



**An exciting new restaurant has opened at 24 South Embankment and By The Dart were very happy to go and try it...**

Annabelles Kitchen opened its doors in August this year and new owners Joanna Crane and John Hodgson were actually ready to receive diners on the very day they moved in just before Regatta. This is typical of their enthusiasm and capacity for hard work. Since then they have redecorated and refurbished the restaurant and although they have only been open a relatively short time they have created quite a buzz in Dartmouth. They were happy to be involved in the food festival in October and threw themselves into the event with very positive results.

This is their first restaurant and they bring a wealth of experience to the task: John trained at the Tante Marie Cookery School in Surrey and catered for large events and private dining parties and Jo was involved in wedding planning and event management. Jo cares passionately about sourcing the best local suppliers for all their produce and has done a great deal of research. It is impressive to see the extensive list of provenance on the restaurant's website – with names that many who care about the quality of their food will recognize. They are



relishing the challenges that running a restaurant involves and are determined to provide Dartmouth with an exciting dining destination with the accent a little more on meat. They are keen to provide a "great British Dining room" experience by cooking modern British food, skillfully prepared and stylishly presented with the accent on great flavour.

This pretty, intimate little restaurant has been redecorated with a bold deep red ceiling with pretty glass chandeliers and neutral walls with wood paneling. The tables are attractively dressed with candles and crisp white linen. The view from the floor to ceiling picture window is simply stunning. Every table has a view and the river can be seen in all its glory with Kingswear beyond. The size of the restaurant, which can seat 24, creates a friendly, dining room atmosphere, which is very convivial.

Joanna, as front of house, provides a warm welcome and talks with enthusiasm and knowledge about the menu that she and John have compiled. It is reassuring to learn that all their meat, dairy and eggs is free range or organic with their fish from day boats, fruit and vegetables from local farm shops, greengrocers or direct from the grower. It is this commitment to every detail that allows you to relax in anticipation of a jolly good meal.

The menu presented us with a problem immediately - everything excited the taste buds: how could we resist so many delicious sounding dishes with echoes of great British classics like shepherds pie, devilled kidneys and mushrooms on hot buttered toast, slow roast shoulder of lamb and wood pigeon with beetroot and pear chutney with cob nuts, Queen of Puddings, blackberry and custard tart... There were interesting fish options too – as well as catch of the day and classic fish and chips was line caught Bass with mussels in a fennel and cream sauce or pan fried mullet with fennel

and garlic butter... This menu was exciting and shouted "try me!" The bread rolls with toasted cob nuts and honey were so delicious we could have eaten them all. Our starters did not disappoint. The mushroom and rosemary soup with a poached quail egg was thick and velvety and suffused with a rich woody flavour with a balancing hint of astringent rosemary. The devilled crab on crisp, chunky, home made bread had just the right amount of heat giving it an enjoyable kick. These are also grown up portions of food – the



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We paused before our puddings because we needed to! My treacle tart with clotted cream was sufficiently delicious that I miraculously managed to polish the lot off. The blackberry custard tart was similarly dispatched. The tart was light and fruity with some of the best custard my fellow diner had had in a very long time. He enjoyed it so much he would have been content with the



dishes are presented simply and without over embellishment. Unsurprisingly on the night of our visit, Annabelles was fully booked.

It was refreshing to see the chef come out of his kitchen to serve some of the main courses and be happy to answer questions from interested diners enjoying their food. Our choices were pan-fried rose calves liver with crispy bacon, curly kale, roasted onions and creamy mash and Devon Rose pork chop with caramelised apple, black pudding mash, Savoy cabbage, cider and mustard sauce and crispy sage. They were as delicious as they sound and the meat was cooked to tender perfection and was full of flavour. A dish of an interesting variety of vegetables including roasted roots and purple new potatoes accompanied our main courses. We particularly liked the scrumptious-black pudding mash.

custard alone... We accompanied our meal with a pleasant glass of Pinot Grigio. The wine list has been compiled by Regency Wines, a small family run business near Exeter and offers a well priced selection.

Annabelle's Kitchen succeeds in giving their diners a pleasurable dining experience: the food is well presented and well cooked, the ambience is convivial and informal and the service is attentive and friendly. It is also well priced and represents good value for money. Starters begin at £3.95 with main courses starting at £9.95 and puddings at £5.25. Obviously you may be tempted to stray to more expensive options and no one could blame you – this is an exciting new restaurant and there are so many irresistible dishes to tempt you. Jo and John have an enthusiasm for all things food, which is infectious, so excite those taste buds and go see for yourselves...

Special British themed dinners are planned throughout the year and Annabelles will soon open on Sundays with a singular roast meat of the day.

**Annabelles Kitchen is open from 6.00pm, Tuesday through to Saturday. 01803 833540 [www.annabelleskitchen.co.uk](http://www.annabelleskitchen.co.uk)**

