

food for thought

with Benjamin James

Our resident foodie Benjamin James of the **George & Dragon** in Chipstead reveals what's been keeping the pub busy this month and shares his favourite recipes



For the latest news, visit our new website at www.georgeanddragonchipstead.com and follow us @GeorgeChipstead on Twitter

Cocktail of the month: Strawberry Daiquiri

Supposedly conceived in Cuban historic fish restaurant and cocktail bar El Floridita around the time of the Spanish-American war, the Daiquiri is now synonymous with martini-style drinks containing rum, lime and sugar. With so many versions of the classic it's a drink well worth personalising with your favourite flavour.

Summers at the George & Dragon Chipstead always involve a few of our strawberry Daiquiris and this is how we make them:

4/6 of a lime

15ml of sugar syrup (gomme)

37.5ml of gold rum (Havana club ideally)

12.5 ml of strawberry liqueur

3 x medium sized strawberries

1 dash vanilla essence

Crush the lime, sugar syrup and strawberries in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Add the rum, liqueur and vanilla and top with ice cubes and shake vigorously. Strain into a chilled martini glass using a cocktail strainer and a T-strainer to stop any broken ice and fruit. Garnish with a curl of lime zest.

Visit the pub at 39 High Street, Chipstead, TN13 2RW and for more information or to book, call 01732 779019 or visit www.georgeanddragonchipstead.com

Traditional bunting adorning houses and lamp-posts, strawberries and cream, sunshine, street parties and true community spirit abound. What a wonderfully British month June is turning out to be!

With the Queen's Jubilee celebrating her 60 years on the throne, I thought it a perfect opportunity to embrace history and focus on the "heirloom or heritage" fruit and vegetable at Chipstead's George & Dragon.

I am always quick to promote the provenance of the staple ingredients used on our menus, whether it is venison from Chart Farm, pork from Bridge Farm, apples from Castle Farm, cheese from Winterdale Shaw, or ice cream from Taywell Farm. Among our favourite dishes lie ingredients that are a little more obscure and interesting. Often termed "heritage", these fruits and vegetables were typically cultivated more than 50 years ago. Many have escaped mass market commercial farming because they either produce low yields or require excessive defence against pests, while others have simply fallen out of favour with consumers.

Take the Salad Blue potato for example, which dates back to 1800 and, along with wild garlic and asparagus, featured heavily on the George and Dragon's menu during May. The Salad Blue potato is a deep, purple blue colour with a beautifully nutty texture to the skin, much like a Jersey royal. It works very well in salads and is a great alternative to the everyday New Potato. Admittedly for most readers, picking up heritage vegetables in the big supermarkets is not easy. However, farm shops and farmers' markets are a great source of heritage produce. Stonepitts Farm just outside Seal for example is a great place to go and pick your own fruit with many heritage varieties available.

Another great way to explore heritage produce is to grow it yourself. Here at the George & Dragon, customers enjoy wandering around our herb and vegetable garden whilst enjoying a thirst-quenching drink or meal in the sun-drenched garden. We also enjoy cultivating our own heritage varieties of peas, tomatoes and yellow tornado courgettes, and are particularly excited this year because the spring rain has well-prepared the ground for our little seedlings to flourish just in time for alfresco dining on Father's Day later this month! Sunday June 17 is set to be a great day!

