

gOLocal! Restaurant Review (September 2005)

Every month, **gOLocal!** will review a restaurant for you, in or around the vicinity of OL2. For our very first review, we chose a real winner when we visited The Cedar Tree just down the road in Newhey.

The success of The Cedar Tree is a true example of having a dream and making it happen. Five years ago, proprietors, Rachel and Andrew Garner took a giant leap of faith when they invested everything in their new restaurant. It paid off. The Cedar Tree has become a thriving bistro with many regular diners.

We were made to feel very welcome by Rachel, who manages the restaurant. Husband Andrew is the chef in what is a truly family-run business. We visited on a Tuesday evening in late July and the restaurant was almost full, which speaks for itself. The dining area is small but uncluttered and has an airy, front room feel about it, which made us feel at home and in the mood to chat straight away.

The menu is changed seasonally, so it was the summer bistro menu when we visited. The bistro menu offers good value with 3 courses for £14.95 with a choice of 5 starters and 5 main courses and a separate dessert menu. There was one starter and one main course which were suitable for vegetarians. There is also a substantial a la carte menu, with a range of meat and fish dishes. Starters cost between £5.50 - £6.50 and a main course costs from £13.50 - £14.95, with optional side orders of bread selection, homemade chunky chips and mixed salad. Dishes can be chosen from either menu.

The wine list is appropriate for the size of restaurant, with prices ranging from £9.95 - £13.50 for a bottle of white and from £9.95 - £14.95 for a bottle of red. Champagne is available at £23.99 a bottle.

Rachel and Andrew describe their food as "traditional with a twist". To start, I chose 'Homemade Potted Crab Served With Warm Ciabatta' from the Summer Bistro menu and my husband had 'Tiger Prawns with Garlic, Chilli & Ginger Butter and Herb rice' from the a la carte menu. The potted crab was smooth, buttery and delicious. The prawns were equally good in a light, spicy sauce and proved a filling starter with the accompaniment of the herb rice.

To follow, I had 'Rib-Eye Strips tossed in Hoi-sin & Plum sauce with Spring Onion Mash' (this was £1.00 extra). The rib-eye was cooked to perfection and the sweetness of the sauce worked very well with the savoury mashed potato. My husband chose 'Oven-baked Chicken Breast, stuffed with Black Pudding, served with Creamy Mash and a Dijon Cream Sauce' from the a la carte menu. The combination was extremely tasty and very filling. The Dijon Cream Sauce gave it an added little kick. We were served plenty of freshly steamed broccoli and chunky cut carrots to accompany our main dishes.

Rachel told us that they use fresh local produce as far as possible and all dishes are made to order. The best sellers are the Lancashire Grill starter and Prime Fillet of Beef main course from the a la carte menu and these remain fixed items, even when the menu changes seasonally.

To finish we had coffee and decided to share a dessert. We chose the 'Banoffi and Pecan Mess'. It was a light combination of chopped bananas, crushed meringue, fresh cream and ice cream, topped with chopped pecans and a toffee sauce. Just right for our sweet tooth! There were many other delicious desserts we could have chosen had we had any room left, including a homemade fruit and ginger crumble and Bailey's cheesecake.

The Cedar Tree also offers a lunchtime menu with 2 courses for only £5.00, from 12-2pm Weds, Thurs and Fri. Phone orders can be phoned through in advance for those on a time limit, which is great for working lunches. The Gourmet Extravaganza Night, held on the last Friday night of each month is generating a reputation of its own! At £29.95 for a champagne and canapé reception, followed by a 6 course gourmet, it's a great value treat. The whole restaurant can also be booked for private functions.

No wonder then that The Cedar Tree has been featured in Granada TV's 'Grubs Up' programme, where celebrity chef, Simon Rimmer, described it as a "hidden gem" and another good food guide as "one of the best places to eat around Manchester". We will certainly be visiting again soon and have no hesitation in recommending you do the same!