

# Food and Drink



Food news with Jo Davison  
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## Trying not to make a pig's ear of brekky

SO you think pouring milk on your cereal is making your own breakfast?

Before me sits a bowl of what looks like enough ground pepper to put the city's entire population of pepperpot-wielding Italian waiters out of business.

Only, it's not. It's dried pig's blood and I'm about to be shown how to transform it into a Northern delicacy, by 'ecky thump. I'm with three other keen amateur chefs learning how to make the essentials of the great English breakfast from scratch at a Saturday cookery class run by city gastro pub the Milestone.

We have three hours in which to make sausages, bacon and baked black pudding, what you'd now call artisan foods but which our great-grandparents called cheap larder staples and probably learned to do at their parents' knees.

"It's easy," assures chef James Wallis, who has taken a break from the kitchen to be our Delia for the morning.

The pig's blood is for the black pudding. One enthusiastic chap on the course is disappointed that health and safety regulations means chefs rarely get the fresh stuff, but it's a relief to me. I'd been dreading the prospect of sloshing, Hammer House of Horror stuff.

We'd already prepared our dry-cured bacon; I can't tell you how easy that was. Oh, OK then: take one slab of pork belly, half a bag of salt flakes, some sugar and as many spices as you fancy and rub.

Why did we ever start buying that flaccid wet stuff

from the supermarket? Though I might think differently when it comes to attempting to slice the pork belly after it has cured in my fridge for five days.

And again when it hits the frying pan. I got a bit carried away with the spices (fennel seeds, cayenne pepper, juniper berries and Moroccan blend ras el hanout, which looked appetisingly red). It's not as if you can taste as you go along.

Similar story with the black pudding mix, which thickens as you stir in a pint of ale and a handful of oats. I'd added onion, chives, pepper, garlic and fennel, but was it too little or too much? There was no way I was dipping a teaspoon in.

But James, who had already shown us step by step, is ever on hand with advice on flavours. I think he liked my sausage, a banger of 80 per cent pork mince, the necessary 20 per cent fat plus dates, walnuts, chervil and a glass of port from the bar (I'm calling it the Portly Pig). We had to wrap



Causing a stir: Jo adds beer to black pudding.

each one French-style in caul, a thin, lace-like membrane which surrounds a pig's stomach. Again, the

technique was much easier than I'd expected.

The Milestone, winner of Best British in Gordon Ramsay's Best Restaurant TV series in 2010, believes enthusiastic cooks want to learn professional cooking techniques and the old skills in danger of dying out. Its Cookery School is running 10 courses throughout 2012, teaching everything from knife skills to bread-making, fish and meat preparation and gourmet cuisine.

Half-day courses are £50 and full days are £95 with lunch. It's good value; I also picked up numerous pro chef tips (like how to expertly cut an onion and sharpen kitchen knives properly). And I went home with enough porky produce to make several breakfasts.

Success on a plate: Jo with her special sausages. PICTURES: STUART HASTINGS



MONDAY sees the start of the Chinese New Year and if your interest doesn't stop at sweet and sour and stir-fried rice you may know that it is the Year of the Dragon.

Not just any old fire-breathing monster, either, but a water dragon (the last dragon year was 2000 and he was made of metal) and pretty auspicious if you believe in that sort of thing.

Now not a lot of people know this but Sheffield has its very own dragon. Its body runs along London Road (which just happens to be Sheffield's Chinatown - accept no Rotherham substitute) and up The Moor while its head is on the Matilda Street-Rockingham Gate axis, where fortuitously there are more Chinese restaurants.

I was told this in all seriousness some years ago by a Chinese woman not known for her sense of humour but with an obvious working knowledge of draconology (the study of dragons) and the Sheffield AtoZ.

You're probably guessing where this is leading to: a review of a Chinese restaurant to mark the New Year, somewhere on the 'dragon.' Well, yes and no, unless you reckon that Hui Wei on Glossop Road, the site of the old Turkish baths, is where the flames would shoot if the dragon belched fire.

It won a gong for best oriental restaurant award in the recent Eat Sheffield awards and that seemed as good a reason as any for a visit.

We were last there four years ago when it was owned by Jerry Cheung, who opened up in 2004 as part of his Simply Chinese chain. Shortly after our visit he sold it to brother and sister Tak Liu and Sarah Ng although Jerry's photograph is still out front.

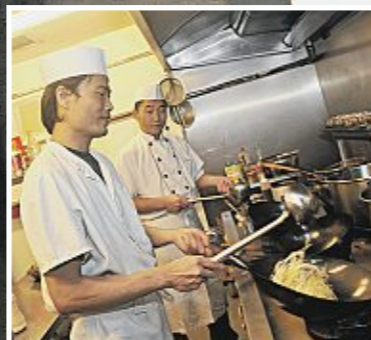
Not too much has changed. The interior is mostly black and nightclubby with ceiling lights which constantly change colour. Even the waitresses' uniforms are black.

Seating is down a central aisle, as well as banquettes along one wall and several cosy circular areas for private parties, occupied by Chinese students. Good news for those who judge a place's authenticity by the Chinese-Western diners ratio and good news for Tak. "We get the more affluent ones," he said later.

Despite the murk the place is cheerful enough, with good food and very friendly waiting staff. On Fridays and Saturdays Sarah's son Kieran plays piano, classic and modern. He started off, aged 14, practising in front of the customers and has now passed Grade 8.

Gloria, the manageress, took our order without a notepad in sight and got it all right. There are set menus from £15.95 to £19.95 but we wanted to eat a la carte and had downloaded it from the website. Previously, the menu had been divided into regions.

## Roar of approval for dark yet tasty Dragon's Den



Hot stuff: Hui Wei co-owner Sarah Ng with a chilli fish pot and, inset, chefs at work in the kitchen.



Nightclubby: The mostly black interior with ceiling lights which constantly change colour.

That's been stopped, although old hands from Jerry's time will recognise some favourites, like Mao's braised belly pork. And it's the same menu for Westerners and Chinese as Tak and Sarah don't hold with separate ones.

"When I go into restaurants with Western friends I can see the staff don't know whether

to give me the English or Chinese," he chuckled. Everybody gets chopsticks unless they ask for cutlery. I began with steamed char siu bau dumplings from the dim sum section (£4.20) because I love the sweetish, fluffy, bread-like texture of the dumplings and the rich pork filling, all of which I got.

Our other starter was golden

deep fried squid (£5.95), generous but mostly crunch, with a sweet-sour dip.

Of course it had to be shredded crispy duck to follow (£8.95 a quarter), really tasty. Sadly, there is no shredding at your table restaurant theatre but you could smell it as it arrived. Part of the attraction of this dish, I think, is having to roll your own.

We didn't bother with drinks (there's a recession on) and made do with jasmine tea (£1.50), happily refilled.

I enjoyed the braised belly pork (£8.20), cut in little cubes which resemble liquorice all-sorts with stripes in different shades of cream and brown, relishing the layers of meat, fat and gelatinous skin. My wife won't touch it but then I'm the man whose family left the room when I brought a pig's trotter back to the gate when on holiday in France.

We also had steamed cod fillet in black bean sauce (£8.95), firm with a salty sauce and unexpected chilli kick, and a lovely little dish of cashews



LAST week, Martin visited the Mill-houses Tavern and commented that it scored over local rivals because of its child-friendly policy. Steve Addy, of the nearby Waggon and Horses pub asked us to point out that his premises is keen to welcome children. He said: "We not only have a specific kids' menu but we also have a kids-eat-free menu for children who don't want a full meal when their parents are eating out here."

PICTURES: STEVE PARKIN

### THE DAWES VERDICT

Food	4	HUI WEI
Atmosphere	3	221 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2GW
Service	4	Tel: 0114 201 3482
Value	4	Open: Mon-Fri 12-2pm and 5-11pm, Sat-Sun 5-11pm.
All scores are out of five		Licensed (house wine £12.95). Credit cards. Vegetarian dishes. Disabled access and toilets. Music levels low (live music at weekends). Takeaways. Street parking.



NEXT WEEK: BULL'S HEAD, FOULOW

with stir-fried vegetables (beansprouts, water chestnuts and Chinese mushrooms), a riot of different textures.

We ate it with egg-fried rice (£2.10), a little too cool and going on clumpy for our tastes.

It's Tak's first restaurant but his family had a takeaway on the Langsett Road for more than 30 years. "I grew up in the

kitchen." He is an architect by profession and keeps an eye on the restaurant at night. "For me, it's like having a party every night," he told us. That's probably why he likes the nightclub atmosphere.

With tea, we paid £46.80, which seemed pretty good value for some tasty food and pleasant service.

### TAKEAWAYTEST

## Taking a real shine to gem of a Chinese



The Crystal West Street, Beighton

NOW I'm into Chinese food but I have to admit that Chinese philosophers have, by and large, passed me by.

That said, I'm pretty sure Confucius did once say "Not all Crystals are precious." And so then to the Crystal, a smart looking takeaway in West Street Beighton.

Would it prove to be a gem - or just an imitation? First impressions are good. The place is clean, Crystal clean, the service fast and friendly.

But hey, this takeaway business is all about the quality of the food. Having eaten there on a previous occasion I had high expectations.

But many a time have I found the quality of food at Chinese takeaways to be inconsistent - at best.

Great on one visit not so good the next. That wasn't the case at the Crystal.

Last time out I ordered a melt-in-the-mouth beef fillet dish. I was disappointed on this occasion that the fillet had all gone, so instead opted for crispy beef in chilli sauce.

This was preceded by a mixed platter appetiser. Seaweed, prawn toast, crispy won ton, mini spring rolls, spare ribs, samosas and sweet and sour sauce.

Hmmm. There was easily enough to feed three and it was finger lickingly good.

The crispy beef was beautifully cooked. Not too dry with a fantastic crunch. And that chilli sauce offered a keen nip on the old tastebuds.

Served with a not too claggy fried rice and a curry sauce to add moisture and a bit of added flavour it went down a treat.

Again the portions were well big enough to serve the three of us.

And because we spent over a tenner there was a bag of prawn crackers chucked in for free.

As we'd already had sufficient the dog had most of them. And she certainly wolfed 'em down.

Nick Ward

### TAKEAWAY FACTS

- Venue: The Crystal, 22 West Street, Beighton, S20 1EP
- Tel: 2489099 or 0789 4499334
- Opening Hours: Open every day except Tuesday from 5pm to 11pm.
- Parking: On street.
- Delivery: Yes. £1 charge within three miles on orders costing a minimum of £6.
- What we ate: Mixed platter £6.50. Crispy shredded beef in chilli sauce £4. Large fried rice £2.40. Curry sauce £1.
- Verdict: A diamond.

FINDIT Go to thestar.co.uk/finidit and have your say on the region's restaurants and takeaways

### TOPTIPPLE

Otra Vida Malbec 2010, Mendoza, Argentina (Asda, £4.48 from £5.98 until March 26)

EVERYONE loves a bargain, especially at this time of year and Argentina is famed for its excellent, affordable wines. That being the case, you won't go far wrong with this more-than-decent red at under a fiver. It's a smooth and velvety malbec with dense black fruits and a dusting of dark chocolate on the lingering finish - enjoyable on its own, or with steak and chips or a lamb chop. Brilliant value at under a fiver.

Martin Smith

SECONDS More food and drink in Weekender: Make sure of The Star on Saturday