



Seriously impressive

RHIANA HUGHES IS LEFT IN AWE OF THE CHEFS AT THE IZAAK WALTON HOTEL.

Driving through the picturesque Derbyshire Peaks as the sun began to set, the stunning views from the winding roads were definitely vying for my attention while I really should have been focusing on the narrow lanes ahead.

Despite finding myself distracted by the beautiful countryside, my partner and I did eventually make it to the Izaak Walton Hotel in one piece. As we pulled up we saw the exterior of the 17th century country house beautifully illuminated, and had it not been a cold winter evening we would have loved to enjoy some time outside in the hotel's well-kept gardens.

As the temperature dropped to well below five degrees, we hurriedly shuffled inside to the warmth of the hotel's reception. Once there, we were greeted by a friendly receptionist who showed us to the Haddon Restaurant, the Izaak Walton's 2 AA Rosette awarded eatery.

Shown to our table by a sharply dressed waiter, we were impressed by the elegant candlelit table setting, and overjoyed when we realised we'd been seated in close proximity to a radiator!

The meal itself began with a delectable amuse bouche of a light yet rich goats' cheese mousse, served with tomato and mushroom purée, mushroom crisp and a mushroom consommé; it was the perfect pre-dinner treat.

We were then treated to another pre-starter course of warm homemade bread which came with a selection of butters, black pepper being the winner for me while my partner couldn't get enough of the Cajun spiced and romesco butters.

Already impressed by the amuse bouche and bread courses, we waited eagerly to see what the next courses would have to offer.

For a second time I was treated to their delicious homemade bread, but this time it was served as an accompaniment to their refreshing tomato and rosemary soup. My partner's starter was an absolute feast for the eyes as much as it was for the stomach, a beautifully presented course of mallard with butternut squash, crispy cavolo nero, chestnuts and clementine.

With each new course we found ourselves further in awe of the talents of the Haddon chefs.

I could not have been more impressed by my main course of fillet steak. Perfectly pink in the middle, it was served with oxtail-stuffed baby gem lettuce, cauliflower, pomme purée and a delicious jus, the flavours of each part of the dish only enhanced by a glass of full-bodied Shiraz (£5.50).

My partner opted for the deliciously tender venison, served with black pudding and potato; it was just salty

enough to offset the sweetness of the juniper reduction dotted across the plate.

Our desserts were no disappointment either, with myself choosing the selection of ice-creams with a brandy snap and deliciously tart berry coulis, and my partner opting for the caramelised apple terrine with vanilla ice-cream, meringue, salted granola and delicate balls of toffee.

Just when we thought we couldn't possibly take another bite, our waiter returned with some petit fours and the offer of coffee. An offer I could not refuse as I felt full and ready for bed, and full of regret too, that we hadn't booked a room at The Izaak Walton for the night in favour of the drive back home.

Haddon menu £39.50 per person (including tea/coffee)

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At a glance:

- ★ Beautiful presentation
- ★ Excellent service
- ★ Generous servings