

The Cockhaven Manor



Despite blizzard conditions when everyone else was battering hatches, my companion and I sallied forth fearlessly for dinner at the Cockhaven Manor in Bishopsteignton. The warmth of our welcome more than made up for the weather

I admit a bias. I maintain Bishopsteignton, on the Teign Estuary near Teignmouth, is the most beautiful village in Devon. Nestled into sheltering hills, the village is blessed with an amazingly scenery and microclimate. It is further blessed with award-winning food producers Old Walls Vineyard, Red Rock Brewery, and Shute Fruit and Produce. Naturally, the owners of Cockhaven Manor, Roy and Mandy Extance, feature these and other local producers in their extensive menu.

Sitting next to the cosy wood fire, we discussed our meal selections.

"We have so much good local food, we use a wide variety," said Roy. "An important part of eating out is salivating over the menu. We try to guide customers through our menu and wine list. Substitutions are no problem as everything is cooked to order. We don't stint on the portions, either. Our aim is to serve good food at sensible prices. Value for money is always important, particularly now. I know, I used to be a bank manager!"

Mandy chimed in. "I think we have a good atmosphere here, too. Our resident DJ, Peter Head, has a knack for getting everybody up and dancing. New Year's Eve next year is practically booked up by the guests as they went

out the door in the wee small hours this year.

"We are family-run – our son is tending the bar tonight. Most of our waiters are local, too. In fact, we find jobs are handed down from one sibling to the next! Our main function room is great for weddings, but we also have a gallery that is ideal for more intimate or family gatherings."

Head chef David Baldwin dug out a tarnished 'SW Head Waiter of the Year 1989' trophy to prove he knows the business from all angles. He echoed Roy's theme of local suppliers. "Gribble's butchers provide us with superb game and Gloucester Old Spot pork, while Leach's supply RSPCA-approved rose veal. "People need reminding of seasonal pleasures. I keep presentation simple. There's no architecture here with leaning towers or sauces that cover up the main ingredients. I also try to limit the main ingredients to three so you can identify the flavours cleanly."

True to his word, my sea bass came with a punchy tapenade that enhanced the flavour without masking it. My companion cleaned her plate of chicken forestiere. Plenty of vegetables, including a rich ratatouille, rounded out the menu. After that we could only manage a shared pudding, homemade of course, and coffee.

Had we not been able to make it home in the blizzard, the Cockhaven have 12 bedrooms, with two four-poster beds making them popular for romantic breaks. Bishopsteignton is blessed, and Cockhaven Manor is one more to add to the night-time count. □

LORI REICH

**Cockhaven Manor,
Bishopsteignton
TQ14 9RF
01626 775252
www.cockhavenmanor.com**

Proprietor: Roy and Mandy Extance
Head Chef: David Baldwin
Starters from: £3.75
Main Course from: £7.75
Desserts: £4.25

Sample Menu **Starters**

River Teign Mussels with Red Rock Beer and leeks
Smoked chicken breast with gooseberry and elderflower sauce and salad
Grilled goat's cheese with sweet chilli sauce on toasted French bread with salad garnish

Main Courses

Venison fillet in a spiced plum and port wine sauce
Brixham plaice mornay with lemon and white wine, and two cheeses
Roasted butternut squash stuffed with Italian roasted vegetables
All served with fresh seasonal vegetables and potatoes

Desserts

Tiramisu cheesecake
Banana, pecan and maple sponge with chocolate sauce
Mixed berry crumble with custard
Westcountry cheese board