

# food for thought

with Benjamin James

Christmas time, mistletoe and wine! How quickly winter seems to have taken hold and now the thought of a white Christmas is a very real one. The **George & Dragon, Chipstead** has been fully decked out in garlands and fairy lights and now all that is left is to hang the stockings by the fire and wait for the big man in red to pop down our large and inviting chimney



A delicious Kentish Blue, pear and walnut salad

## On the forager's trail

What a delight November turned out to be for the eagle-eyed among us we were blessed with a late crop of mushrooms springing up all over the countryside. Quince, pears and apples have all had bumper crops, along with the famous Kent cobnut which seemed to be in every wood I walked in this year. Back at the George & Dragon, Chipstead we try our best to use the ingredients I find on my travels along with ones exchanged over the bar for a pint of Westerham's George's marvellous medicine or glass of merlot. Most recently, our talented chef's made a fantastic spiced quince jelly to accompany our infamous cheese board and a wonderful celeriac and apple gratin, all of which featured ingredients donated to us by green-fingered locals.

Our **Kentish Blue, pear and walnut salad** is a hugely popular dish which combines a great local cheese with one of my favourite fruits, which has also had a bumper year: Easy to make at home, this is the perfect recipe to create if you want to use up the last of your pears:

For two people:

- 1 Pear peeled and cored
- 150g Kentish Blue cheese
- 50g Walnuts
- 25g Kent cobnuts
- 80g Mixed salad leaves
- 10ml Vinaigrette dressing



Carefully peel the pears, slice in half, remove the core and slice lengthways. In a bowl place your mixed salad leaves and add the pear; crumbled blue cheese (small dice-sized pieces), and roughly crumbled nuts all into the bowl. Drizzle over the dressing, gently toss with your hands and transfer onto a plate. When transferring don't worry too much about the nuts and cheese staying in the bowl; if this happens arrange the leaves then scatter the nuts and cheese over the top. Finish with a little drizzle of reduced, aged balsamic.

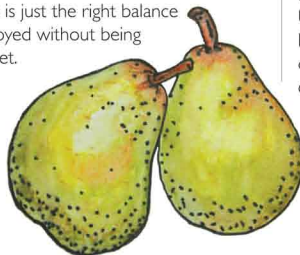
## Fresh from the farm

With game season underway, local farm shops and butchers are the best place to visit for an alternative to chicken, lamb or even beef. Both Coldbreath butchers and Chart Farm in Seal have a great selection of game, offering a wonderful seasonal variety to any dining table. Why not try some, rabbit, venison, pheasant or partridge with a nice bottle or red! If you're stuck for ideas of what to do with your purchase, pop in to see me at the George & Dragon, Chipstead, and over a coffee or glass of red I'd be happy to share some of our recipes and tips with you.

■ Visit [www.georgeanddragonchipstead.com](http://www.georgeanddragonchipstead.com) or call 01732 779019 for details about what's on at The George & Dragon, Chipstead this Christmas

## After-dinner treat

For me there are only two viable options for cocktails in December: sparkling champagne cocktails add fizz to any party or deliciously creamy after-dinner cocktails add the finishing touch to great dinner parties. The 'grasshopper' has always been a popular after-dinner cocktail at the George & Dragon, Chipstead; the subtle mix of mint and chocolate is just the right balance to be enjoyed without being sickly sweet.



- 25ml Crème de menthe
- 25ml White crème de cacao
- 25ml Double cream
- 25ml Milk
- Cocoa powder to dust

Vigorously shake all the ingredients with cubed ice. Using a tea strainer, strain the liquid into a martini-style glass and discard the ice. Sprinkle over a little cocoa powder and serve immediately.



Grasshopper  
Cocktail