

The Shed Seafood
Bistro, Porthgain.

Welsh restaurants serve food to dine for

When it comes to dining out Wales has got it all – the ingredients, the skill and the flair – making it one of the hottest spots in the UK for food lovers.

With the Welsh hospitality industry on a high, competition for the best eatery was always going to be tough, and judging the Eating Out in Wales category was a challenging job.

Tyddyn Llan

“Nothing short of sensational” said the judges of the food served at the Tyddyn Llan at Llandrillo in North Wales, regional winner and overall winner of the coveted Eating Out in Wales award.

Proprietors Bryan and Susan Webb took over this small elegant Georgian country house at the foot of the Berwyn Mountains in 2002, after running a restaurant in London. Since



The Foxhunter,
Nantyerry.

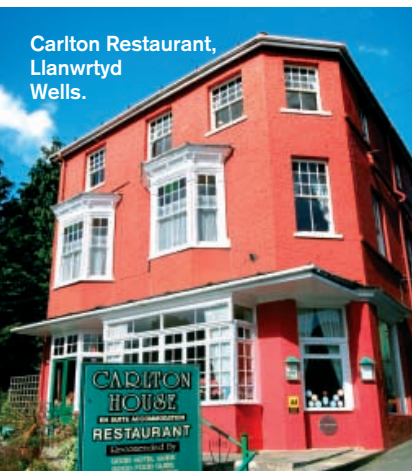
then, their cooking and hospitality has earned them a cabinet full of awards, including one of the highest ratings in Wales in the Good Food Guide, two stars from Egon Ronay and a Silver award in the True Taste Awards 2003.

The couple put their success down to Tyddyn Llan's relaxing

atmosphere, which, says Susan, is what makes it feel more like a house than a hotel, and most importantly, chef Bryan's approach to food.

Susan said: "Bryan is very passionate about food. He sources the best ingredients that money can buy."

Meat and game comes from local estates through their local butcher in Bala, while the fish comes from the Welsh coastline.



Buffalo mozzarella comes from Naples, while diver caught scallops, lobster, crab and langoustines are sourced from Scotland.

The restaurant's signature dish is Welsh lamb, especially rack of lamb when in season. Other favourites are scallops with vegetable relish and rocket and fillet of Welsh Black beef au poivre.

Puddings are no less inviting, with steamed ginger pudding and custard and whimberry crème



The Foxhunter, Nantyerry.

brûlée getting customers' votes.

Inside, the restaurant seats 40 and has a warm and inviting "New England" look, with pale blue wood panelled walls and white linen.

Susan said winning the award was "a bit of a surprise" but with awards and accolades piling up, it comes as no surprise to their satisfied customers.

The Foxhunter

Chef Matt Tebutt also made his name in London, training with top culinary names like Marco Pierre White before setting up The Foxhunter, a former stationmaster's house and pub in the tiny, picturesque village of Nantyerry near Usk, in 2001.

With Welsh flagstone floors and log-burning fires, the South-East Wales regional winner combines original features with contemporary comfort.

The menu changes daily and features the best of modern

British cooking with fresh, organic, seasonal ingredients. Wild foods feature too and Matt and wife Lisa offer foraging trips for visitors to gather natural delights such as whimberries, mushrooms, hazelnuts and samphire.

Customer favourites include grilled sardines and squid with coriander and chilli salsa; and rack of Welsh lamb, with white bean and fennel salad.

Voted AA Restaurant of the Year in 2004, The Foxhunter continues to receive rave reviews, with customers describing it as a "food lovers' dream" and "heaven for anyone who knows anything about food".

Lisa Tebutt said: "The menu changes every day so regular customers always have new things to try. Customers say that as well as the food, they like our informal atmosphere and friendly service."

The Shed Seafood Bistro

The judges were similarly impressed by West Wales regional winner, The Shed Seafood Bistro at Porthgain, on the Pembrokeshire National Park Coastal Path.

"Pure unadulterated joy!" they enthused, which must be music to the ears of proprietors Rob and Caroline Jones. It has been a remarkable journey for the couple, who opened The Shed as a tearoom in 2001 without any mains water or electricity!

Fisherman Rob catches much of the fish and shellfish that appears on the menu of this quayside restaurant himself. His wife Caroline is responsible for creating dishes like pan fried local bass fillet with beurre blanc sauce; and whole Porthgain Lobster Newberg - with dry sherry, fresh parsley and cream, topped with breadcrumbs.

Since then they have opened a



bistro upstairs and its reputation as the home of good, locally produced ingredients, simple, non-fussy cooking and enthusiastic service has grown. Most recently, it won AA Wales Seafood Restaurant of the Year award for 2006 and praise from the national press' food critics.

Rob Jones said: "Our customers appreciate the fresh local ingredients, and shellfish like Porthgain crab and lobster can be on the table within an hour of being caught."



Tyddyn Llan, Llandrillo.

Carlton Restuarant

Mary Ann Gilchrist, the chef at Mid Wales regional winner, Carlton Restaurant in Llanwrtyd Wells, also credits fresh, seasonal, local produce as the secret of her success. But the True Taste judges were plentiful in their praise of her cooking skills too.

Opened 15 years ago, Carlton Restaurant has established itself as the home of top-class dining in Mid Wales, thanks to the skills of self-taught chef Mary Ann.

The judges branded the food "excellent", "sensational" and "beautifully cooked".

Dishes that keep diners coming back for more include ham and parsley terrine with Sauce Gribiche, and roast rack of local lamb with crushed new potatoes, ragout of peppers and tomato and black olive sauce.

The favourite pudding is bread and butter pudding with double cream, while the cheeseboard features nine Welsh cheeses.

Mary Ann said: "Fifteen years ago we couldn't get people to try Welsh cheese, but now people are very interested in Welsh produce. There's lots of fantastic produce in Wales."

By the New Year, Mary Ann and husband Alan will have relocated to a new larger building in the town with views of the river. The new Carlton Restaurant with Rooms will seat 20 and have four bedrooms.