

food for thought

with Benjamin James

What a great month October was: crisp mornings, plenty of sunshine and cold evenings, which were perfect for sitting next to an open fire with a glass of red wine. Here at the **George & Dragon, Chipstead**, the most coveted spot is the sofa in front of the fire. Whether it is a couple of coffees mid-morning, a glass of wine and a steak sandwich for lunch or one of our cocktails in the evening, the sofa has certainly had its fair share of occupants and I'm sure its popularity will continue as the cooler weather continues



Horseradish makes a great accompaniment to winter meals... try this wonderful smoked salmon and grated horseradish dish

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Fresh from the farm

Along with writing our menu for Christmas Day lunch at the George & Dragon, Chipstead, I have been revisiting some of my favourite farms to collect great produce for our autumn menus. With over six different edible varieties of pumpkin and squashes to choose from, the Hop Shop at Castle Farm in Shoreham is one of the best places to pick up a glorious stone-coloured Crown Prince pumpkin or a smaller Gem squash. They make fantastic soups and risottos, or a great addition to your roasted vegetables on a Sunday. The Weald Smokery in Hawkhurst is another fantastic local farm shop, producing an array of smoked and local artisan produce that we use regularly and which is ideal for Christmas hampers and festive meals.

Sour notes

With local wild nuts coming to the fore for foragers this month, the George & Dragon, Chipstead has used a nut-based liqueur for its cocktail of the month in November: Served in a jam jar, the amaretto sour will be a very refreshing yet comforting accompaniment to any fireworks display in November.



On the forager's trail

The sun-filled days have been ideal for the walkers and foragers among us, the hedgerows are changing, winter berries and holly are reaching full ripeness and the cobnuts and walnuts are starting to fall from the trees; all of which are contributing to a beautiful assortment of colour as autumn really takes hold.

Back at the George & Dragon, Chipstead our garden has just about given up the last of its crop for the year. The marvellous horseradish is the last of our home-grown vegetables to be pulled from the ground. It probably exists in many people's gardens without anyone realising. If you have got some it is well worth digging up a root or two to grate into a home-made horseradish cream to accompany your Sunday roast. At the George & Dragon, Chipstead we will be using it to make many accompaniments over the coming months: perhaps the most popular of these will be the horseradish butter served with our steaks or the horseradish potato that accompanies a plate of the Weald Smokery's salmon.

For two people:

- 180g smoked salmon
- 220g new potatoes (boiled and quartered)
- 25g shallots finely chopped
- 20g fresh grated horseradish
- 30g mayonnaise
- Pinch of freshly chopped chervil
- Salt and pepper
- Micro herbs (optional)

Mix all the ingredients (except the salmon) together and place in the centre of a plate, arrange two slices of smoked salmon on each plate (lay them in a crescent shape so they wrap around the base of the potato salad). Drizzle a little extra virgin olive oil and finish with a little sprinkling of micro herbs.

- 50ml amaretto liqueur
- 25ml freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 15ml sugar syrup
- 1 egg white
- 1 squeeze of lime

Vigorously shake all the ingredients with cubed ice. Quarter-fill a chunky glass with fresh ice and then pour the shaken cocktail into the glass, allowing the ice that was shaken to fall in as well.



Amaretto Sour