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Fine dining out at The Market Place

THEY say that traditional apprenticeships are dying out - but not in the world of fine dining.

Bright young men and women still learn their trade under an experienced practitioner in the gourmet world that we all know, courtesy of programmes such as *Masterchef*.

Tim Marriott, who is now rapidly establishing himself in the Vale at The Market Place in Cowbridge, has indeed followed that route, learning his trade at a variety of prestigious London restaurants.

His first post after leaving college was The Kensington Place, a two rosette establishment run by Rowley Leigh. Over the next 10 years, he served an eclectic apprenticeship, first at the Coast, one of the pioneers of fusion cooking, then at Marco Pierre White's Titanic. A spell at the highly-rated fish restaurant, Scotts, gave him another string to his bow, and he also cooked under Herbert Berger, in the Michelin-starred Number One Lombard Street.

However, the family had strong ties to south Wales. Tim's mother, Carole, comes from Bridgend, and his father Peter is Cardiff born and bred. Tim's grandfather, Idris Thomas, was a president of Bridgend RFC. Throughout his time

by PHILIP IRWIN

in London, Tim made regular visits to see his grandparents, and now the family has made the move back.

Tim took over the Market Place in November last year, with Peter and Carole taking a behind-the-scenes role.

It is fair to say that not too many businesses were starting up then - or now - and Tim and Peter have taken the current economic situation into account when they planned the menu.

Tim told *The GEM*: "I would describe my cooking style as 'modern British' but it is definitely eclectic, with the accent on fresh produce every day, and a menu that will change rapidly with the seasons."

The result is that

The Market Place offers a fixed price dinner menu (Tuesdays to Friday) at £10.95 for two courses or £13.95 for three.

The a la carte menu, of course, offers a wider choice, and the cost of three courses from this menu would range between £17.50 and £27.

In the interest of balance, my colleague and I ordered from each menu. I took the a la carte option, starting with Black Mountain oak-roast salmon, with boiled egg, grain mustard potato salad, and lemon mayonnaise, which featured a generous portion of both the salmon and the potato salad, and there was plenty of flavour from each component.

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Where good food doesn't cost the earth...

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Big flavours (and good-sized portions) are a feature of Tim's cooking, and my main course was a fine example.

The roast breast of duck, and a confit leg of lamb were both full of flavour, and this contrasted with the braised red cabbage and beetroot jus that accompanied it. An added extra was a tart, filled with creamed parsnip and parmesan.

My colleague meanwhile, had begun with the soup of the day from the fixed price menu - a creamy and subtle leak and potato.

Her main course, roasted corn-fed chicken supreme, with gremolata potatoes and glazed green beans was guilty of hiding its light under a bushel, because the sauce (a flour-based veloute with cream and saffron) was terrific.

To finish, we had the two desserts that come with the fixed price menu - although we both felt pretty full already. It was worth the 'effort' though, because both were fantastic.

My glazed lemon tart with a strawberry sorbet was the sort of dish



Tim Marriott is offering a diverse and imaginative menu at The Market Place.

where you savour every mouthful, while the Panettone bread and butter pudding with vanilla ice cream was every bit as good.

I would not like to choose between the two, but the a la carte menu offers another four options!

Cowbridge has always had a reputation for good food and fine dining, and the credit crunch has made things quite competitive.

Tim Marriott's Market Place looks as if it will be a fine addition

to Cowbridge, and to the Vale as a whole.

In mid-May, Peter and Tim plan to have the walled garden open for al fresco dining through the summer.

Over the next few weeks on a Friday and Saturday around noon, Tim will be offering free 'tasters' - so that local gourmets can sample some of the restaurant's specialities.

For more information, telephone 01446 774800 or go to www.themarketplace.co.uk



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