

Phoenix, Chudleigh

Food, ambience and service all score highly here on Sue Cade's visit

This gastropub, which has been open for around two years, is airy and spacious, with an eclectic mix of seating, including comfy sofas for a pre-dinner snifter, if you're so inclined. Big, bright, original artwork fills the walls, adding to the sense of space.

My companion for the night, FH, fancied a pint of cider while I stuck to soft drinks, moving from a refreshing elderflower pressé to a scrummy pink lemonade.



The cider drinker chose the Thai fishcakes to start, while the black and blue flat field mushroom tempted me. After some prompting, FH stopped saying "yum" to give me a better description: "Perfectly spiced, a delicious slaw and beautifully presented." My plump field mushroom was topped with a mouth-watering Devon Blue cheese, served on peppery rocket. It was a "yum" from me, too.

The Phoenix offers specials evenings: Steak Nights on Thursday and Fish and Chips Friday. We visited on Gourmet Burger Wednesday, so FH

ordered the chicken burger with caramelised red onion and pea shoots. I stayed with the main menu and chose the pancetta-wrapped haddock fillet. The perfectly cooked fish, caught locally, was one of the nicest I've eaten. It came with a bundle of yellow courgettes and carrots, and a moreish mound of wild rocket and cashew nut pesto mash. Across the table, came another series of "yums" as FH demolished her chicken burger without pausing for breath, or so it seemed.

I never turn down dessert if I can help it, and despite being fairly replete, I thought I could manage a raspberry jam tart with peanut butter ice cream. I was right. I didn't leave a morsel on my plate. The 'lightweight' ordered 'Tan's Signature Dish', a handcrafted tuille biscuit cup, handle, spoon and saucer filled with dark chocolate mousse. I say lightweight, as FH failed to clear her plate. So I helped her out, naturally.

If you love an informal, quirky atmosphere and superb food all wrapped up with an exceptionally warm, friendly service, the Phoenix is the place for you. A namecheck for Emma who served us, for her cheerful demeanour and finding me paper and pen for notetaking, as I'd forgotten my notepad! We said we'd be back, and I hope so. I've now found a really good reason to come off the A38 at Chudleigh.

ON THE MENU

- Chicken liver and truffle parfait with a redcurrant, orange and ginger jelly
- Scallops wrapped in pancetta, roasted red pepper and balsamic salsa dressed leaves
- Thai fishcake with a light chilli soy
- Confit of Hoi Sin duck leg on stir-fried egg noodles with carrot and mange tout
- Lamb Alexandra: rack of mustard-marinated lamb served pink with pickled fennel, poached plum and star anise syrup, crushed minted new potatoes, vegetable bundle
- Pearl barley, beetroot and squash cakes filled with Sharpham's rustic cheese on mixed leaves
- Chocolate Cup
- Lemon and mascarpone cheesecake with Wicked Wolf Gin and tonic sorbet
- Cornish Yarg, Sharpham Rustic, Devon Blue cheeses, with onion and pineapple chutney, apple, grapes and celery

Starters from £4.50

Mains from £9.50

Desserts from £5.95

Chudleigh TQ13 OHX
01626 859005

.....
phoenixchudleigh.co.uk