

Exquisite dining at Number One

✘ The flagship restaurant at The Balmoral has had a £200,000 facelift, but the owners Rocco Forte Hotels are anxious to point out that the elements of the restaurant which were considered essential fixtures by their regulars have been left in situ. So breathe easy, the lacquered walls are still there.

There is a fabulous new daisy gerbera broadloom carpet on the entrance stairway from Princes Street and lovely soft touch wooden flooring throughout the three distinct spaces that make up Number One.





The space furthest from the entrance can also be used as a private dining room, but is more often in use as part of the dining area for smaller groups who wish to enjoy an unparalleled culinary experience. The curious thing that the restaurant's general manager has noticed is that their clientele has become younger in recent years. Now whether that means the young customers are saving up for the £70 a head dinner or just more affluent than their forebears is immaterial. They are simply there for the experience, to savour and enjoy every mouthful.

At a recent press lunch we were entertained to a piece of complete real foodie heritage.

General Manager Franck Arnold explained that the restaurant is known for its romantic setting, the art on the walls from the London School of Art and its space. He said: "We wanted to increase seating capacity and have some tables for two in the bar area. This is now a destination restaurant for couples who have something to celebrate. The ceiling has been completely redone and the newly designed lighting is focussed on each table. It has been an interesting endeavour, all done in a matter of weeks. From the first feedback we have had it appears that people already like it."

The hotel group's refurbishments are all overseen by Olga Polizzi, Director of Design.

I am still savouring the distinct taste of the Balvenie smoked salmon which took head chef Brian Grigor two years to devise. It is smoked over wood chips from Balvenie casks in the Belhaven Smokery in Dunbar, but the taste has taken some effort to get just right. When it is served it is the most theatrical dish on the menu with swirling clouds of smoky steam billowing from under the cloche.

Grigor is a born chef. He started his career under Jeff Bland in 2001, and after a brief sortie elsewhere he returned to The Balmoral and the kitchen preparing the exquisite food for Number One which has had Michelin star status for thirteen consecutive years.

Grigor said: "The whole ethos of the restaurant is first class produce and 95% of it is from Scotland. We have good contacts with really good suppliers who we have known for a number of years. I would like to think that the restaurant has a good seventeen years of business behind it now and a lot of that is repeat business.

"I have always loved this hotel and to finally be head chef here is exactly where I want to be. There are a couple of signature dishes, the smoked salmon and the chocolate dessert

which has been updated for 2015.”

It is perhaps a little known fact that the former railway hotel has separate kitchens for each restaurant, including a banqueting kitchen for all of its function suites.

Truly an institution this hotel is safe in the hands of the Rocco Forte Hotels group who understand the heritage of the building and the guests’ desire for the first class experience.

Menus from £70 upwards.

[Booking details here](#)