

Fit for a king

RUMOUR has it that Charles I was once a guest at the original mansion that stood on the site of Peterstone Court.

The ill-fated monarch would probably be surprised if he saw the handsome Georgian building that stands on the site today.

With a backdrop of the Brecon Beacons to offset it, Peterstone Court looks pretty imposing, but inside it's relaxed and comfortable.

"The Peterstone Court of old was staid and formal, but in its current incarnation it's upbeat and chilled," explains Emyr Griffith, founder of Welsh Rarebits which represents a selection of independent hotels in Wales.

Walkers and mountain bikers stay at the hotel as an antidote to their exertions on the hills, and for those who have over-stretched their muscles, a soothing massage in the spa or a dip in the pool helps things along.

Dogs are welcome too, with baskets, bowls and treats provided, and spectacular 'walkies' on the doorstep.

Peterstone Court has also developed a reputation for modern, bistro-style food, with much of the meat and poultry coming from the hotel's own farm.

■ Peterstone Court is part of Welsh Rarebits, a collection of handpicked, top quality, independently-owned hotels. Order your free brochure online at www.rarebits.co.uk or call 01686 668030. Gift vouchers available.

Twice baked Caerphilly cheese soufflé

INGREDIENTS - SERVES 6

- 150ml double cream
- 300ml milk
- 225g Caerphilly cheese
- 6 eggs (separated)
- 50g butter
- 50g plain flour
- 1 small onion
- 3 whole peppercorns
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 1tsp English mustard
- 6 teaspoons laverbread

FOR THE TOPPING

- 60g parmesan
- 50ml cream

METHOD

■ In a saucepan add the milk, cream, onion, peppercorns, garlic and bay leaf and bring to the boil, turn it off and leave to one side to infuse.

■ In a separate pan melt the butter then add the flour and whisk until well combined, cook the mixture over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes whisking constantly.

■ Put the milk mix

through a sieve into a jug and discard the onion etc. Add the milk mixture to the butter mixture a little at a time whisking constantly, once all the milk is whisked into the butter mixture add the cheese and whisk until melted then remove from the heat and set to one side to cool slightly, add the egg yolks once it has cooled slightly.

■ In a separate bowl whisk the egg whites to soft peaks, add a quarter of the egg whites to the milk mixture and stir until combined then add the rest of the egg whites and fold in gently.

■ Butter the inside of six ramekins and add the mixture to each one leaving a 1cm gap. Place one small teaspoon of laverbread into the centre of each soufflé. Cook the soufflés at



160°C, Gas 2½ for 20 minutes in a bain marie. Once cooked leave to cool and run a knife around the outside of

each soufflé and gently tap them onto a tray. ■ Before baking them for the second time put some cream and

parmesan onto the top of each soufflé then cook them at 180°C for 10-15 minutes until risen.

Marinated Pork Chops

INGREDIENTS - SERVES 2 FOR THE PORK AND MARINADE

- 2 10-ounce bone-in, extra-thick, centre-cut pork chops
- 112g cup hoisin sauce
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 4 cloves minced garlic
- 1½ tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp sherry vinegar
- 1 tsp rice vinegar
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1½ tsp hot sauce
- ½ tsp white pepper
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 green onion (minced)

METHOD

■ Mix all the ingredients together and place in a plastic food bag with the pork chops, leave to marinate for at least 12 hours.

■ Remove from bag and place on char-grill or barbecue.



■ Seal meat on both sides for 4-5 minutes, or until a charcoal effect is reached. ■ Transfer to oven 220°C, Gas 7 for 15 minutes, leave to rest for a further 5 minutes

before serving.

FOR THE MUSTARD SAUCE

- 50g red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp hot mustard powder
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 egg yolk

■ 70g cup crème fraiche

- Cayenne, to taste
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- Mix all ingredients together, fold in the crème fraiche last.

Plum frangipan with plum compote

INGREDIENTS - (SERVES 6) FOR THE SWEET PASTRY

- 375g of plain flour, plus a little extra for dusting
- 15g caster sugar
- 225g unsalted butter, cut into cubes, plus extra for greasing
- 1 free-range egg
- 4 tbsp ice-cold water

METHOD

■ For the pastry, sieve the flour and sugar into a large mixing bowl. Tip the cubed butter into the bowl. Rub the butter and the flour between your thumb and fingertips until the mixture resembles fine bread-crumbs.

■ In a jug or small bowl,

beat the egg together with four tablespoons of ice-cold water. Pour into the flour mixture.

■ Slowly bring the ingredients together with your hands to form a dough, being careful not to overwork it.

■ Knead the dough lightly on a clean, floured work surface, then wrap it in cling film and refrigerate until firm, at least 30 minutes

FOR THE FRANGIPANÉ

- 200g of unsalted butter
- 200g sugar
- 2 free range eggs
- 200g ground almonds
- For the tart filling
- 5-6 ripe plums each cut into eighths, stones

removed

METHOD

■ Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until light and fluffy. Crack the eggs into the bowl one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the ground almonds and mix well until combined. Set aside.

■ Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4. Dust the work surface with flour and roll the chilled dough thinly.

Use it to line one large 25cm/10in tart ring or 6-8 individual tartlet rings 8cm/3¼in in diameter.

■ Spoon the frangipane into the tart case so that it comes about halfway

up the sides. Smooth over the surface with a spatula and cover evenly with plums. Bake for 30-40 minutes (15-25 minutes for the tartlets), or until pastry is golden-brown and the fruit tender

FOR THE PLUM COMPOTE

- 6 plums (diced)
- 100g of sugar
- Juice of ½ a lemon

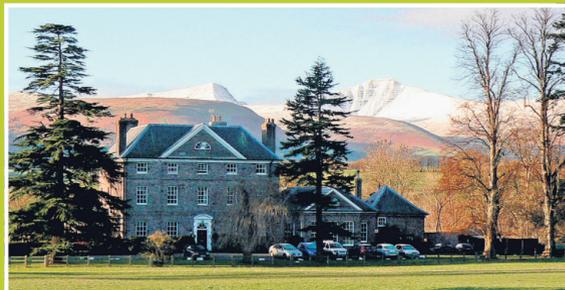
METHOD

■ Put all ingredients in a pan and cook for 5 minutes or until plums are soft

■ Dust tart with icing sugar and serve warm with compote and vanilla ice cream. Our chef tops it with spun sugar.



Win a night for two and dinner at Peterstone Court



Just go to the Welsh Rarebits web site www.rarebits.co.uk, go to the competition tab on the left, enter the code WOS66P and follow the simple instructions.

WELSH RAREBITS
Hotels of Distinction

THE STAR INN

Talybont-on-Usk, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7YX

TEL: 01874 676635

STAFF: Unfailingly friendly, knowledgeable, welcoming and accommodating, the staff - led by landlord and landlady Ian and Anna Bell - complement this perfect little village pub, well, perfectly. If it seems like they're the hardest working couple in the licensed trade it's

because they probably are. Barely a week goes by without a beer festival, Christmas fair, live music or themed nights pulling in the regulars and the tourists.

18/20

DECOR: Anyone expecting one of these so-called 'gastropubs' will be disappointed. The interior of the Star can hardly have changed since the 1970s and, of course, looks all the better for it. The centrepiece of the bar is an enormous open fire, perfect for this time of year (although it's also, strangely, been roaring at the



height of summer!). Add a pool table in the lounge, wall decorations

attesting to their plethora of guest ales, a snug and tiled floors and you've just about got the picture. Oh, and did we mention the beer garden, nestled between a babbling brook and the Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal? In the summer sunshine, there's no better place to be.

17/20

FOOD & DRINK: While you could, at a pinch, squeeze a pint of lager out of mein host, do yourself a favour and pick a choice real ale or scrumpy from the ever-changing roll of honour on the blackboard over the

fire. Pick one - they're all lovely. Or go through the list and make a night of it. As for food, it's good, honest pub grub - and plenty of it!

19/20

CLIENTELE: All the world was here in the summer when ex-Beautiful South singer Paul Heaton stopped by on his UK tour, cycling in to sing a storming set in the lovely garden out the back. Most nights, though, you'll find the residents of this charming canal-side village here relaxing and swapping stories.

17/20

ATMOSPHERE: If there's a better 'proper' pub in Wales, we've yet to find it (although we're sure you'll contradict us). The fame of the Star stretches far and wide and it probably justifies its reputation. Certainly, the beer monsters at Camra like it and it's currently Brecknockshire Pub of the Year for the fourth year running.

17/20

TOTAL: 88/100



SEVEN TO LUST AFTER

AERIAL EXCITEMENT

Remote control choppers can now come with built-in water pistols, working winches and cameras - and they're easier than ever to fly. But this set-up from Spin Master takes in-flight play to another level. It'll track you while you fly, trying to knock you out of the air. Air Hogs Battle Tracker, £99.99, from www.tesco.com/direct



CASE STUDY

A vintage-style miniature suitcase in Liberty's signature Tana Lawn fabric is a must for weekenders who face luggage restrictions. Green Loden Print Miniature Suitcase, £65, from www.liberty.co.uk

TRULY SCRUMPTIOUS

Those with a sweet tooth need look no further than Biscuiteers' Winter Wonderland basket. Festive goodies include a Biscuiteers Christmas fruit cake, Say Cheese tin, Happy Christmas chocs tin and two Santa Jolly Gingers, along with a Biscuiteers Book Of Iced Biscuits and tea towels. Winter Wonderland Hamper, £199, (plus P&P), from www.biscuiteers.com



WAKE UP NATURALLY



Be less alarmed by the lack of light in the morning with this clever clock, which simulates a sunrise in your bedroom. It eases you in from the land of nod over preset periods by slowly brightening the room, promoting the body's get-up-and-go hormone cortisol - very scientific. Lumie Bodyclock Active 250, £89.99, from www.firebox.com

JUST ADD WATER

After a single charge, these shoe inserts will provide up to 35 minutes' worth of foot-warming relief. And to reactivate, just boil them in water for 10 minutes. The soles will mould to your feet and they can be reused up to 100 times. Warm Up Soles, £12.99, from www.iwantoneofthose.com



LUXURY THROW

A designer favourite in smart hotels, styling your favourite space with a luxurious fur throw will add the finishing touch to any room by adding warmth and glitz. Faux White Fox Fur Throw, £198, from www.wesley-barrell.co.uk

SMARTPHONE SYSTEM

Connect these to your existing sockets and, with the assistance of an app on your smartphone, you can control almost every aspect of your illuminating devices from a tap on the screen. These bulbs can also be set to simulate daybreak - handy if you want to wake up gradually. Philips Hue Starter Pack, £179, from Apple stores nationwide



PUB SPY