

Cote, ticking boxes in the heart of Scotland's Capital city

It is no surprise that Cote has risen in less than two decades to become a well-respected nationwide chain where values are important, not just in food and service but also in creating a comfortable environment in which to dine.

Edinburgh's 160-seat outlet is a prime example, and I've eaten in several of the company's 80-plus outlets across the country in the past decade. Two courses for £14.95 Monday to Thursday from noon to close and noon to 7pm on a Friday. Three courses are £18.95.

And, even within that tight budget, the food has a subtle twist, crispy whitebait with garlic and lemon aioli or pan fried sea bass, Provencal pistou, peas a la Francaise and baby potatoes, for example.

Spring Specials have recently been launched and they are pleasantly different. Wye Valley asparagus (warm) and served with a bite topped by a soft poached egg, the punctured yoke pouring out over the deliciously tangy tomato bearnaise and delightful rosemary and lemon breadcrumbs.

Grilled red mullet was also part of the package on the day we dined. Two fillets perched on top of a bed of crushed Jersey Royal potatoes, olives and cherry tomatoes sitting in a deliciously oily sauce vierge.

You can, of course, stick to the normal menu. Our alternative choice was chicken liver pate, a strong but not overpowering pate accompanied with a tangy apple chutney and warm, toasted baguette.

The main selected was fillet steak, recommended medium, with frites and a generous portion of watercress. As a side, we picked French beans which came al dente, just as we like them.

Cote in the heart of Edinburgh delivered. People vote with their wallet and this restaurant was busy even on a Tuesday night with a number of walk-ups, obviously tourists. Cameras and maps are a giveaway.

We indulged in a desert. Chocolate and salted caramel tart, lusciously rich and served with dairy free vanilla ice cream. This ice cream was a rung above the dairy free I normally select from the supermarket freezer cabinet. A tad sweeter and smoother and the tart was, well, wonderful with a deep, chocolate top adorned by three, sweet strawberries.

We tarried over coffee. The hessian covered wall panels and beige decor provided a calming environment in which to chill. We, luckily, had a window seat, allowing us to watch the world go by from comfortable seats and with soft music in the background making conversation easy.

Customers of all ages frequented the restaurant on the night we visited and service from Euan, our waiter, was slick and highly professional, a tribute to the staff training which we heard was a key element in the company.

Cote, designed to be similar to a French brasserie and to be relaxed, up-market and yet affordable, certainly ticks lots of boxes for me and, if you decide to visit do try the Spring Specials. Just ask one of the team for this month's seasonal dishes. The package worked for me.

The Edinburgh establishment, positioned on the edge of the atmospheric New Town, is open seven days (9am to 10pm) for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

LOCATION AND CONTACT: Cote, 51 Frederick Street, Edinburgh EH2 1LH: telephone 0131 202 6256 or email edinburgh@cote.co.uk