

The BeachHouse Cafe, South Milton/Thurlestone Sands

Cheerful waiters set the mood at the BeachHouse, where rustic décor is agreeable for both daytime beach-combers and evening diners.

Our coastal walk took us across Thurlestone golf links and the reed beds of South Milton Ley. The Beachhouse is an ideally situated refreshment stop for Hope Cove coastal path walkers as well as locals. Many South Hams visitors drive via South Milton, or take the country lane from South Huish.

The sea view is exceptional and you may place your order at the hatch-window for eating at tables arranged alongside grassy sand dunes behind low retaining walls, but today we go inside where rustic tables and benches seat 24, or a squashed 36. A chalk board invites us to:

'Book a party to celebrate... or just because you can'.

We called in for coffee and a slab of their delicious flapjack - and took in the creative elements of this unique restaurant.

Seated at the end table, perfume from hyacinths (that sagged under their own weight) greeted us. The perfume reminds us of home comforts and I prop the flower stems back on the fork and spoon I find stuck in the soil for their support.

The comfortable ambiance accommodates the habit of eating at any hour of the day. It's open for brunch, lunch and dinner, and everything in between, 364 days a year.

Packing-case boards, probably from fish boxes or pallets, form the division from the galley kitchen. Glowing antique carbon filament bulbs, hang from open rafters on blue wire, while infra red heating lamps hang over the food-serving counter. Alongside them is a modern coffee machine.

Set aside, in reserve for the inevitable power cut, are gas lamps and paraffin lamps... and a store of candles. The wine rack is a fish box; cutlery is stored in plastic sand buckets.

A melody, from an out of sight source, defines what is meant by background music. It is subtle behind the cheerful cosmopolitan chatter of tourists and locals. They eat from timeless food – lots of it caught from the sea nearby. Kid's beach buckets are perfect vases for fresh parsley.

A toddler at the next table shares food from his parents' plates – a sight that contrasts the cheeseboard and wine set at another table where there's a laptop in use. Golden daffodils there, keep the natural ambiance, regardless of the business that is taking place.

At another table I see mussels served – and there's a sand castle bucket for the shells. I like it here and I promise myself to return one summer evening to enjoy something from their dinner menu. I'll be wearing earrings, perfume and a dress... instead of walking boots.

For more information, or to make a booking, call 01548-561144.

You can also catch the flavour of the place from their website at

www.beachhousedevon.com and the advert in ***South Hams Eating Out Guide 2014/15, a useful free handbook from S. Hams Newspapers.***