

THE INN AT STONEHALL, a real gastro-pub that will set your taste buds tingling!



The term 'gastro-pub' has become somewhat overused recently, often describing establishments that serve little more than pre-prepared food with the aid of a microwave oven. However, culinary connoisseurs shouldn't despair, because the recently opened Inn at Stonehall, near Kempsey, really is a gastro-pub in the truest sense of the expression. In fact, conveniently situated just a few minutes drive from the centre of Worcester, it's a definite 'must' for lovers of fine food, or those just looking to enjoy a quiet drink in beautiful, rural surroundings.

Formerly known as the Fruiterers' Arms, The Inn at Stonehall is the brainchild of Joanna Coull and her business partner Hash Chavda. Master chef, Hash has 20 years experience in the restaurant trade and is part owner of other highly regarded Midlands' gastro-pubs which have all won coveted awards for their excellent food.

Joanna and Hash have taken great care in the restoration of the 100 year-old Inn at Stonehall which originally provided refreshments for local fruit-pickers. Indeed, one of the fruits they picked was the famous, and now

very rare, Worcestershire Black Pear and two of these scarce trees are still to be found in The Inn's extensive gardens, where during the summer months diners can enjoy eating al fresco.

"We've tried to be sympathetic to the building's original features," Joanna told me, "but at the same



time, create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where customers can enjoy a first-class meal or a quiet, relaxing drink."

And Joanna and Hash have certainly been true to their word, because that's exactly what they've achieved. This picturesque and historic pub now boasts an attractive interior, which is a clever blend of the traditional and contemporary, a private function room with spectacular views and also has some of the most comfortable seating that I've ever relaxed in! However, the visual delights don't stop there. As if to show their customers that their food really is cooked-to-order, the delightful dining room has been cleverly designed to incorporate an open kitchen, adding an extra exciting dimension to the memorable experience of eating at The Inn at Stonehall.

The Inn's carefully thought out, regularly changed and very reasonably priced menu offers a delicious selection of modern, British cuisine with an ingenious, Indian twist. If starters like: devilled lamb's kidneys with pancetta toast and mustard sauce at £6.25, or main courses such as slow



braised shoulder of local lamb with pomme puree, roast root vegetables and comfit of garlic at £12.95 don't excite you, there's bound to be others that will. The puddings are equally tempting, as are their prices and while the chocolate and saffron fondant with pistachio ice-cream at £4.95 might not have helped my high cholesterol, it was something I found hard to resist! Also worth mentioning is The Inn's impressive wine list which, with its comprehensive selection of excellent vintages, more than complements the delicious dishes which are always available.

Worcestershire is lucky to have several top-quality eating establishments and having left The Inn at Stonehall feeling very contented, I now know that this exciting, new gastro-pub is definitely one of the best!

Article by Peter Stephens

COMPETITION

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Worcestershire Now, Unit 3C, Shrub Hill Industrial Estate, Worcester WR4 9EL

Answer: _____

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