

“The Forge couldn't have asked for a better location, housed within a stunning old corner-positioned building on Garrick Street. Stepping into this restaurant you'll be hard pushed not to be impressed. There's an air of sophistication to The Forge that's lacking in many of its neighbouring bars and restaurants. The staff have a strong knowledge of the menus. Restaurant etiquette is observed at all times and, although the service is efficient, there's an underlying friendliness to the staff that is refreshing. The food..this is where The Forge excels. An excellent and surprisingly large selection of modern European dishes impress in terms of presentation, flavour and quality. Whether drinking in the bar or in the restaurant, it's the wine list that really shines..the bottles aren't described but they are well sectioned and the staff are happy to offer recommendations..If you're a Londoner who's all but given up on the tourist traps of Covent Garden and the surrounding area then The Forge might just change your mind”

(View London, 5th October 2009)

“With a name like that, you could be forgiven for thinking that this place is going to be a pale imitation of a decent restaurant, attempting to pass itself off as being much better than it in fact is. But only if you'd never eaten here, that is. Modern European cuisine's the order of the day, with the huge choice on the menu leaving Itchy scratching our heads so hard we think we poked a bit of brain. Having eventually chosen, we got dishes whose punchy south-east Asian flavour surprised our tastebuds with the ferocity of a viet-kong springing from a ten year wait in the undergrowth, meat whose glazes were stronger than that over the eyes of a 1970s hippy, and wine so mellow it could've spent the last ten years in a Californian day spa listening to 'Moon Safari'. So was there anything fake in the end? Nope. This place is (ahem) Forge-ing ahead.”

(Itchy London, 2009)

The Forge...another outlet from the stable of Robert Seigler, who runs Le Café du Jardin in nearby Wellington Street and Le Deuxième on Long Acre.

Some of its Gothic detail is still in place and Seigler has done a good job brightening it up while retaining its established, cosy atmosphere. The main room has a silver tin ceiling and a lot of exposed brickwork. Sea-green upholstered banquettes and chairs have a calming influence - and so do two glasses of Taittinger Champagne (£10) that arrive within a couple of minutes of being requested.

The Forge's menu is laid out like those you get at The Ivy and at Marco Pierre White's band of restaurants - a single A3-size stiff card with, in this case, 19 starters at the top, seven pastas and risottos in the middle and 23 main courses below, along with no fewer than 16 side orders. There's everything from half a dozen Colchester oysters to eggs Benedict, as well as steak tartare, lobster, venison and chicken Kiev. If you can't find something you want to eat here, then you shouldn't be eating out at all.

When the food arrives, there's a lot of tasting of each other's choices before we commit to our own. Both look very tempting and are prettily presented.

And both turn out to be highly satisfactory. The prawns are sitting in a light dressing, along with tiny slices of red onion and grated carrot. I might have reached for the Tabasco to spice up the prawns just a smidgeon if any had been to hand, but could think of nothing that might improve my three pieces of startlingly fresh haddock cased in the thinnest of batters and rolled into circles the size of ping-pong balls.

When Joanna ordered the £25 grilled T-bone steak (aged for 28 days, according to the menu), the waitress said: "I like your style." We took this to be a warning about the size of what was on its way. But, when the T-bone arrives (pictured above), it's the quality, not the quantity, that takes us by surprise, so much so that we want to know where this juicy, tender flavoursome cow comes from.

Fortunately, the chef, Andy Barber (pictured) - who until recently worked at the Rex Whistler restaurant in the Tate Britain gallery - does a quick tour through the restaurant and I get a chance to ask him. He tells me that most of the beef on the menu is reared on a farm near Appleton in Oxfordshire. I like it when a chef does a fly-past, just as long as he isn't fishing for praise too obviously. Barber doesn't seem to be fishing at all.

I have "veal Holstein with a fried quail's egg" as my main course. The only place I have had such good veal Holstein is the San Domenico Palace Hotel in Taormina, Sicily. It's accompanied by capers, anchovies, parsley; and the veal has just enough Parmesan coated on it to ensure a crusty top.

We also ordered "real chips", which strikes me as a relatively new description of fried potatoes. What it means is that the chips are thick and that you get quite a lot of potato - probably much better for you than thin chips, but nothing like as rewarding.

The after-theatre crowd (last orders at midnight) is trickling in as we scan the pudding options. There are 10 of them...after those guiltless "real chips" we decide that we deserve a plate of "sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and vanilla ice cream" - and have no regrets.

By the time we leave at 11.30, the restaurant is busier than it was earlier in the evening. I wonder how long it will be before members of the Garrick are tempted to venture across the road to sample what The Forge has to offer.

Mark's verdict: 7/10

(The Daily Telegraph, 28th April 2007)

Review of The Forge Wine Bar

The Forge's intimate, air-conditioned cellar plays it simple (think olive walls, kingfisher banquettes & user-friendly high stools at the zinc bar) & boosts the current 'wine bar' revival by shifting the focus onto quality wines & good food. The lengthy, value-conscious Europhile list includes plenty of good stuff: try an

entry-level Tarn Sauvignon Blanc (£15.50) or upgrade to Morogues Menetou Salon; at £32, it drinks like a July afternoon on the Loire. There are also over 40 selections by the glass: the rich berry burst of a Castilian Abadia Retuerta Rivola (£7.50) works well with bresaola, crispy artichokes & rocket or fine Teruel ham carved from the bone. Above-average tapas such as ricotta basil & tomato galette or dressed crab with anchovy & piquillo pepper aioli on toast join more substantial Mediterranean-style baked bream, steak & ale pie, & seafood platters
(*Squaremeal 2009*)

A fresh ray of hope in the garden

Chris Blackhurst, Evening Standard 06.06.07

A lot of British and a dash of French: the Forge's head chef, Andrew Barber, was formerly at the Tate Gallery restaurant.....

Perhaps I'm in a minority of one, but I've never found a restaurant in [Covent Garden](#) that I especially care for. At last, there comes hope in The Forge. It's on what has long been a dead corner, directly opposite the front door of the Garrick Club. Indeed, the very spot it occupies once held a [London](#) favourite called Inigo Jones.

The Forge is the third in a coterie of Covent Garden restaurants owned by Robert Seigler (he also has Le Café du Jardin and Le Deuxième). Like them, it's modern but not too much. The decor is light and airy. There are Gothic architectural notes, and from the front door to the high ceiling and some of the original features, it has the feel of being inside a vestry.

Seigler, to his credit, has avoided emasculating the interior, adding some fetching, comfortable blue-green banquettes, and resisting the temptation, so prevalent elsewhere in London and not only in Covent Garden, of cramming the main room with tables. It is possible to sit and not overhear snatches of conversation - and therefore, to not be overheard.

He's gone, as so many have done, for the bare brick look. That and the wooden parquet floor give a none too fussy, pared-down feel. The chef is Andrew Barber, formerly of the dependable Tate Gallery Restaurant.

The menu is up to the minute. There's everything you could ever desire and much more besides, all contained on one side of card. There's a lot of British and a dash of French - so there's Welsh rarebit on the starters, alongside French onion soup.

The new Dave opted for crab on toast with lemon and mayonnaise. In words I never thought I'd hear him utter, he said the mayo was "fresh and I can taste the olive oil". Mine was tempura of smoked haddock on parsnip tabbouleh with pea shoots and carrot salad (see, I told you it was modern). The batter was light, the fish delicate and flaky. It worked.

His main course was fillet of sea bass with Niçoise garnish and basil oil. The fish was firm and plump, the vegetables al dente - there was no suggestion of a wholesale collapse into a mushy heap. My selection was "leg of lamb 7

hours" with pomme fondant and rosemary. A traditional French recipe, the seven-hour roasted lamb has been given a dust-down by Anthony Bourdain in his recent *Les Halles Cookbook* and is now popping up everywhere.

That isn't to knock it. The meat literally falls apart and is so moist and tender as to require virtually no chewing. A decent tarte tatin and a crème caramel followed. With two glasses of Dillon's Point Sauvignon and coffee, the bill was £113.62. We lurched outside. Opposite, the old boys were also staggering, contentedly down their steps.

(London Evening Standard, 6th June 2007)

Review - The Forge

Thursday, 08 October 2009, Harpers Magazine

Hiding discreetly in the basement in Covent Garden's popular The Forge, is the recently opened bar...offering a selection of modern European quality food for competitive prices and a wine list boasting over 500 wines.

There aren't many places in Covent Garden where you can get a starter for the price of a sandwich, and a main course for the price of a round of coffees. That's why the Forge Bar is a little oasis nestling below the frenetic and bustling life that is Covent Garden and Leicester Square, where you can enjoy quality food that won't break the bank. Owner Robert Seigler says... " For people who either want to come in for a whistle wetter before they dine upstairs. Or to meet up after work for a drink and a quick bite to eat."

"Down here it's less formal than the upstairs restaurant. It's convivial and much busier with local business clientele on a weekday than at the weekends."

The menu is simple and concise with reasonably priced starters such as anchovy, piquillo peppers and aioli on toast (£4.50) up to crab with toasted flatbread (£7.50).

Mains consist of a choice of 12 dishes including salmon fishcake with parsley sauce (£8.50), a little more expensive comes whole baked bream, tomatoes, olives and garlic (£14.50). Ten of the 12 dishes come in below £10.

The full list of wines consists of 500 and is dominated by Old World at around 75 per cent. Downstairs the list is simplified to around 100, but still has a healthy 40 wines by the glass. You can start with a reasonably priced Sauvignon 'Elegance' 2008, VDP Des Cotes Du Tarn (£4.00) up to Taittinger NV (£11.50), or Rully, Maizieres 2007, Domaine Dureuil-Janthial (£11.00).

On the bar list most bottles come in between £15-£30, but you can go up to £75.00 for the Meursault Les Narvaux 2006, Vincent Girardin. But my guess is that if you're going to start ordering at that price, you're going to want to eat upstairs!