

Juliet goes on 'retreat' – to Trump Turnberry

Let me tell you about my recent 24 hours of champagne, food, foraging, swordsmanship and, erm, carpet croquet with Donald Trump.

Or, allow me to rephrase: courtesy of Donald Trump. And I can assure you the last three activities are not euphemisms. No fake news at the Edinburgh Reporter.

I was invited to Trump Turnberry on a 'culinary retreat' and The Donald, or at least the people he employs, knows how to treat the guests. I took my now regular plus one, the Silver Fox, whose eyes watered with joy at the sight of the Ailsa golf course. "Look at those lovely lumps and bumps," he gasped. He likes his bunkers like his women.

We were treated to some breakfast canapés' on arrival. Mini eggs Benedict and lobster omelette? Local lobster, of course. With a frequently topped up glass of Taittinger? I shall force it over. By the end of our stay the word 'local' had been hard wired into my noddle. However they've an important message to make at Turnberry when it comes to their food suppliers and staff.



PHOTO Matthew Shaw

But what you all want to know is has Trump made quaint old Turnberry Trumpish? One of my chums warned me to take ear plugs, such was the rattling of windows during her stay some time ago, but luckily since a £100 million investment (such a Trump amount of moolah) I'm happy to report the windows are snug and fresh. But is it all gold lame soft furnishings and gilded bath tubs? No, it's classy, luxurious and downright fabulous. In fact the only clue Donald Trump owns it is the epic new ballroom named after himself and a lovely picture of Ivanka in the ladies lavs, now named 'Washrooms'.

Ralph Porciani, our host and General Manager of the resort informs us that the Trump family are very much involved in the upgrades, with Eric a regular visitor and once delightfully frustrated at having nothing to criticise. Ralph was about to up-sticks to sunnier climes when Trump bought Turnberry, but a multi million upgrade was too exciting a prospect to miss so his family were told to unpack their bags and continue enjoying the refreshing Ayrshire breeze.



The courtyard PHOTO Matthew Shaw

After breakfast it's time to get the wellies on as we're going foraging. My fellow hacks all seem to be feigning much enthusiasm for stepping out in the freezing rain and Callum Dow, Tunberry's Executive Chef informs us that he and his staff often forage on their breaks. It cheers them up, apparently and makes them feel connected to what they're cooking. Led by Caledonian Wild Foods it's an interesting experience.

There are lots of tasty bits and pieces to be found on the beach and in the nearby woods, my favourite being seawort, a little succulent thing that tastes of oysters. Our guide gives us some foraging etiquette, or the art of the foraging deal, if you will. You must forage responsibly, not take all the plant so some more can grow. So if you're a selfish capitalist, foraging may not be quite the pursuit for you.

Back to the hotel to dry off, we find ourselves in the kitchen and I must say it's pretty cool to be behind the scenes. Callum and some of his favourite suppliers tell us about how the business works and I'm impressed by how well forged a relationship they have. For example when it comes to meat and fish supplies Callum is careful to order across the board,

every range of seafood and cuts of beef from the whole carcass. So whilst it's important to be a good supplier it's equally important not to act like a prat when you're ordering: don't snatch all the monkfish and leave the cod for everyone else.

Fishbrothers Seafoods tells us about the traceability of all their fish. A family owned company with 25 years in the food industry, they work closely with fishermen and divers to provide the best quality but equally importantly ensuring sustainable methods are used for what they buy.

John from Campbells Prime Meat, another family run company not only butcher's half a beef carcass in front of us but shows us the useful but dramatically named 'Kill Tag' each beast carries so their clients can trace meat back to the farm it came from. They also continue to butcher meat traditionally, not on a production line, ensuring consistency in quality and taste.

One of the other highlights of the 'meet the suppliers' session is a chat and tasting with Susie from East Coast Cured. Tired of the lack of charcuterie made in Scotland Susie and her innovative husband Steven created their own award winning products, retailing at local markets and their shop in Restalrig Road, along with supplying some of the finest establishments in Scotland.

To complete the full on kitchen experience we're paired up with a chef and I'm delighted to be in the relative cosiness of the pastry section. Heather is in charge today and along with three other ladies, delivers everything pastry, dessert and bread orientated for the whole resort. The organisation involved must be phenomenal. Heather, from the USA clearly has a cool head on her and rather sweetly refers to her colleagues as Ma'am. She demonstrates how our dessert for the evening is made and the level of accuracy is quite astounding. So this is how they manage to turn so much food out? Avoiding mistakes seems to be the key.

After a busy morning it's suggested we sit down, eat seafood and drink champagne. Our partners join us and I'm relieved to hear the SF's golf lesson with the Turnberry pro has gone well, the early morning champagne oiled his joints, it seems. I inform him that if you go foraging you can find a flower that tastes like a pea. "Why not just eat a pea?" Like I said, foraging isn't for everyone.



The Donald Trump Ballroom PHOTO 2016 Matthew Shaw.

Seafood and champers were supposed to be served on the terrace but as it's still rather wet we are in the Donald Trump Ballroom where croquet has been set up with champagne bottles holding up the loops. The view, though misty, is still spectacular and we are informed that we can actually see out the window, where most of what were eating came from.

It turns out I'm rubbish at croquet. However I'm fortunate to get a shot at Sabrage, the most ostentatious way to open a bottle of champagne. I'd love to tell you that my success in this was down to much skill on my part but the knack is simply sliding a heavy sword along the neck of the bottle and knocking the top off. It looks so cool that I was soon

browsing the internet to find a bayonet of my own.

Sumptuous seafood eaten up and champagne cellars depleted, we head to our room for an afternoon nap. Luxurious and comfy, our double has everything you'd desire, including some welcome macarons (thanks Heather!) and a bath a shorty like me could easily take a swim in.



Bathe while enjoying a sea view PHOTO Matthew Shaw

After a relaxing siesta it's time to scrub up for cocktails and a seven course dinner. Over drinks Ralph and Callum, along with Justin Galea, Head of Culinary, treat us to some encouraging stories of how local farmers have adapted their crops to supply Turnberry directly. They also get excited about the abundance of local beetroot. By this time the message has well and truly sunk in: local and with provenance is the Turnberry way. We are also reminded that 80% of employees are local, many on training programmes straight out of school.

I shan't linger here with the intricate details of my evening's feast, suffice to say that the principals employed

to bring excellent cuisine to the Turnberry diners are working like a well oiled machine.

So to support a business that focusses on local employment, the highest quality suppliers and forming relationships with growers and makers could be described as a positive way to treat yourself in more ways than one. Whilst the President might not be everyone's taste, Trump Turnberry certainly caters to mine. Good job.

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