

## **Astley Bank Hotel Darwen**

### **Othello's restaurant An Evening in Lancashire**

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I was invited to be guest speaker at The Astley Bank Hotel last September for a Lancashire Evening with Chef James Andrew and his team. To me this is the finest restaurant in the area and the food is exceptional. Nigel Ainscow and his wife Helen run the Hotel with a passion and so I knew what to expect on my pre event visit where we had a wonderful lunch in Othello's Restaurant, the main restaurant at Astley Bank Hotel.

The brightness of the dining room in Othello's is astounding, with beautiful relaxing colours, a great deal of thought has gone into the colour scheme. I started with the Goats Cheese Brushetta which was served with a tomato salsa and a mini roast vegetable salad with onion rings, one of my colleagues had the Mini Beef Patties which were filled with mozzarella and served on a Chargrilled English Muffin with a sweet vine tomato relish and mustard mayonnaise.

I think our English pork is far superior to our European counterparts and a pork fillet main course was my choice on Dauphinoise potato with bacon lardons and a really mellow brandy pepper sauce that was awesome. The ladies had the fillet of Salmon with a SunBlush tomato Risotto and a wild mushroom cream sauce.

Being the very boring me, yes cheese and port man, local cheeses again but after tasting the Hot X Bun bread and butter pudding and a Banoffee Meringue with Chantilly Cream making me an extra few pounds heavier,

I wanted to thank the Head chef James Andrew for the excellent lunch and service and like me being a Bolton Wanderers supporter, the chef James appeared but it was his Sous Chef James Parker who created the food and due to the quality of the whole meal James is this months Chef of the Month.. There is only one thing that let JP down; he supports Manchester United how sad is that.

For the fantastic Lancashire evening we started with northern canapés in the form of Potted Shrimps on a Lancashire cheese and chive scone followed with bite size shepherds pie. The starter was a trio of Lancashire favourite's Black pudding with battered shallots, Faggots and a mini Steak & Kidney Pie. The flavours of Bowland followed with Pan-fried Loin of Bowland Lamb hot pot potatoes, pickled red cabbage and mashed root vegetables, in other words an extremely posh Lancashire Hot Pot.

One of my favourite desserts came to the fore, a Manchester Tart with a Bilberry Coulis and Sarsaparilla sorbet and finally a selection of Lancashire cheeses with Vintage port (I did help to sell the port).

I would also like to thank Nigel for the overnight stay and use of his crockery during the Food Theatre of Dreams and Nightmares, without it, nothing would have been made!

A Big thank you to Sue Hayes and all the staff for an excellent evening and overnight stay in room 29, followed by enormous naturally cured bacon butty, ta...

Tom Bridge