

Where to eat in Edinburgh – The Edinburgh Larder

Eleanor has owned and run this restaurant on Alva Street since her four year-old daughter was born. Great timing to acquire a new restaurant and a new baby all at once, but she has carried it off well and this restaurant has now grown into a real business.

✘ I have eaten there several times before, usually at lunchtime which I think suits me better than evenings if I am honest. Unfailingly good food with pleasant surroundings, and then there's the added bonus of the Bistro on Blackfriars Street offering a great breakfast and a hearty bowl of soup for lunch on the go. Now we are told they have also taken over the restaurant at Whitmuir Farm outside Edinburgh too.

In Alva Street the seating layout has remained the same for a while, but now there is a counter with foodie gifts for sale near the front door.

There is a new chef, and we were invited along to sample the new dishes. Interesting choices were made from the short but varied menu, and we sampled the Spiced Pear and Apple Vodka Cocktail while we chose.

There was a flat bread with pumpkin mash served as appetiser to stave off any hunger pangs.

I would like to say that I enjoyed everything, but that would not be quite true. What I should say is that each course had something surprising and lovely. In the case of the first course of Arbroath Smokie pâté with beremeal bannock it was the pickles. They were just delicious. The pâté itself was a little bland, but the pickles were full of flavour and we took a guess that they might actually be pickled blueberries.

The surprise in the main course was the pear accompanying the Dunsyre Blue Cheesecake. The pear was spiced, had been marinated in bay leaves along with cloves and 'many other spices' according to our waitress. I would go back to Edinburgh Larder for the pears alone.

As I have said I am not sure that evening meals are my favourite time of day anymore. Left to my own devices I would not have eaten dessert, but in the interest of bringing you a full review I chose the Marmalade Bread and Butter pudding. The pudding was a bit dry and the marmalade was only on the top, and not as I had envisaged spread throughout the layers. But the custard was heavenly and went a long way to redeem the pudding.

Part of what was missing during the evening was the chef. It was her birthday and she had taken the night off. Well everyone deserves a night off especially on their birthday, but we would have welcomed the opportunity to quiz her on aspects of the menu.

The restaurant proudly proclaims that they will be buying a whole animal each month and will create different dishes as they move 'from nose to tail'. Eleanor had explained the they would be butchering the animal themselves in their kitchen. This is ambitious, but certainly a way of keeping a chef on their toes. It also means that the menu will change each week and month.

The lamb stew which others had was apparently delicious, although it looked more like pulled lamb than a thick winter stew.

This is not the cheapest place in town to eat and my meal would have cost £33.50 without the glass of Shiraz which accompanied it.

I think the chef has great ideas; side dishes of bread with seaweed butter and guinea fowl saltimbocca are testament to creativity. But I think that it may take a little more time to get it all exactly right.

Do go to The Edinburgh Larder at 1a Alva Street. At present this is yet another street in the city which is dug up for utility works, but you are safely snug and tucked away in the basement away from the world upstairs.