

The View review

Cassi Kingshott finds much to recommend the seafood diet



Sealevel Restaurant • Portsmouth Marriott Hotel • Southampton Road • Portsmouth Hampshire • PO6 4SH • 023 9238 3151 • www.portsmouthmarriott.co.uk

Do you remember that old joke about going on 'the seafood diet'? Answer: see food and eat it (*cue for laughs*). Well, at the Sealevel Restaurant you can do just that; the menu is extensive and you are spoilt for choice when it comes to delicious fish dishes.

The restaurant and lounge at the Marriott Hotel in Portsmouth is a sophisticated combination of high-class dining and cocktail bar. Enormous light shades hang from the ceiling high above. The lighting is low and the tables are candlelit. I would have liked a piano playing soft jazz to complete the atmosphere.

Staff are smartly dressed in dark suits. David Oh – restaurant supervisor – is from Australia and very knowledgeable about wines, having completed his 'wine training' back home in Canberra and, on his recommendation, I tried the wine from this region. I must admit I do have a thing about white or rosé wines served lukewarm; it tells you everything about the meal to follow. This light, crisp wine was chilled beautifully.

So, after a sip or two of chilled nectar we made our choices. I began with grilled king tiger prawns, which were juicy and full of taste, complimented with a little side dish of mayonnaise.

My dining companion was keen to try clam



Grilled king tiger prawns



Jaap Schep, executive head chef

chowder for the first time. Unsure of whether he would like it, a dish that included sample tastings of crab cake, 'London-cured' smoked salmon and clam chowder seemed the perfect answer. While the smoked salmon proved a tasty morsel, he decided that clam chowder, served in a tiny pot, wasn't for him.

His choice of a thick, juicy sirloin steak for his main course soon made amends. Served with a simple salad garnish this went down very well with a tall, frosted glass of beer and resulted in a very happy companion.

I chose the Sealevel fish pie, which also turned out to be a man-sized portion. Chunky pieces of smoked haddock and salmon in a creamy sauce made a delicious combination. I really enjoy fresh vegetables and for me there weren't enough on the menu. Mentioning this to David, he promptly brought a little cone of French fries to accompany the sirloin.

The service at Sealevel is attentive, efficient and friendly without being intrusive. Situated in what can only be described as an enormous conservatory-type extension with a cavernous

sloping ceiling, an intimate, comfortable and very sophisticated restaurant and bar area has been created with furnishings and lighting.

Jaap Schep, executive head chef, has created a menu that is not too complicated or over-ambitious for his audience. The Marriott is a busy hotel, which also caters for guests, including families. There were no children present, however, the evening we dined. Sealevel Restaurant has a very grown-up feel and I like that; it's certainly the perfect place for a celebratory evening with friends or to impress business colleagues over dinner.

The cheese menu included some intriguing names such as Tornegus, an award-winning farmhouse Caerphilly, and Oxford Blue. Only having space left for a taste of something sweet we chose from a small but discerning pudding menu. I chose a warm treacle tart with a quenelle-size serving of clotted cream. The rich, grainy, treacle filling was perfectly set off by the light, crisp shortcrust pastry shell.

My companion chose vanilla crème brûlée on the recommendation of our waitress. It was a good brûlée, creamy with a crisp sugar topping and served with two little circles of shortbread. A little bittersweet demitasse of espresso completed our meal. **V**

Our meal came to £67 for two, excluding drinks and coffee



Vanilla crème brûlée with shortbread