

Iconic hotel moving forward



m3193

Bromley Court Hotel

Bromley

★★★★

It's been a few years since I visited the iconic Bromley Court Hotel, when I attended a friend's wedding reception. Like many such similar grand venues it has enjoyed changing fortune over the years - and the charge of 'fading glory' could be levelled against such a large and well-known establishment.

However, it's patently obvious that the Bromley Court Hotel, which became a hotel in the 1930s, and has enjoyed a rich and varied history, is not resting on its laurels as it undergoes a five year-plus programme of refurbishment which began with the revamp of its Garden Restaurant. The restaurant was officially opened by the Bromley Mayor Julian Benington, and his wife Valerie, in April. It overlooks the attractive landscaped garden. The has had what's been described as a "regency-style" makeover and offers diners a traditional British and European cuisine.

I visited the restaurant on a Thursday evening, with a friend and we were taken to the cocktail bar for a pre-meal drink - we had the Cosmopolitan and a strawberry and vanilla Mojito, which we sipped on the pleasant garden patio.

Head chef Steve Clark also popped out to say hello and we had a chat about the menu - before we went into the restaurant for dinner.

The restaurant was more or less empty around 7pm but as the evening wore on there were a few more diners and the atmosphere picked up. The staff were very attentive and yet not obtrusive, as I chatted with an old school friend, who had travelled up from Whitstable.

We opted for the sharing meat board which included Woodall's Cumbrian air-dried ham, Yorkshire smoked duck, speck, fennel salami, slow roast tomato, mozzarella and olives. Served with a selection of bread rolls the starter, which you could also have had as a main course, was not only delicious but also very substantive. Generally, the starter menu had a good selection including salmon, whitebait, duck foie gras, lamb megueez sausage, soup and tempura battered prawns.

For the main course I settled for the duo of lamb - braised lamb shoulder with ratatouille, seared cut-



GARDEN VIEWS: The Bromley Court Hotel has launched a new garden restaurant m3271

lets with rosemary jus. This was perfectly satisfying as the lamb was tender and cooked very well.

My friend chose seared fillet of bream which was served with charred baby gem, cous cous, sweet onion and tomato salsa. She decided against the cous cous and had it replaced with their delicious chunky chips.

The main course menu offers a selection of solid dishes ranging from beer battered cod to mild chicken curry.

The vegetarian menu offered a tempting Moroccan vegetable cous-cous stew, as well as vegetable chilli and bruschetta of chargrilled provençal vegetables. There was also a selection of rice and pasta dishes.

Our overall impression of the food and menu was totally solid and all our dishes were properly seasoned and cooked very well.

We had a bottle of Chilean San Abello Sauvignon Blanc from the

extensive wine list.

The restaurant also offers a 'Today's Special' and on that Thursday, it was pot roasted pork belly, buttered mash, curly kale, braised grellot onions with roasting juices.

Actually, after the main course we were very full and decided against having a dessert. However, the dessert menu again has something for everyone including rhubarb and custard, dark chocolate and grand marnier torte and a selection of great British cheeses.

Prices are very reasonable and for starter dishes range from £5.50 up to £7 and the main course dishes range from £12 up to £16.50.

Our visit to the Bromley Court Hotel, was pleasant and it was good to see the work being done to move this hotel forward. It still enjoys a strong base of clientele of businesses and local community groups



holding functions there. Also, still a great venue for weddings and now with the garden restaurant local diners should also definitely try it out.

However, it does still need a signature - something that will make it stand out for a very special reason in 2015 - and it wouldn't do badly to take a leaf from its past when it attracted some great acts - the hotel had once become a popular jazz venue featuring artists such as Acker Bilk as well as great acts like David Bowie, Eric Clapton, Cream, Pink Floyd and even the legendary Jimi Hendrix.

So over to you Bromley Court...

● Shujaul was a guest of the Bromley Court Hotel, Bromley Hill, Bromley, Kent BR1 4JD. 020 8461 8600

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newsbites

Penny at the Old Vic

The Old Vic is home to Penny, the new all-day cafe to be run by Julian Porter and Lauren Johns.

Serving coffee from Workshop Coffee and a wine selection with a concentration on biodynamic and natural wines, alongside craft beers, naturally, there are also fresh juices, made using seasonal fruit from New Covent Garden Market.

Breakfast is a locally sourced affair, with pastries from The Little Pedlar (in Bermondsey) and dishes include "smashed avocado, Sussex ricotta, garden herbs on Brixton sourdough" and "poached organic Oxfordshire eggs with herb salt". They'll have small plates that include "beechwood smoked anchovies

on toast, chilli salt" plus cheeses from the British Isles with acorn flour crisps. Penny is next to The Old Vic at The Cut, London SE1 8NB.

Le Pont de la Tour

Tower Bridge restaurant Le Pont de la Tour is getting a makeover and set to open later this month. A new head chef, Frederick Forster, will be at the helm of this classically French restaurant and comes with quite a CV, the Ritz, Le Gavroche and Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons all receive a mention. His menu celebrates French fayre, with a firm nod to great British produce.

Roasted Orkney scallops with violet artichokes, and a starter of golden beetroot with

turnip and wild wood sorrel gives more than a hint of what diners can expect.

A main course of poached turbot with leeks and cauliflower and a crab sauce sounds magnificent.

Le Pont de La Tour is at Butlers Wharf Buildings, 36 Shad Thames, London SE1 2YE.

Brown & Green

Fans of popular railway cafes, Brown & Green, will be pleased to learn their latest outpost is opening in Crystal Palace just off Church Rd later this month.

Responsible for some of the finest breakfasts in south-east London, visitors will be able to tuck into all manner of dishes from continental style to a full English.