

The Pub of the year

Our team of Michelin inspectors have eaten, drunk, and slept their way around the British Isles, in a search for the 550+ pubs worthy of inclusion in this year's Guide. Each has been selected for the quality of its food – that much is a given. But what is it that merits the title of Pub of the Year? There's the choice of beers and wines, the warmth of the welcome and the service. The location is important, as is the ambience; but the number one spot can only go to a pub with real star quality: that extra ingredient which you can't quite put your finger on – but which you'd travel to experience, and which is recognisable almost as soon as you step through the door.

The pub was converted from three farm-workers' cottages and the story of the conciliatory gesture behind this transformation helps explain the origin of its name. The pub was originally situated next to the farmer's house - but so fed up did he become with the late night noise that he closed it down. The farm workers subsequently went on strike – the problem only being resolved when the workers agreed to swap; they would live in the old pub and the cottages would become the pub.



Several distinct areas are still in evidence, each one cosy and characterful, with blazing log fires and church pew seats. Champagnes and wines are available by the glass, as is refreshing homemade lemonade; and the choice of real ales includes the pub's own label - the infinitely gluggable 'Olive Oil'. The ambience is unhurried and informal, and the shelves, chock-full of empty wine bottles and cookery books, provide a hint to the pub's gastronomic credibility.



A passion for good food means that high quality produce and seasonal ingredients are at the base of every dish served here; a local map on the menu lets you know exactly where your food has come from. There's a flexibility too; dishes are not divided into starters and mains, so you can have as little or as much as you like. This is simply and carefully prepared food; unfussy, fresh and full of flavour – and their cookbook, 'Full English and other pub recipes,' means that you can even attempt to recreate it at home.



Across the road in Beech House are six beautiful bedrooms with names like Chocolate, Double Cream and Biscuit. Furnished with antiques and contemporary fabrics, every little extra has been thought of, like the homemade biscuits, magazines and flowers. Breakfast is served by the log fire in the barn: feast on eggs from the local farm, fruit smoothies and homemade preserves. A charming all-rounder, our Pub of the Year for 2008 is...



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