugar
300g table salt
1 shot Gordon's Gin
Zest of two lemons
Pepper

Cucumber jelly

1 cucumber
50ml white wine vinegar
45g caster sugar
100ml water
Small pinch of salt
½ bunch of dill
Zest of 1 lime
4 bronze gelatine leaves

Beetroot puree

6 beetroots
3 apple juice
White wine vinegar
Port

Horseradish cream

1 tbsp Coleman's horseradish
300ml whipping cream
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Beetroot cured salmon

Blitz all of the ingredients in a Magimix, place over cling film and wrap the salmon. Leave for 24 hours. Wash and dry.

Cucumber jelly

Blitz the cucumber, dill and lime zest in the Magimix. Pass the mixture through a muslin cloth. Bring the rest of the ingredients to boil, add the gelatine and then leave it to cool.

Beetroot puree

Puree ingredients and add sugar to taste.

Horseradish cream

Whip the cream until it forms stiff peaks. Add the horseradish and season to taste.

Dish up using your own creativity.