



Malton Cookery School

Made in Malton

Malton in North Yorkshire is not a big place, but it's aiming high in culinary terms. Giselle Whiteaker puts Malton's finest food to the taste-bud test.

Malton has big ambitions. The historic working market town in North Yorkshire only claims 13,000 residents at last count, but it's styling itself as Yorkshire's food capital – a moniker that's fast taking root.

Set on the edge of the North York Moors amidst beautiful countryside, Malton boasts a monthly food market with live cooking demonstrations, music and fresh local produce, as well as the impressive Malton Food Lovers Festival in May, a large-scale celebration

of the best of Yorkshire produce and cooking that features all things food, from chef demonstrations to talks, tastings and more. It's not just about celebration, though – food here takes centre-stage every day.

The Borough was purchased by the Hon Thomas Watson Wentworth in 1713. Twelve generations later, much of Malton is still owned by his descendants, the Naylor-Leylands, who hold the Fitzwilliam Malton Estate. The family have also owned the Grade II-listed Talbot Hotel since 1739, and it's here that my friend



Matt and I have chosen for a foodie mini-break. With Malton-born chef James Martin – of BBC and Channel 4 fame – previously in charge of the kitchen here, the hotel tops our list of places to dine.

Head Chef Jake Jones is creeping up on three years with The Talbot. The 23-year-old comes from a family of chefs, so he was born into the profession. Despite his young age, he comes across as confident and competent, exactly what you'd expect from someone who has learnt the tricks of the trade from James Martin. "He's keen on having the best of everything, which is good for me," Jones says. "He's helped me massively." Naturally, both chefs have had an impact on the cuisine, too.

Jones points out that the style of food served in the restaurant has changed over time. "I think when we first started it was a lot less refined than it is now, so it was a lot more simple. We decided to go a little bit more complex – nothing too over the top, but a little more of an experience for the guest," he says.

The restaurant specialises in taking Yorkshire's finest ingredients and cooking them simply with care and Jones is quick to credit the suppliers. He estimates



that 65% are local and the rest are not so far away, either. "We're working on bringing even more local suppliers in and building the relationships," he explains. With superb game from the North York Moors and seafood from the coast, he has an enviable larder on his doorstep.

"Seasonality is key. When you use things that are in season, you get the best from them," says Jones. To this end, the menu at the Talbot changes regularly. "When I'm thinking about a dish, I'll ring a supplier and say 'What have you got that's really good and how long is it available for?' and then we work on a dish from there, rather than the other way round."

In winter, the menu tends towards game, with grouse, partridge and pigeon flying onto the menu during our visit, and hare soon to bound in from a local Estate. Naturally, a number of fish dishes also feature. Jones is a fan of grouse. "We cook the bird on the bone and confit the legs down for twelve hours so they're really tender. It takes a good amount of skill to cook grouse correctly without it becoming dry. It's a very lean bird with no fat," he explains. Clearly Jones has the skills needed and I know what I'll be ordering for dinner.

In the evening, my main course decided, I peruse the list of tantalising fare for a starter. Traditional jazz tunes tinkle in the background, and a few somber horses gaze at us from their paintings as Matt and I negotiate our entrees. We agree to share a goat's cheese mousse with soured beetroot juice, salt-baked garden beets, dill and pine nuts, and a serving of confit Sharpes Express heritage potato with crispy ox tongue, lovage cream and leaf, dripping and pickled onion.

Both choices are delectable. The goat's cheese mousse is light and fluffy, retaining the essence of the tangy cheese, which is accentuated by the smooth beet juice. Four round maroon-coloured puffs perch on top of the mousse and explode between our teeth in bursts of flavour, adding texture. I'm almost sad as I scrape the last of the mousse from the plate, but the subtle scented flavour of the potatoes soften me up, for the ox tongue to deliver its flavour punch before it melts on the tongue.

The hay-roasted grouse is everything I imagined it would be. The deep-red meat is tender and springy, the mild game flavour meeting rich, velvety blackberries and mulled red cabbage at the mid-point to deliver intense impact. Matt has fallen silent over his Brass Castle beer-braised beef cheek, dished up with a pea-



green pearl barley and parsley risotto, braised onions and warm beer jelly. He looks slightly resentful when I ask to try some, but reluctantly allows me to scoop up a morsel of the meat, which is so soft that it simply dissolves in my mouth. Matt looks upset. "I want to eat more, but I don't want to eat more because then there will be less left for me to eat," he says mournfully. He ekes out every bite until he can't extend the meal any further. "Last mouthful," he sighs with remorse and sits back in his chair. "That was amazing."

Dessert is no less stirring. Matt's Muscovado cheesecake with Braeburn apple slices, walnuts and thyme is a beautiful pairing of creamy cheesecake and tangy sorbet, the flavours light and fresh. I opt for the somewhat more decadent milk chocolate and rapeseed oil ganache with ruby plums and chunks of artistic aerated chocolate. The ganache has a silky fudge-like consistency as I carve it with my spoon and fill my mouth with chocolate goodness that avoids being overly rich or sweet, while the aerated chocolate crunches into cocoa-dusted air.

The meal has inspired us, so the next day we swing by the Malton Cookery School to sign up for a game cookery class. Set in of an old congregational chapel the school is a new temple to Yorkshire gastronomy, focusing on game, seafood and baking. Gilly Robertson heads up things here, putting together a fantastic selection of courses, chef's tables and events that are fast gaining a following from across Britain.

From basic knife skills to serious master classes, the well-equipped school covers every skill level and we're keen to sign up. We'll make a date of it and stay at the Talbot Hotel, learn at the Malton Cookery School and dine at the hotel's Restaurant; the ultimate foodie weekend. ■

For more information about The Talbot Hotel Malton, see www.talbotmalton.co.uk and to sign up for courses at the Malton Cookery School visit www.maltoncookeryschool.co.uk.

Tarte au Citron

The Malton Cookery School specialises in Yorkshire baking, Yorkshire game, Yorkshire seafood and Yorkshire top to toe rare breed meats. This classic Lemon Tart is always popular. It's easy to make and will be perfect every time. Always a dinner party winner, serve simply dusted with icing sugar and seasonal fruits and always serve at room temperature.



For the pastry

The preferred pastry to use is shortbread pastry or "Pâte Sablée"

200g Butter
Pinch of Salt
100g Icing sugar
2 Egg yolks
250g Flour
2 drops Vanilla essence

For the filling

4 Lemons
9 Eggs
375g Caster sugar
300ml Double cream
Icing sugar to serve.

Pastry

Use a 22cm flan ring/baking tray to support this. Both should be buttered and the oven temperature 180c/gas 3.

Put all the ingredients, except the flour, into a food processor and blend until smooth then add the flour and as soon as it is combined, stop the machine. This pastry will suffer if it is over worked. Chill for 20 minutes and then roll out to about 4mm and into a circle that will fit your flan ring.

Once the pastry is the desired size lift into the ring

Tip: Fold it to make it easier to move – carefully in half and then into quarters. Put the point of this into the middle of the ring and open out so as to fill the whole shape.

Push using your finger so that it is eased into the ring and reaches to the bottom. Take care not to make any holes at this stage. Trim away the excess but leave about 3cms hanging over the edge and don't worry about it not looking neat. Line with a piece of baking parchment and fill to the top with rice. Bake for 20 minutes. Now remove the paper and the rice.

Lower the oven temp to 150c/gas2.

Filling

Wash and grate the lemons, squeeze the juice and mix together. Beat the eggs and sugar and add the cream. Do not over whisk at this stage. Pour in the lemon juice and zest and pour most of it into the pastry case. Place the tart on the oven shelf and add the last bit of filling so that it is brim full. Tip: Done this way it means you don't spill it en-route to the oven.

Bake for 40 minutes or until it is cooked almost to the middle but the centre still has a very slight wobble. Take out and keep in a warm place or turn off the oven and leave the door open for another 10 minutes.

Take a sharp knife and trim away the overhanging pastry, so that it is level with the filling. Cool completely and dust with icing sugar just before serving.

This is very rich and will serve 6.

Tips: Using caster is best as golden castor takes away the delicate lemon flavour. Using rice instead of beans makes a better job of keeping the pastry a good shape. Trimming the edge at the end gives a very professional finish.