

## A taste of the season

### FOOD AND DRINK

The Good Food Shop  
Café Bistro

★★★★☆

As we drove past The Good Food Shop delicatessen on Addingham's Main Street, it looked firmly closed, and my heart sank, having booked a table at The Good Food Shop Café Bistro. Nonetheless, we parked and peered through the darkened windows, feeling rather as if the pretty grey-stone village beyond Ilkley might actually be the setting for something rurally sinister. The newsagent nearby was open, though, and its proprietor pointed us in the right direction: 200 yards up the road and round the bend.

As bistros go on a wet Saturday evening, it couldn't have been more civilised, or more welcoming. Chef/manager Matt Brown used to be the chef at The Fleece, a swish and popular gastropub in Addingham, and the decision to extend the delicatessen's business to a restaurant is an excellent one, reflecting a similar concern for food that is good, local and, where possible, organic and fair-trade. After a soft start prior to getting a licence, the Bistro has been fully operative since the summer, and if what we sampled on a blustery October night is an indication, it offers an ideal opportunity to sample food that celebrates the seasons.

The Bistro is housed in one of Addingham's higgledy-piggledy old houses, so that the kitchen (you can peer in as you walk to the entrance) appears to be partly in the cellar and the small, intimate restaurant is on the ground floor of the tall, narrow, tower-shaped front of the building. Inside, the walls are a warm burgundy and the furniture is dark and modern; if it sounds a bit overpowering in such a small space, it's not, but feels at once cosy and elegant. Pictures with a stylish French theme adorn the walls, and the soundtrack of sophisticated lounge music includes songs by Édith Piaf.

The menu, as you might expect, falls more on the side of classic French than modern English. We were initially disappointed to be told – by Matt Brown, who on our visit was single-handedly looking after the front-of-house side of things, and overseeing the kitchen – that none of the mussel-based dishes were available. Neither was the fruits de mer main (£13.95), a seafood casserole that had appealed to me. Still,



Season to be cheerful: The Good Food Shop Café Bistro in Addingham is a cosy and elegant establishment that specialises in classic French dishes

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there were attractive alternatives, and complementary offerings of French bread, olives and gorgeous home-made pesto promised that good things were in store.

A starter of potted chicken livers (£5.25) couldn't have been richer, or more delicious. The livers (free-range, and proudly marked as such on the menu) were chopped and potted in a paprika and brandy butter, and served in a round glass pot that looked interestingly like an apothecary jar. Only two small bits of melba toast, so thin that they looked like curls of parchment, were initially served, as Brown said the rest had been scorched; he brought out a generous pile before the first two had been demolished.

Traditional French onion soup (£3.95) was exactly that: warm, richly brown (too often this is served an insipid colour, rather than burgundyish red-

brown) and full of deep earthy flavours. It was topped with a piping hot slice of toasted Gruyère on French bread; the menu describes it as a 'croûton' but if so, it's the sort that giants eat at the top of their beanstalks. It went well with our glasses of rustic Estratego Real Tinto (£3.35).

A similar generosity characterised the mains. Boeuf bourguignon (£11.95) – another French classic – was a heartwarming dish, served in a bowl, which always seems to indicate that large portions are on their way. The meltingly slow-cooked meat in its heady sauce of wine, mushrooms, shallots and bacon lardons emitted a wonderfully heady aroma, and offered flavours to match. As if all this bounty were insufficient, it was served with gloopy, gloriously creamy dauphinois potatoes.

Alongside this triumphant traditionalism was a dish from the specials menu: Indian Ocean tiger prawns. Four enormous crustaceans

with lime and garlic butter (£12.95) showed that they were dab hands on the modern front, too. This dish was served with a warm sweet chilli potato salad.

Best of all, though, was the accompanying dish of seasonal autumn vegetables, which included butternut squash so perfectly roasted that it looked like thick suede and tasted beautiful. A shared chef's trio of desserts (£4.95) finished things off in style with miniature crème brûlée, tarte au citron and a lovely seasonal crumble of autumn fruits in which plums featured heavily. Those of us who love the colours, scents and flavours of this season should make a beeline for the bistro's door. Those of us who just like good food served with charming lack of pretentiousness should make a beeline, too.

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