

The Millbrook Inn
South Pool

"Where English pub food collides with French auberge cuisine in a spectacular fashion."

To find restaurants with Indian, Chinese or Italian fare is not difficult, but I know of only two places that have that truly French flavour: France, and The Millbrook Inn in South Pool. There have to be others, but I have not yet come across them.

French chef Jean Philippe Bidart is at The Millbrook Inn so to find Escargots, Foie gras, and Bouillabaisse on the menu is no surprise. If you're wanting a burger, or fish and chips, your destination is elsewhere.

The proprietors of the Millbrook say of themselves that they are 'reassuringly pubby', but theirs is a favourite place to dine and we went straight to our reserved table in one of the three dining rooms, each of which seats about 12. There are 40 covers inside; 40 outside.

The ambiance has the intimacy of a 17th century cottage. Cob walls are painted white with warm red here and there. There are no white tablecloths or other marks of formality, but the unpolished table reserved for us is welcoming and set near a fireplace. Overhead there are beams, but most importantly, this restaurant has wonderful cuisine. It's a restaurant for fine-dining on food that is mainly from the sea between Fowey and Salcombe.

With the compliments of Travelzoo membership we drink Prosecco as we peruse the menu believing there is no wrong choice; nothing will disappoint us.

There is a delightful vegetarian Tortilla dinner; and for meat eaters, braised shin of beef. Bouillabaisse; and grey mullet fillet are among the fish dishes and each is fully satisfying. We see changes on the menu with each visit, but today, it's the pigeon breasts with bath chaps that wins my favour. Bath chaps are a regional speciality that's enjoying a revival in restaurants and pubs in Bath and Bristol. Chaps, the lower half of the pig's cheek, are rich and marry especially well with lean meats such as the pigeon breasts they accompany on this menu. They arrived plated up with flageolet beans, artichoke chips, and grilled pancetta – a superb combination.

My starter was a fish soup - crab bisque, but if escargots are your fancy, they are pan fried with wild mushrooms, flambéed with cognac and a garlic butter sauce.

This is award winning food. Flavours are fabulously robust. Textures are soft and tender where they should be and crisp where crispness is wanted. Every ingredient is meticulously sourced.

Cheese and biscuits with celery, and figs cooked in port, was good to share afterwards. Puddings frequently change and might be chocolate fondants, pannacottas, Tarte Tatins and parfaits according to the creativity and mood of the kitchen.

We lingered with coffee along with other diners in this candle-lit place where cottage character and classy cuisine stimulate a congenial mood.

Mains are priced £14 - £20 and a starter costs around £8. Our meal was sensitively served against the easy backdrop of this South Hams country pub whose hours are 12 noon to 11.30pm. They open every day of the year.

To book a table, call 01548 531581 View on line: www.millbrookinnsouthpool.co.uk