

Restaurant Review : Angels with Bagpipes

by Nigel Duncan

✘ Edinburgh's atmospheric Royal Mile houses an eclectic mix of historical attractions, tourist shops, restaurants, eateries and pubs. During the world-famous Edinburgh Festival it is a major focal point for tourists and street entertainers. The street also is also at the centre of Scotland's legal system, being the home of both the High Court of Justiciary and the Court of Session.

It's no surprise then that Marina Crolla picked the location, but the restaurant faces stiff competition.

A name can be crucial and she admitted agonising over Angels with Bagpipes. It arrived after spotting an angel during a walk through nearby St Giles Cathedral, the High Church of Edinburgh, which is directly opposite the 90-cover restaurant.

Divine intervention?

Marina also thought long and hard over the key appointment of a head chef and she eventually recruited award-winning Paul Whitecross. Under his guidance, this heavenly restaurant is going from strength to strength.

Attention to detail is evident and the dishes are stunningly-presented. Paul specialises in using produce from Scotland's extensive food larder then providing an Italian twist, a tribute to Marina's homeland. He doesn't just pay lip service to dietary considerations. I'm lactose intolerant and he obliged in style.

My three courses were subtly altered to provide maximum flavour without diminishing the visual experience.

Seared Orkney scallops, Stornoway black pudding and pea puree (instead of parsnip, because of my diet) was eye-catching and mouth-watering. The scallops were cooked to perfection but my one criticism would be the sauce which was a little tart.

My main was roast rump of Ross-shire lamb, pancetta cabbage and white beans. Artistically a delight and the cherry tomatoes added a welcome extra colour and flavour to a superb dish.

Unassuming Paul saved the best to last. His raspberry soufflé was sublime. It arrived with apple sorbet (succulent Granny Smiths cut quickly with a touch of lemon to maintain colour and speedily frozen). The beautiful dish arrived with a tiny Kilner-type jar packed with raspberry puree – simply wonderful.

The meal was a triumph of innovation and flair by the award-winning chef who has tickled the taste buds of the late, great operatic tenor, Pavarotti, and international film stars Kevin Costner and Samuel L Jackson, plus the owner of car giants Ferrari.

My wife Pam was effusive in her praise of the busy, up-market restaurant. You feel comfortable and looked after by the accommodating team at Angels with Bagpipes.

So, what was her selection? The starter choice included lentil soup, a traditional Scottish dish, with unique twist, shaved chestnuts and truffle oil. She could also have picked braised pork with white pudding and apple and creamed goats cheese with pickled beetroot, apple and balsamic. Pam also swithered over oak smoked Scottish salmon or terrine of chicken and foie gras but decided to wait for the main.

Her selection was roast cod, smoked haddock and chive potato scone, parsley oil and citrus salsify. It was, once again, beautifully presented and a delight to taste, the flavours merging to provide a tremendous dish.

Alternatives included rib eye of Angus beef with pesto plum tomato and garlic mushrooms, Highland loin of venison with pearl barley, turnip and bitter chocolate (correct) sauce, a risotto of butternut squash, sage and walnuts or pan fired sea bream, handpicked crab ravioli, creamed leeks and lemon butter sauce.

The extra payment for side dishes – buttered spinach at £3.50 and thin cut chips at £2.95 – grated, but that's a personal thing and, of course, rates are high in the Royal Mile.

However, on to desserts. Pam's choice was baked date and toffee sponge with puff candy ice cream, pistachio and banana. It could not be faulted. Once again, the choice was difficult and it included apple and cinnamon crumble with green apple sorbet and a bitter chocolate mousse with passion fruit sorbet and caramel dusted popcorn. Mouth-watering.

Simply, Angels with Bagpipes is a gastronomic treat to be experienced. The hand-prepared main dishes (without sides which are ordered separately) come at a cost and ranged from £12.95 (risotto) to £20.95 (rib eye of Angus beef) on the night we were there it was memorable.

Angels with Bagpipes

343 High Street

Royal Mile

Edinburgh

EH1 1PW

0131 220 1111

<http://www.angelswithbagpipes.co.uk>

Open seven days

Nigel Duncan is a former journalist with some leading British newspapers [who now runs a PR agency](#) featuring some blue-chip clients.