



# The *View* review

Radley's Bar & Restaurant • 37a Oxford Street • Southampton • 023 8090 8700 • [www.radleysbar.com](http://www.radleysbar.com)

**W**hat a difference a smile makes. We've all had experience of the barman who'd rather be anywhere but serving you a drink, the surly waitress desperate to rest her aching feet, and the terminally bored maitre d' whose concentration is focused on closing time – or retirement. It was therefore a particular pleasure to be greeted by very happy, upbeat and smiling staff at Radley's – and that sunny welcome set the tone for the evening. Whoever appoints staff here obviously appreciates the importance of employing people who are not just good at their jobs but who seem genuinely happy to be at work, too.

Certainly Sam, the head barman, and Helen, our very own waitress, were top of the charm hit parade as they settled us at our table with menus and a drink.

One of the first things my eyes lit upon was a vase of what must have been the tallest foxtail lilies known to mankind, a couple of feet from my right ear. How I coveted them. Might just one of them leap out and into my arms to be carried home as a souvenir?

Forget the giant flowers, what else is there

## *Rosemary Staal enjoys service with a smile*

to see? There's a large room that's an interesting mix of period (1840s) and contemporary (refurb circa 2004), carpeted to cut noise, painted in blocks of off-white and signature dark red, and with well-spaced tables bearing white cloths and fresh flowers. We're here on a Wednesday and the place is two-thirds full, even though this is an evening when there isn't any live music. Check when there is, because it's great stuff, by all accounts, ranging from piano to soul and Motown.

Fellow diners include what appear to be a golden wedding party, because there is a bunch of gold balloons attached to their table for four, and a large group of impeccably behaved twentysomethings, the men in black tie, the girls in not very much at all. There are also several couples, like us, and a few clumps of suits in post-work mode who are presumably escapees from nearby hotels.

And so to the food, which Radley's has

entrusted to the talented hands of chef Dan Towell. Dan came here two-and-a-half years ago with a good reputation, having worked in a rosette-winning kitchen, among others.

On this warm and starry night he prepares for us a carpaccio of tuna (for me) and a Caesar salad (for D) – both with an abundance of greenery – followed by roasted halibut on a small and tasty raft of vegetables (for me) and fillet of beef with asparagus, fondant potato, and mushrooms (for D). All is helped on its merry way courtesy of a delicious Pinot Grigio from the Veneto.

We aren't great pudding eaters, but as Dan claims puds to be his speciality, we feel we should give him the opportunity to go on delighting our tastebuds. So it is with some reluctance (yes, I am joking) that D chooses a coffee crème brulee with vanilla ice-cream and I decide to try the basket of sorbets with lime syrup and fresh fruits. Modest they are not, but we suddenly find we have cleared our plates.

How does that happen? I blame Dan. He's worked some kind of magic on us. I think it must be the magic of Radley's. ♥

Our 3-course dinner, excluding wine: £54