

# Wells Life

CELEBRATING THE BEST OF THE CITY | 19.16 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2013 | £3 WHERE SOLD

## Restaurant

# The White Hart

LINDSEY HARRAD heads over to Somerton for a feast of local produce

Once the capital of Wessex, Somerton is a pretty little historic town surrounded by beautiful countryside just a short drive from Wells. Like the town itself, the White Hart pub has seen many changes over the years, but it's been trading from its prime location in the Market Place, in one form or another, since the 16th century. It's just been completely renovated and now has a 'contemporary country' feel, with lashings of sage green paintwork, designer lighting schemes, log baskets and nooks in unexpected places. The effect is smart but it still has the vibe of a relaxed country pub – there are sofas for stumping in while enjoying a tipple at the end of a busy day, but equally you could bring your mum for a special lunch too.

As we were venturing a little further from home, we decided to bunk a room and avoid the 'what's driving?' debate. The accommodation is stylish but comfortable with a huge and powerful walk-in shower, aromatic locally made natural toiletries by Bramley, quirky styling and a super comfy bed – not to mention the amazing home-cooked breakfast in the morning. Bliss.

After working up an appetite by strolling around Somerton's historic heart – tracing a route helpfully provided in our room – we headed to the bar for a beer and a Damon Bealini, a deliciously local and seasonal interpretation of a cocktail classic.

The kitchen team here is headed up by ex-River Cottage head chef



Tom Blake, who naturally works with the best regional producers and uses locally sourced game, pork from Gloucester Old Spot pigs reared in Wedmore and dairy producers from Brown Cow Organics in Pilton. The kitchen also sources organic and Fair Trade products where possible, including Cocoa Loco chocolate and Sharpam Park spelt. We started our meal with a basket of delicious focaccia bread with homemade hummus – all the bread is baked in-house using Shipton Mill and Doves organic flours and it really makes a difference to the quality. The food certainly has an impeccable pedigree and the flavours are incredible as a result.

For starters we chose the venison Scotch egg with White Hart piccilli and the creamy hazelnut squash soup with spiced onion bhaji. The garney roast on a classic stack went down a treat, and looked stunning on the plate with the bright yellow piccilli for a zesty flavour contrast. The soup was rich and flavourous, with the bhaji adding texture and spice – but the portion was so generous my boyfriend

felt obliged to help me finish it. Faced with a difficult choice, a man always plumps for steak, I find, so while he tucked into a substantial 7oz sirloin steak with chinkhauri sauce, perfectly crisp and fat signature chips in a mini bucket and fresh, bright salad vegetables, I went tapas style and opted for the sharing plate of English vegetables (which can also be ordered as a main course). The beefroot hummus was vibrant in both appearance and flavour, especially scooped up and scooped with homemade flatbread, while the slow-cooked courgette brought out the best in this often delicately flavoured vegetable. Served with marinated peppers and a simple herb, tomato and red onion salad, the aromatic (risotto balls) with Wedmore soft cheese were quite simply melt-in-the-mouth delicious.

The portions are generous here and we were glad we'd been too busy to have lunch earlier, but we still wavered over whether to have dessert – until we saw the offering. On an autumn evening, what could be better than a rich stickyoffee pudding with homemade vanilla ice cream, or another dinner appearance in the form of a brulee with a thick slather of rich, red duxin sauce, underneath, served with a homemade shortbread biscuit? Dessert perfection.

And as it was off to bed we went, replete with delicious seasonal fare and already looking forward to breakfast. **WL**



### Visiting details

**We visited:** Tuesday 8pm  
**Opening hours:** Breakfast to one table from 8am – 11am every day. Lunches served from 12pm – 4pm. Dinner service from 6pm with last orders at 10pm. Bar opens later and bar service is available all day. Reservations closed 30 days in advance. A 10% surcharge for weekends and public holidays.  
**Prices:** Bar from 10 – 6.50. Sharing plates 110 – 130.20. Main 17.50 – 22.50. Desserts around 5.50.  
**Disabled access:** Yes.  
**Children's menu:** Yes.  
**Wine list:** Full size and excellent value set.  
**Services:** ATM, phone, internet, car, bar and shop on premises. Friendly staff and contemporary country decor.  
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[www.thewhitehart.co.uk](http://www.thewhitehart.co.uk)

