

Faring Well in Greenwich

Rivington Greenwich is an unexpected delight, serving up modern British fare. It's all about good food, done well, as Giselle Whiteaker discovers.

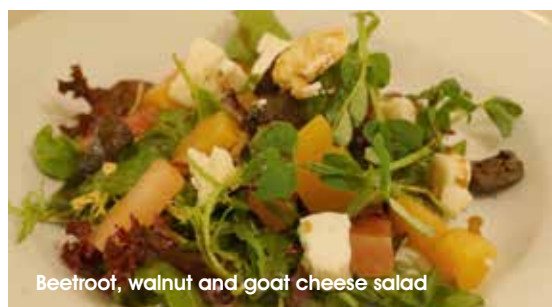


Rivington Greenwich's split-level dining space

I'm clearly in a gin den. The beverage menu offers a wide variety of the juniper-derived spirit, served neat, with tonic or as a portion in a concoction from the cocktail menu. I'm tempted, but it's early in the week, so instead I choose a crisp white wine and glance around the Rivington Greenwich's open-plan dining space.

Tables dot the downstairs area, which has a maritime feel, all brass railings and dark wood, flanked by the wooden bar where my friend Judy and I are currently

sitting, absorbing the relaxed atmosphere. From here, we can also see the mezzanine dining space at the top of a wooden staircase. There's a hum of happiness pervading the room, as people sip their cocktails and chit-chat over tantalising fare. I've been scrutinising the plates going from pass to table and it's heightened my senses. Every morsel is carefully positioned and colour-balanced, yet not pretentious, in a plating effort that's beyond what I would have expected from this unassuming eatery on Greenwich High Road.



Beetroot, walnut and goat cheese salad



I should have known better. The Rivington was set up by Mark Hix, the executive chef for Caprice Holdings, the group that owns the Ivy. The original Rivington, the older, slightly edgier sister, is in Shoreditch and going strong. The uber-trendy, boutique-filled high road in Greenwich seems an obvious choice for another. Caprice Holdings bought into the Rivington back in 2006 and the influence is felt in the service and quality in both establishments. Rivington is a champion of prime British produce, cherishing food that is foraged, farmed and fished in the British Isles and I can't wait to stick a fork in it.

We are taken to our cosy table for two upstairs by Andre, who is smoothly managing the flow of guests in and out of the dining spaces. He gives us an overview of both the restaurant and the menu, introducing our deep-voiced waiter, Oliver.

We've perused the menu over drinks at the bar, but there's a delicious tang of spice in the air and I'm willing



Head Chef Simon Wadham

to forgo my original Newlyn cod fillet, chorizo and crushed new potato choice for whatever is making that enticing scent. Oliver's eyes flicker to the next table and he confirms that it's the Monkfish tail and prawn masala that's intoxicating my olfactory senses. My main-course decision is made.

Oliver delivers a plate of potato and onion bread for us to nibble on while we wait. The deliciously crusty wedges are flavour-packed and it's all I can do not to munch through the lot. I refuse to let him remove the final slice, hoping I'll still have room for it after dining.

For starters, Judy chooses the mixed beetroot, pickled walnut and goat cheese salad. It's an attractive blend of colours and flavours and I'm almost envious when Oliver places it on the table - until my heritage tomato, burrata and basil salad arrives. The creamy burrata cheese rests on a bed of greens, several yellow and orange tomato wedges forming a circle around the



Isle of Mull scallops



A table for two



Monkfish tail and prawn masala

mound. A drizzle of balsamic dressing adds the finishing zest to the entire dish, which is delightfully light, the perfect introduction to the full-bodied masala to come.

Judy's seared Isle of Mull scallops rest in a swirl of potato puree, diced black pudding and Old Spot bacon balancing the sweet tenderness of the shellfish. The flavours are soft and subtle, the antithesis of my rich, bold masala. Served with lemon rice, the chunks of seafood have enveloped the spicy masala tang, exploding in bursts of intense flavour that end with a mild heat. I eagerly scoop up every morsel, abandoning my ambitions to eat the final slice of bread lingering on the table. After all, there's still dessert to come.

I knew Judy would stay true to character and order the cr me br lee with blueberries. I was equally as predictable, my predilection for caramel drawing me to the salted caramel ice-cream with hot toffee sauce.

The generous tower of ice-cream scoops melds into a delicious mass of caramel goodness when I pour the entire jug of toffee sauce into the bowl and I spoon every sweet dribble into my mouth, revelling in the treat.

Head chef Simon Wadham and his team are to be commended on the superb selection of distinctively British dishes. Rivington Greenwich is all about back-to-basics British cooking, taking good food and making it even better, before dishing it up in a relaxed, cosy environment. Served with a modern twist, each dish is designed to allow the produce to be the focal point and that's just the way it should be. ■

For more information about Rivington Grill Greenwich see www.rivingtongreenwich.co.uk.



Salted caramel ice-cream



Rivington Buratta Photo by Lucy Richards

Rivington Grill's Potted Shrimps.

Ingredients

100g unsalted butter, softened
1 lemon
Pinch of ground mace
Cayenne pepper to taste
40ml anchovy essence
200g brown shrimps, peeled and
cooked
Salt and freshly ground black
pepper

Serves 4

Method

Place the butter in a saucepan with the juice of half the lemon, ground mace, Cayenne and anchovy essence. Simmer on a low heat for 2 to 3 minutes for the spices to infuse the butter. Remove and allow the mixture to cool until just warm. Add the shrimps to the butter mixture. Stir well and check seasoning. Pack the shrimps into ramekins or small kilner jars and put in the fridge to set. Remove from the fridge at least an hour before required and serve with toast and lemon wedges.

