



# By Royal appointment

Dining in provincial hotel restaurants can be something of a lottery, but not at the Tudor Farmhouse, where **MARK TAYLOR** discovers a chef in danger of putting the Royal Forest of Dean on the culinary map

**H**ari and Colin Fell took over the Tudor Farmhouse hotel and restaurant just under three years ago, when Hari's parents decided to retire after running the business for two decades.

Located in the heart of the Royal Forest of Dean, in the old mining village of Clearwell, parts of the hotel's structure

are from the Tudor era, dating back to the 13th century, when it was a large farm.

These days, it is a luxurious boutique hotel with 20 double and family-sized rooms, some with four-poster beds and Jacuzzis.


Perfectly situated close to the Wye Valley, Monmouth, Abergavenny and Gloucestershire, it attracts visitors from





point of paying their bills on time, which is important when you are dealing with small producers.”

In my experience, provincial hotel restaurants can be a very hit or miss affair, but I was taken aback by the luxury of the rooms and the quality of the food on offer here.

Food in hotel restaurants rarely gets as good as this and I suggest you head to the Tudor Farmhouse before the secret's out. 

 **Tudor Farmhouse, High Street, Clearwell, Royal Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, GL16 8JS. Tel: 01594 833046. www.tudorfarmhousehotel.co.uk**

afar, both for the tranquility and also the excellent food in the hotel's restaurant.

Chef Blaine Reed uses as much local produce as possible and the hotel has a strict policy of buying from local organic or biodynamic farmers where available.

Much of the vegetables and fruit are sourced from the hotel's well-stocked gardens and the menu lists all suppliers, including Bower Farm, Abergavenny (cream, yogurt, sausages), Cowshill Farm, Tidenham (beef), Douglas Willis, Cwmbran (Welsh lamb) and Lydney Park Farm (venison and game).

Such attention to detail extends to the rooms, where guests can enjoy nice touches like jars of home-baked cinnamon shortbread and Fairtrade tea and coffee.

The hotel also offers guests foraging trips with local celebrity forager Raoul Van Den Broucke, who lives nearby and supplies the Tudor Farmhouse with local produce picked in the Forest and Wye Valley.

These seasonal forays last for half a day and guests can take their wild mushrooms, herbs and leaves back to the hotel where the kitchen will happily cook it for lunch or dinner.

The restaurant is a revelation, with chef Blaine Reed displaying the sort of precise, flavour-packed dishes sure to place him on the radar of Michelin inspectors. Dinner costs £32.50 for three courses – a steal considering the quality and provenance of the ingredients.

Dishes are intelligent and perfectly executed, as well as fiercely seasonal: marinated supreme of wood pigeon with

celeriac remoulade, beetroot and harissa; braised shoulder of Raglan lamb with poached apple, roast shallots and red wine caper jus, and the memorable breast of Madgett's Farm duck with aubergine and lentil curry, mango relish and roasted sweet potato.

“We always wanted the hotel to be the sort of place where we wanted to stay ourselves,” Colin tells me the following morning.

“We have gone big on local produce because we would be mad not to take advantage of the incredible producers around us. We're just shouting about it more than others in the area.

“It has been important to forge good relationships with these suppliers, but also getting their trust and support. We make a

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