

## WEEKEND

# Hearty lunch enjoyed in spotless surroundings

**JAMES SHAW and family play the waiting game for their dessert, but it was worth it**

Whenever I walk into a pub or restaurant, one of the first things I look for is cleanliness.

Of course, plentiful tables and baby chairs are important, but there is nothing more off-putting than grubby seats and a sticky bar. There was nothing like that to worry about when we walked into the Royal George in Shifnal. In fact, I can state right now that I have never, ever, been in such a clean pub.

Such was the standard of cleanliness, that we almost felt guilty for disturbing the tables and rustling the tissues. But the cleaner deserves a real pat on the back – I spent much of my visit looking for grubby marks, but found none.

It was a really great start to our meal, and the food did little to change our collective mood.

The menu has taken a slight step away from the usual pub fare, offering meals such as pork shank in apple and cider sauce, alongside classics such as fish and chips. Indeed, we took at least 20 minutes to choose our main courses.

I eventually went for the steak and ale pie, while Claire plumped for the beef Sunday lunch.

The wait for our main courses wasn't too bad, but as the meal went on, this became something of a bugbear.

My steak and ale pie was a real triumph, with soft, yet solid pastry and chunky pieces of steak in a deeply flavoured sauce. Perhaps the only fault I could find was that there

## FOOD REVIEW

Royal George, Shifnal  
Rating ★★★★★

could have been a few more pieces of meat. It came with the usual accompaniments of chips and vegetables, although they once again received little attention, such was the focus demanded by my pie.

### Centrepiece

Claire has always been a bit of a sucker for a genuinely nice Sunday lunch and her main course did not disappoint. Her plate arrived loaded with the sort of treats that mother usually knocks together with aplomb. Plenty of crispy roast potatoes, Yorkshire puddings and vegetables.

Of course, the real centrepiece of Claire's main course was the beef – thick, plentiful and with very little fat. She was hugely impressed.

Up to this point, our visit had been a real joy and, to be honest, I was on the verge of awarding five stars. Unfortunately, it went a little bit downhill from this point.

The staff on duty had been attentive and made us feel extremely welcome. But it seemed as if someone had thrown a switch. Granted, there were only a few people serv-



The Royal George boasts a varied menu and a welcoming atmosphere

ing and the pub was busy, but it seemed as if we had suddenly been forgotten about.

The wait for our desserts went on, and on, and on... In the end, they took over 30 minutes to arrive.

Bearing in mind Louis had finished his sausage and mash some 20 minutes earlier, our patience had become strained. Nevertheless, we were happy enough with our desserts.

I had the chocolate indulgence sundae, while Claire had the millionaire's shortbread. Both were huge and arrived to a warm welcome.

My dish was loaded with chocolate ice cream, chocolate pieces, chocolate sauce... you get the idea. Overall, it was a dangerously sweet way to end my meal.

Claire's shortbread was a classic version of the recipe – lots of soft shortbread, chocolate and toffee.

At £1.60 per portion, it was certainly fantastic value.

We would have enjoyed our desserts much more, but the wait had taken the shine off our meal.

So would we visit again?

That has to be a yes – the sheer value of our meals was a real bonus and we paid just £25 for two courses, drinks and a main course for Louis.

But with a wait of over 30 minutes for one course, we will check how many staff are on duty first.

Contact:  
Royal George, Shifnal  
Tel: 01952 462807

## MINI GUIDE

### MENU SAMPLE

#### STARTERS

Prawn cocktail (£3.35)  
Breaded mushrooms (£3.10)

#### MAINS

Pork shank in apple and cider and sauce (£6.95)  
Fish and chips (£4.85)

#### DESSERTS

Rhubarb crumble (£2.80)  
Melt in the middle chocolate pudding (£3)

#### ATMOSPHERE

A bit quiet in the dining room, although that soon livened as our meal progressed

#### SERVICE

Very good at first, but by the end of the meal, we felt as if we had been forgotten about

#### DISABLED FACILITIES

All of the pub is on one floor and there are disabled toilets.

## Mirage brings a taste of the Med to market hall



Mezze magic at Shrewsbury's market hall

A woman with a glittering culinary career featuring a spell at one of the most prestigious names in the hospitality and retail industries is now enjoying life bringing the taste of the Mediterranean to Shropshire.

As if working for 15 years at international level and time spent training as a pastry chef at the Le Cordon Bleu in Paris was not enough to whet the appetite, Nadia Zaza also worked for world-famous department store Harrods.

Her passion for culinary delights saw Nadia specialise in cakes and she worked for a time designing wedding and birthday cakes.

But in 2010 she decided it was time for a new venture to make the most of her prowess in the kitchen and love of food.

Together with her family she opened Mirage in Shrewsbury's Market Hall offering Mediterranean cuisine including a large selection of authentic mezze.

"I have had the pleasure to design wedding and birthday cakes both locally and internationally and I was then offered a position at Harrods which widened my knowledge and experience in international affairs," said Nadia.

"But it was in 2010 that I decided, along with my family, to take on a new venture by opening a venue specialising in Mediterranean cuisine. I wanted to offer a wide selection of authentic mezze in an array of colours, all prepared fresh daily from the finest of ingredients sourced locally and internationally.

"Our mezze not only caters for non vegetarians but it's a vegetarian and vegans heaven, and a number of our dishes are also suitable for gluten sufferers. Along with our cuisine we sell all the ingredients and grains used to prepare Mediterranean dishes. We also cater and deliver for any type of venue. I chose Shrewsbury Market Hall as I was born in this lovely town and I wanted to offer the best of this cuisine to the well travelled and affluent people of Shrewsbury. I am so grateful to everyone that has come to Mirage, tried our food and supported me in this new venture."

● Mirage is open Tuesday to Saturdays from 9.30am to 4.30pm. For orders and queries contact 07760537448 or visit [www.miragemezze.com](http://www.miragemezze.com).



Mirage is heaven for vegetarians



The Royal George is situated in High Street, Shifnal

## Time to toast those wine-promoting mothers

On Mother's Day, how about paying tribute to all the fantastic mums in history who have encouraged their talented winemaker sons and daughters to bring us great wine!

Try McWilliam's Mount Pleasant Elizabeth, Hunter Valley Semillon (Best Australian White Wine Trophy, IWC 2010), RRP: £9.99. New, at Tesco and also at Majestic & Sainsbury's.

Elizabeth McWilliam was wife of winemaker J. J. McWilliam and mother of his eight children, many of whom played valuable roles in the family business. So a formidable woman who deserves a mention on Mother's Day.

Current winemaker and Hunter Valley Semillon master Phil Ryan has his mother to thank for finding him his very first job in wine – as a lab assistant at the McWilliam's head office in Sydney, 46 years later. Phil still works for McWilliam's and is Mount Pleasant chief winemaker. The Elizabeth is testament to this talent and expertise – picking up the Best Australian White Wine Trophy at IWC 2010.

Delicious with hot smoked salmon and horseradish or fresh oysters and lemon as a treat for mum on Mother's day. Don't forget to raise a glass to Mrs Ryan and Mrs McWilliam too!

Spoil mum this Mother's Day – with a funkun cocktail perfect for both of you to indulge in while spending the day together.

With eight tasty cocktail mixers to choose from, award-winning funkun is the simple way to make cocktails in the comfort of your own home.

## DRINKS

By Sharon Walters

● For further information about the funkun range visit [www.funkun.co.uk](http://www.funkun.co.uk). Funkun cocktails are available at [www.funkun.co.uk](http://www.funkun.co.uk), Waitrose, Selfridges, Ocado, Harvey Nichols, Majestic Wine, Sainsbury's, Harrods and Asda.

For those whose mums are eco friendly, buy her one of the latest in the Yali range, Yali National reserve Viognier 2010.

It has elegant aromas of flowers and apricots and is a well-balanced and fresh wine – great on its own as an aperitif, it also balances well with Thai food, salsa and shellfish. Or try it with rich creamy cheeses and dishes containing: apricots, lemongrass, coconut milk or chilli.

For every bottle of Yali sold in the UK, a donation is given to leading conservation charity the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust ([www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)). The same scheme is running with Operation Migration in the US and Canada and Bird-Watch Ireland.

In addition Yali is working with local communities and schoolchildren in Chile to conserve the Yali wetland for future generations of plants, animals and people, CO2 emissions on the transportation of this wine are offset via a programme with ClimateCare and it comes in special lightweight bottles.



Funkun cocktail mixers are widely available

Available at Majestic, £7.99 and until May 2 buy two bottles and save £4.

● If you want to celebrate Mother's Day with fizz try a bottle of Freixenet Cava – it tastes great and is good value for money.

Freixenet Cordon Negro (£8.99) and Freixenet Cordon Rosado (£8.99) are available at supermarkets and off-licences. The Negro is lovely as an aperitif to toast mum while the Rosado goes well with chocolate.

Freixenet Elyssia Pinot Noir (£14.99) and Freixenet Elyssia Gran Cuvée (£14.99) are a real treat to toast mum and are available at Waitrose and waitrose.com

## As the clocks go forward the British eccentricities come out of the cold

With the clocks going forward this weekend and Shropshire preparing to welcome the official start of summer, new research reveals the top five traits that make British summers so unique.

The Pimm's Summer Time Report, based upon research of 3,000 adults, revealed British Summer Time (BST) can be characterised by triumph over adversity.

Topping the poll of British summer traits is our rush to change into summer clothes at the first glimpse of sunshine – regardless of the temperature.

### Further findings show:

1) 56 per cent of those polled believe wearing summer clothes at the merest sniff of sunshine and braving the cold to sunbathe through clouds, all in the name of a tan, are a true sign of what makes British summers so great.

2) More than one in four people from Shropshire admit to not even needing sunshine to strip-off – 20 per cent of those polled will be putting on their summer clothes tomorrow as the changing of the clocks in itself makes them feel "sunnier".

3) Another quirky British trait is the determination to have a good time, despite the conditions – a quarter of adults from Shropshire reported they don't mind the discomfort of sitting on wet grass or sitting in the rain to have a picnic.

4) A further 41 per cent also admit to hosting barbecues in the rain!

5) More than a fifth (23 per cent) of people

from Shropshire even admit to wearing sunglasses when it isn't even sunny.

Comedienne and uniquely British, Jenny Éclair commented: "We should rename British Summer Time and make it Better Summer Time because this really captures the mood of the nation in the summer. Despite all that's thrown at us, be it the threat of rain or cold weather, we remain resilient, triumphing against all we're confronted with and under no circumstances allowing such minor details such as hail, wasps or big ants get in the way of fun."

### Transport

Interestingly enough, those surveyed were asked what they would do to make their British summers even better, nearly two thirds (69 per cent) want to ban the existence of wasps in the UK, while just under half (45 per cent) would choose to have more sunshine-filled weekends as the sunniest days are only ever on a weekday. Also making the list was the introduction of air conditioning on all public transport with over 33 per cent of the vote.

Emma Sherwood-Smith, spokesperson for Pimm's, said: "With Pimm's being the quintessential British summer drink, we wanted to mark the official start of British Summer Time by celebrating all that makes our nation's summers so unique."

We want to encourage the Great British public to embrace their inner eccentricities in the name of fun to make this the best summer on record. We are calling on all Brits who want to celebrate British summers, to join the Pimm's Summer Party on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pimms](http://www.facebook.com/pimms).