



## TAKE A BOUGH

Newhey branches out with the Cedar Tree

Rachel and Andrew Garner opened the Cedar Tree five years ago. Rachel is the vivacious and efficient front-of-house manager and Andrew does the cooking.

In its quiet and understated way, it's more akin to a cosy tearoom than a faux French gaff. There's no accordion music or Parisian prints here. Small, with only 28 covers, it offers the intimacy of your own home with a decent enough space between the tables so that neighbouring conversations don't become intrusive or, heaven forefend, become more interesting than your own and you fall off your seat backwards trying to listen.

The menu provides a short but varied à la carte selection with some enticing descriptions. The Lancashire grill starter (£5.50) consisting of black pudding, field mushroom, smoked bacon and Lancashire cheese with a warm mustard sauce particularly

caught the eye, showcasing the Cedar Tree's excellent use of fine local produce. Leaving that for a later visit, we instead chose from the Summer Bistro Menu that offers three courses for £14.95 every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, or £17.95 on Friday and Saturday. As the name suggests, these bistro menus change seasonally.

Strong Mediterranean and Far Eastern influences are reflected on this menu as befits summer fare, and my starter of grilled Lamb koftas (meatballs) were nicely seasoned and not over spiced while the accompanying yoghurt and mint dip was refreshing. Freshness oozed from the homemade Potted crab served with warm ciabatta that was snaffled across the table.

My main of Grilled halibut fillet topped with a spicy Singapore crust and accompanied by a bed of fragrant coriander rice was so beautifully cooked that it broke with the most gentle pressure from knife

and fork. Meanwhile my companion was enthusing about the care Andrew Garner had lavished on the Slow roasted belly pork served with a sherry jus and patatas bravas. With these ingredients and through clever technique, the chef had transformed this rich meat in a novel way.

To accompany these dishes, we chose a too often underrated Chenin Blanc from the Paarl Heights vineyard in South Africa (£12.95). Though a white wine, the acidity came through with sufficient character to go well with the pork.

Tree makes for a real destination - the small town of Newhey is a couple of stops down from Rochdale on the Oldham line from Victoria Station. It's one of those establishments that is so easily overlooked by aficionados of the city centre or the southern suburbs. Put this place in the must-visit tray along with those other little wonders on the city fringe such as Saints Brassiere in Uppermill or Harts in Leigh, then make sure you get round to them at some point. It's these little proprietor-run venues that often provide the most variety and originality

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It's fortunate that we had just enough room for the puddings. Freshly prepared on the premises, they were a revelation. My crumble contained a fruity cocktail of apple, mango and banana and came with a generous helping of thick custard. Opposite, the Seville orange and chocolate truffle so closely resembled a minor artwork that it seemed cruel to approach it with spoon and fork.

With charming service, excellent food and good portions, the Cedar

(and occasionally eccentricity) when eating out. By taking the train or exiting at junction 21 on the M62 and turning right, you might find yourself pleasantly surprised.

PHILIP HAMER

**Food 4/5 Service 4/5 Decor 4/5**

**The Cedar Tree (Huddersfield Road, Newhey, Rochdale. 01706 842626)**

**Open: Wed-Fri noon-2pm (two courses for £5); Tue-Fri 6.30pm-9.30pm; Sat 7pm-9.30pm**