food/drink

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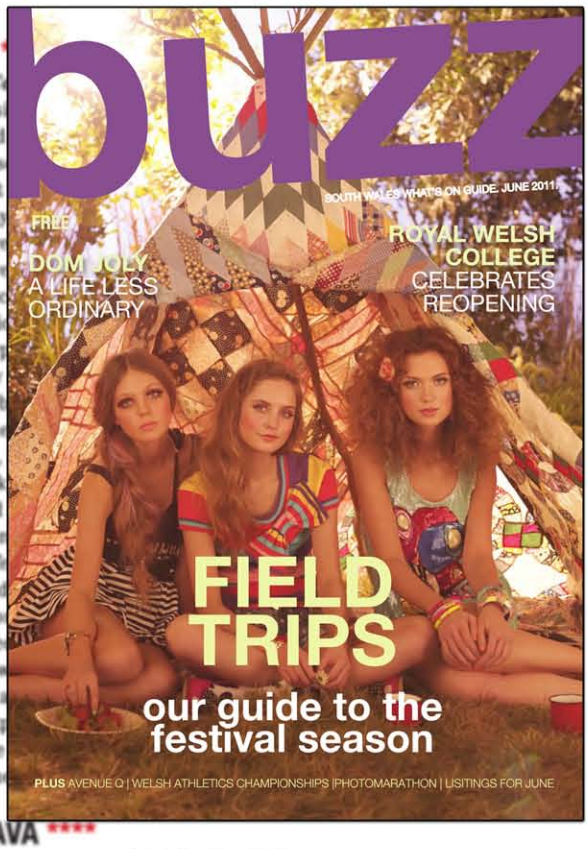

CAFE BRAVA ****

71 Pontcanna Street, Cardiff. 029 2037 1929

It's quite clear to see why Cafe Brava has built such a popular reputation over recent years. Celebrating 10 years in business, they continue to offer friendly and welcoming service, a great selection of dishes, and a modern and light atmosphere.

Whether venturing in for a coffee, an indulgent lunch, a brief bite to eat or a sociable evening meal, Brava proves a great place to meet friends and share excellent food at any time of the day. During my lunchtime visit, the tantalising specials board caught my eye and a chicken breast with warm mango salad, sautéed potatoes and fresh rocket salad proved as delicious as it read. Beautifully presented, the dish was a perfect lunchtime treat. From cakes to quiches, salads and burgers, neighbouring tables saw equally tempting selections.

Fresh and value for money, I certainly couldn't question the standard of food. The cafe is already popular for their lunches and brunches and I was unsurprised to see the cafe full with customers. You'll undoubtedly have to be on your toes to catch a seat at the weekends. But also open for evening meals from Tuesday to Saturday, it may well be worth booking ahead in order to sample their brand new evening menu.

Brava is well known as a popular destination for local celebrities. Actor Matthew Rees has been spotted in the cafe, as has rugby star Jamie Roberts. Pop in for a great lunch, a delicious evening meal or a light bite and you never know who you might see. **GARETH LUDKIN**

THE MARKET PLACE ****

66 High Street, Cowbridge. 01446 774800

After months of planning, digging, re-designing, renovating and accommodating medieval structures, the hard work has culminated in a superb new look at The Market Place, Cowbridge. The Terrace Restaurant, which is finally unveiled this month, is a project that even Kevin McCloud would be proud of.

Sitting in the light and airy Terrace Restaurant with a lovely view of the garden, we surveyed the menu and were swayed by the soup of the day (mushroom, coriander and truffle oil) and mousse of prawns, smoked mackerel and crème cheese wrapped in smoked salmon. This was followed by confit pork belly with feta cheese, dauphinoise potato and herb and liver sausage, plus a braised beef haché with mash potato, seasonal greens, poached egg, chive and cream sauce. Desserts included a bitter chocolate and golden coffee cheesecake, macerated fruits, banana cream and sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and whisky and coffee ice cream.

Everything was superb: the confit of pork belly was perfect and probably the best I've had; the appearance faultless, the service from Stefan was adroit and, as usual, amusing. There's an excellent value early supper menu from 6-6.55pm from Tuesday to Friday. With a set menu price of £10.95 for two courses and a glass of wine for £2.75, diners can choose from a slightly smaller but no less tantalising selection of dishes from the dinner menu.

With the addition of a cocktail and wine bar/lounge upstairs, the inevitable 'where shall be go for a drink/lunch/dinner' need no longer cause concern as The Market Place has it all covered. **ANTONIA LEVAY**