

Restaurant Review



In her culinary tour of West Norfolk, **Ann Weaver** is lucky enough to enjoy an evening at the deservedly award-winning Crown Inn at East Rudham...

Driving on the main road through East Rudham your eyes are instantly drawn to The Crown Inn on the far side of the village green. It looks very impressive from the exterior, and on closer inspection, you can't fail to notice (it's written in large words above a crown) that it was voted Norfolk Dining Pub of the Year 2010 by the Good Pub Guide.

Expectations duly risen, I found the decor continued to impress on entry, with low-beamed ceilings and rustic wooden tables and chairs alongside contemporary colours and dimmed lighting – it's a lovely modern feel. The area's very roomy, but it's still cosy and relaxed.

We chose a table and ordered some drinks to enjoy whilst making some hard

decisions from the menu. There were around seven starters and main courses plus three more of each on the specials board. Each was very different – and there wasn't anything that didn't appeal to me.

After much deliberation, I came to the conclusion that **Feta, Squash and Spinach Samosas with a Coriander Yogurt** would probably be a lighter starter than **Poached Chicken and Celeriac Salad** – especially since my main course was going to be **Roast North Norfolk Partridge with Butternut Squash, Courgette and Chorizo**, which I anticipated would be quite rich.

My partner chose to start with **Smoked Haddock Beignets with Chive Sauce** (an easy choice for a fish lover) – but it was much harder to decide on the main, the main contenders being **Monkfish Pappiote**

with **Crushed Potatoes**, or the **10-hour Cooked Brisket of Beef with a Shallot Jus**. Since it was a cold night and a little homely comfort was in order, it wasn't a surprise that the beef won.

After making our selections the friendly waitress brought over some bread rolls and asked if we'd like more drinks. Throughout the night we were more than impressed with the staff, all of whom were all very helpful and – despite the restaurant being rather busy – still had time to share some banter and check everything was ok.

It wasn't long before the starters were brought over to the table – two crisp, tasty samosas, and four small haddock beignets in a deep bowl, accompanied by three boiled quails eggs on a bed of leaves dressed in a chive sauce.

Both looked fabulous and were mouth-wateringly full of flavour – genuinely fresh, with each ingredient shining through!

Soon the main course arrived, and once again it was presented beautifully. The brisket of beef was an enormous (and tender) slab that would have comfortably served two people, accompanied by the most velvety smooth mashed potato.

My whole partridge was quartered and sat on sweet soft cubes of courgette, squash and tiny baby onions, generously drizzled with a rich jus.

I wasn't sure how the chorizo would sit next to the gamey taste of the partridge but it was simply perfect – the chef demonstrating a true talent for exciting combinations that work.

Pudding had already been decided in my mind – **Warm Chocolate Brownie with Vanilla Ice Cream**. Not wanting to miss anything, my husband chose the **Dark Chocolate Mousse with Pears, Salted Caramel and Churro**.

What can I say? It was – to coin a phrase – truly scrumptious, and probably the best chocolate brownie I've ever tasted (I've tried quite a few!)

It had a luxuriously soft goey texture, a deep chocolate flavour and not a crumb was left. The other dessert was another triumph of creative combinations for the chef, and the only disappointment for my husband was that he couldn't manage to eat another!

Three courses, three alcoholic drinks and a soft drink, and the bill came to £68 – which we thought excellent for the quality of the food and standard of service we received.

With fine 'gastro pub' dining in such an easygoing atmosphere, it's not hard to see why the Crown holds the title it does. My next visit can't come soon enough! **KL**

The Crown Inn

The Green, East Rudham, Norfolk PE31 8RD

Tel: 01485 528530

E-mail: reception@crownnorfolk.co.uk

