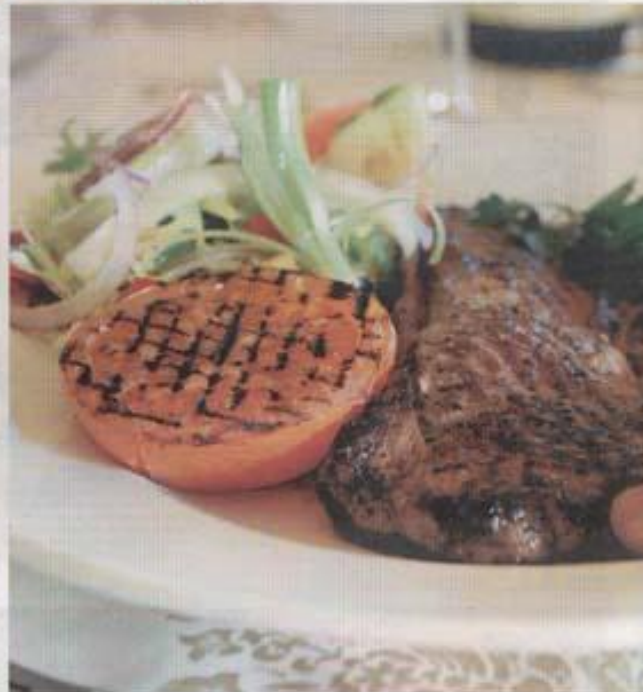
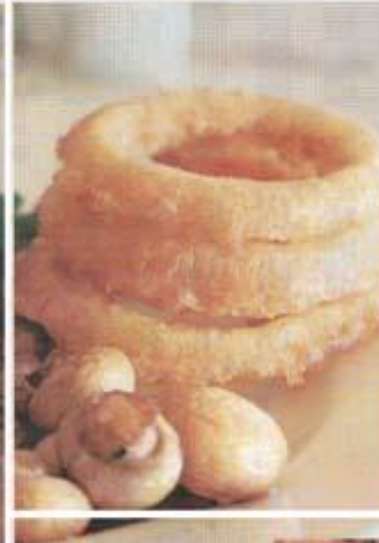


Eating Out



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Heath Hill owner, Jan Spinks. Photographs: DENNYELFRICK

Country cooking at its best

ACOUNTERTOP restaurant in the north of Buchan is ensuring that the area's reputation for hospitality is kept alive and well – without breaking the bank. We visited The Inn at Heath Hill, in Monzie, near Fraserburgh, for Sunday lunch and left suitably impressed. Value for money abounds. The most expensive starter was just £3.95, while the top priced main course – a braised lamb shank – was £13.95. Drinks are obviously more expensive, but at £2.95 for a cabin and £2.95 for a fillet, they, too, are well priced to give many other restaurants a run for their money. Our three-course lunch for three with drinks and coffee at just a tad over £70 was excellent. Mother – she who must be obeyed – had been suitably impressed after calling to book. She said it was by far the most pleasant booking experience she had encountered. Our welcome at the inn – on the road between Monzie and Ardler Ferry – was warm and we were given a choice of eating either in the bar area or conservatory. We chose the latter, although it was a little chilly given the howling gale outside. The antique items that adorn the

conservatory windows provided an interesting pre-lunch discussion as we walked over the menu. Let's not say that, in our lounge, there is only one person suitably qualified to use all tools. That person is not male and the wife of the view that it was high time someone else learned the craft. My father and I were, however, of a different opinion. It was perhaps just as well the waitress appeared to take the lunch order so that the conversation could be steered in a different direction. For me, it was the Ireland provenance of the fish which may well have guided me on the conservatory and bar area were busy. The service team such a young staff was very good. The food was without the complications of added fat and all sorts of unnecessary adornments. What we were served up was wholesome, good and simple. The only mild criticism was that, while the beef and veal proudly boasted on the menu that they came from Aberdeenshire and Mother of Invention, there was no such

geographical indicator for the lamb or the fish. Buchan is home to two of Britain's biggest fishing ports – Peterhead for whitefish and Fraserburgh for prawns. Strange then that the prawns for my starter were branded Ireland on a menu that says, "The Inn uses as many fresh ingredients and as much local produce as possible". If using local produce, it is a good idea for restaurants to actually show it. Other than that, The Inn at Heath Hill was country cooking and country hospitality at its best.

At The Inn at Heath Hill, Muir Road, Monzie, Fraserburgh. Open seven days for lunch and dinner. Phone 01464 541482, or visit www.theinnatheathill.com

QUALITY OF FOOD	5
MENU CHOICE	3
VALUE FOR MONEY	4
LOCATION	4
SERVICE	4
VALUE FOR MONEY	5
TOTAL (OUT OF 30)	25



Country cooking at its best

A COUNTRYSIDE restaurant in the north of Buchan is ensuring that the area's reputation for hospitality is kept alive and well – without breaking the bank.

We visited The Inn at Heath Hill, at Memsie, near Fraserburgh, for Sunday lunch and left suitably impressed.

Value for money abounds. The most expensive starter was just £5.95, while the top-priced main course – a braised lamb shank – was £11.50. Steaks are obviously more expensive, but at £17.95 for a sirloin and £21.95 for a fillet, they, too, are well priced to give many other restaurants a run for their money. Our three-course lunch for three with drinks and coffee at just a tad over £79 was excellent.

Mother – she who must be obeyed – had been suitably impressed after calling to book. She said it was by far the most pleasant booking experience she had encountered. Our welcome at the inn – on the road between Memsie and Ardlaw Farm – was warm and we were given a choice of eating either in the bar area or conservatory. We chose the latter, although it was a little chilly given the howling gale outside. The antique irons that adorn the

conservatory windowsills provoked an interesting pre-lunch discussion as we mulled over the menu. Let's just say that, in our household, there is only one person suitably qualified to use an iron.

That person is not male and she was of the view that it was high time someone else learned the craft. My father and I were, however, of a different opinion. It was perhaps just as well the waitress appeared to take the lunch order so that the conversation could be steered in a different direction.

For me, it was the Iceland prawns bound in Marie-Rose sauce, served with salad leaves and brown bread. Mother had the chicken liver pate with oatcakes and tomato chutney, while father, as ever, opted for the soup of the day, lentil and cumin.

We were all happy with our choices, although the salad leaves that accompanied the prawns became an unnecessary addition with the sirloin steak I ordered as a main. The steak was cooked to perfection, medium rare, but I would have much preferred vegetables with it.

Mother's main was the special of roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes, parsnips and turnip. She asked for just one slice of beef, but ended up with several in what

was a rather large portion.

Strangely, father decided on fish. He was, however, more than happy with the fillet of plaice baked with prawns and double cream, topped with parsley sauce and served with vegetables and potatoes.

Other mains on the menu included what you would expect in a country pub – beef-steak burger, duck breast, chicken curry, scampi, beef-steak lasagne and steak and ale casserole. Despite the exceptionally large main courses, we all had desserts – two home-made rice puddings and an ice cream. The rice came with a portion of jam which may well have piled on the calories, but we were not really caring.

When we arrived at 12.30pm, we were the only folk there. By the time we left, though, both the conservatory and bar area were busy. The service from such a young staff was very good. The food was without the complications of added jus and all sorts of other unnecessary adornments.

What we were served up was wholesome, good and simple. The only mild criticism was that, while the beef and steaks proudly boasted on the menu that they came from Aberdeenshire and Mathers of Inverurie, there was no such

geographical indicator for the lamb or the fish.

Buchan is home to two of Britain's biggest fishing ports – Peterhead for whitefish and Fraserburgh for prawns. Strange then that the prawns for my starter were branded Iceland on a menu that says, "The Inn uses as many fresh ingredients and as much local produce as possible".

If using local produce, it is a good idea for restaurants to actually show it.

Other than that, The Inn at Heath Hill was country cooking and country hospitality at its best.

■ **The Inn at Heath Hill, Muir Road, Memsie, Fraserburgh. Open seven days for lunch and dinner. Phone 01346 541492, or visit www.theinnatheathhill.com**

QUALITY OF FOOD	5
MENU CHOICE	3
SURROUNDINGS	4
LOCATION	4
SERVICE	4
VALUE FOR MONEY	5
TOTAL [OUT OF 30]	25