

food for thought

with Benjamin James



October is always a month that seems to creep up from nowhere; a moment ago we were enjoying the late summer sun in the garden at the **George & Dragon, Chipstead** and now the fire is being stocked ready for those bracingly cold autumn mornings. Fortunately the best of Kent's produce brings some much-needed warmth to our seasonal dishes...



Wild mushrooms are abundant in October: try this wonderful sautéed wild mushroom, new potato and fried duck egg dish

On the forager's trail

The arrival of the first frosts and cold mornings has its benefits for those foragers and food lovers among us. Wild mushrooms are abundant and a short walk over the fields or into the woodlands can unearth some special discoveries, but beware, mushroom picking is not for the amateur or foolish: I will only ever go looking with an expert, my expert being a very well illustrated book. Many books on the delight of mushroom picking are available, but for beginners I would recommend the *River Cottage Handbook no. 1, Mushrooms*, by John Wright.

Back at the **George & Dragon, Chipstead** we find the wild mushroom dishes to be particularly popular sellers. One of our favourite dishes is **sautéed wild mushroom, new potatoes and a fried duck egg**

For two people:

180g wild mushrooms

120g new potatoes (boiled and sliced)

5ml truffle oil

2 duck eggs

Salt and pepper

Sauté the new potatoes in a shallow pan with a little vegetable oil until golden brown; add the mushrooms and toss gently until the size of the mushrooms has wilted and halved in volume. Drizzle over the truffle oil, transfer to a plate, place a fried egg on top and add a touch of salt and pepper to finish.

Christmas cheer in Chipstead

With October upon us few can think about the passing of the year without their thoughts turning to Christmas. The **George & Dragon, Chipstead** is already gearing up for a month of celebrations. The heavy oak beams, solid furnishings, real fires and original features create a perfect venue for a variety of events from a casual Christmas lunch to a romantic dinner for two. The two floors allow customers to enjoy food and drink in the bar downstairs with its open fire, or under the beamed splendour of the upstairs dining room. There's even a tree-filled private dining room for more intimate parties. Whatever your requirements why not let us put the sparkle into your Christmas gatherings this December.

Pear necessities

You can also pick up wild mushrooms from nearby farm shops, along with some new season pears. At the **George & Dragon, Chipstead** our pear and blue cheese salad is always popular when we feature it on our lunch classics menu. Kent has some great pear orchards so it is also worth trying the pear juice as a refreshing alternative to orange or regular apple juice. Many producers in Kent even make an apple and pear juice which is great for creating cocktails. The **George & Dragon, Chipstead's** cocktail of the month for October is a pear and apple martini, which is deliciously smooth and refreshing.



Apple and pear martini

75ml pear and apple juice
(fresh pressed)

25ml gold rum
(Havana Club, five years ideal)

25ml apple liqueur

12.5ml Amaretto

1 squeeze of lime

Shake all the ingredients with cubed ice and strain into a chilled martini glass.