

The View review



Esther Apodaca *fast forwards from classical elegance to 21st-century chic*

The Mulberry • Bishopstrow House Hotel • Warminster • Wiltshire • BA12 9HH
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A dark and drizzly drive eventually heralded the welcoming vista of Bishopstrow House. Built by Squire William Temple in 1817, this ivy-clad Georgian mansion with a pair of handsome ionic columns flanking its entrance is now a hotel, spa and restaurant.

We studied the menu in the traditional library furnished with comfortable sofas, handsome tartan cushions and bookshelves stuffed with hardbacks. Starters included two vegetarian dishes (including an exciting-sounding cauliflower panna cotta with Parmesan jellies under the heading cauliflower cheese), a poached salmon with accompanying jelly and a marinated beef fillet carpaccio. The choice of six mains looked punchy and included game, a vegetarian dish and seafood. The general theme is modern British, but, as with the slow-cooked pork belly and loin with mustard foam, there are clearly some sophisticated influences at work.

Bishopstrow's Mulberry restaurant is the recipient of a recent refurbishment, with the result that en route from library to dining room we travelled H G Wells-style from the 19th century into a tawny colour scheme and laid-back minimalism of the 21st century.

My starter of pressed chicken, cured foie gras and ham terrine served with warm brioche and fine cress with mustard sauce was an agreeable threesome of sweetness, meatiness and tang. Meanwhile, my companion had perked up with a nice glass of Argentine red and was making favourable sounds about his twice-baked mature cheddar soufflé, and toasted hazelnut salad with orange. He's constantly braying about soufflés, and to be honest I always thought his bark was worse than his bite, but true to his word he ordered one and it disappeared in its entirety. Very sweet it looked, too, on its salad, replete with crunchy hazelnuts.

His main course, was a triumph of pan-



Bishopstrow's comfortable library

roasted mature sirloin steak served with fondant potato, braised carrot and young spinach with sautéed girolles. It was juicy, tender and good-looking. I was jealous, because my seared scallops, nero pasta with roasted pepper jam and lemon chilli dressing was a mixed bag. The scallops were succulent, impeccably cooked delights. They were served with a small mound of inky Nero tagliatelli and the whole ensemble came on a rectangle of the same. While it looked graphic and classy against the white plate, it was a little too much pasta for me.

The pudding list included a crumble and cheeses and after much deliberation it was iced nougatine parfait, poached apricot with sharp raspberry sauce for him, Seville orange cheesecake, macerated oranges with Grand Marnier sabayon for me. Unnecessary, maybe; greedy, certainly; but enjoyable, definitely.

Our compliments to chef Ben Streak. I only wish we could have stayed for the night, lounging in the cosy sitting room with brandy and petit fours. ♥



A slice of contemporary style in the newly refurbished restaurant

Our meal without drinks came to £95