



# THE LOCAL FLAVOUR

Jaine Blackman samples the fare of an Oxfordshire chef on his way to Cheltenham Food Festival

**B**efore you ask, no, The Wychwood Inn isn't attached to the Witney brewery.

The award-winning, four-AA, silver star hostelry, with restaurant and rooms, is independently owned and run – by Paul Hunt and his mother Tracey – and can be found in the picturesque West Oxfordshire village of Shipton Under Wychwood.

It's a lovely setting; there's a large welcoming garden with seating area and swing chairs hanging from the trees – perfect in warm weather.

It wasn't good enough for us to sit outside on our visit but we were happy enough in the dining area of the inn which underwent extensive renovation in 2012, transforming the old building into a stylish and inviting place for guests to dine and stay in one of five smart en-suite guest rooms.

Joe McCarthy, who heads up the kitchen team, is one of the chefs taking centre stage at the Cheltenham Food & Drink Festival in June and we were keen to taste his dishes.

Things started well as warm freshly-baked bread and Marmite butter was delivered to the

table and course after course just kept getting better. Starters were crispy shin of beef, which came in the the form of actually very tender shredded beef in a deep-fried croquette (£8) and dressed prawns with pickled cucumber, cayenne aioli and sourdough crisps (£8.50). Mains were a perfectly cooked sea-bass special with a smooth chive veloute (£16.50) and tender, pink pave lamb with accompaniments which included really tasty roasted artichoke. And then there was star of the show for presentation – a rhubarb and custard dessert (£7.50), *pictured*, which turned traditional ingredients into something extraordinary with its rhubarb jelly encasing custard parfait.

The Wychwood Inn was previously named the Red Horse... and known locally as the Dead Horse.

It's furlongs away from that now: a real thoroughbred – with thoroughly good bread... and more.

**Win a stay at The Wychwood Inn, page 129**

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**W:** [thewychwoodinn.com](http://thewychwoodinn.com)



## Make a date

Joe McCarthy will be cooking two dishes – cod with chorizo crisps, avocado puree and salsa with a black olive crumb and a lemon pie – on the Sunday at Cheltenham Food & Drink Festival, which runs from June 15 to 17.

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**W:** [garden-events.com](http://garden-events.com)