

# Cornish Guardian

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## Only the finest in Cornwall

By Zoe Bourdeaux

whatsoncornwall@c-dm.co.uk

**N**OW this is one cellar I'd love to see – judging by the vast wine list, it must be a sight to behold.

Hold your breath: said list features 100 wines, 12 forms of bubbly, three dessert wines and six choices of sherry and port.

Broken down even further, that's 42 different white wines (the French section has six regions alone) and 54 reds to choose from (even a couple from Lebanon – a country better known for its troubles than its fine wine).

Prices start from £17.50 a bottle and go to £150 for a Burgundy. The champagne's even pricier, but that's not to say it's unreasonable. I set my wine pricing standards by the Camel Valley Brut (£35), which I've paid more than £40 for elsewhere. Phew.

It's a connoisseur's dream; the downside is I could've been there all night umming and aahing. Not that I'm complaining, partaking in the odd (ahem) glass of vino tinto is one of my favourite pastimes.

Eventually, we settled on a New Zealand sauvignon

blanc, £22.50 a bottle, as we were both in the mood for fish.

Whereas choosing wine took an age, picking our meal took just a few minutes. The menu is the opposite of the wine list, with just four dishes for each course.

We'd already ordered the first two – scallops, followed by sea bass for me; quail then John Dory for him.

But as well as the usual three courses, we had a further three to sample.

There were delicious canapés (parmesan crisp

with olive; taramasalata; chicken liver parfait) and then a pre-starter of velvety butternut veloute, served with a truffle crouton – all before we even reached the starter.

The meal itself was exquisite.

Worth special mentions were the juicy quail, served on a white onion risotto with egg and crisp shallot; and my bass with butternut squash, crab and fennel pollen. Admittedly, fennel pollen sounds like over-hyped marketing talk, but taste-wise it was the star of the plate, the perfect partner to the bass. I couldn't fault it.

By now we were seriously flagging, but we still had the third added-extra to come. The pre-dessert (a new experience for me) was a shot glass of rhubarb and vanilla custard. Palate cleansing, or just a taster? I'm not sure either way, but there were no complaints. It was superb.

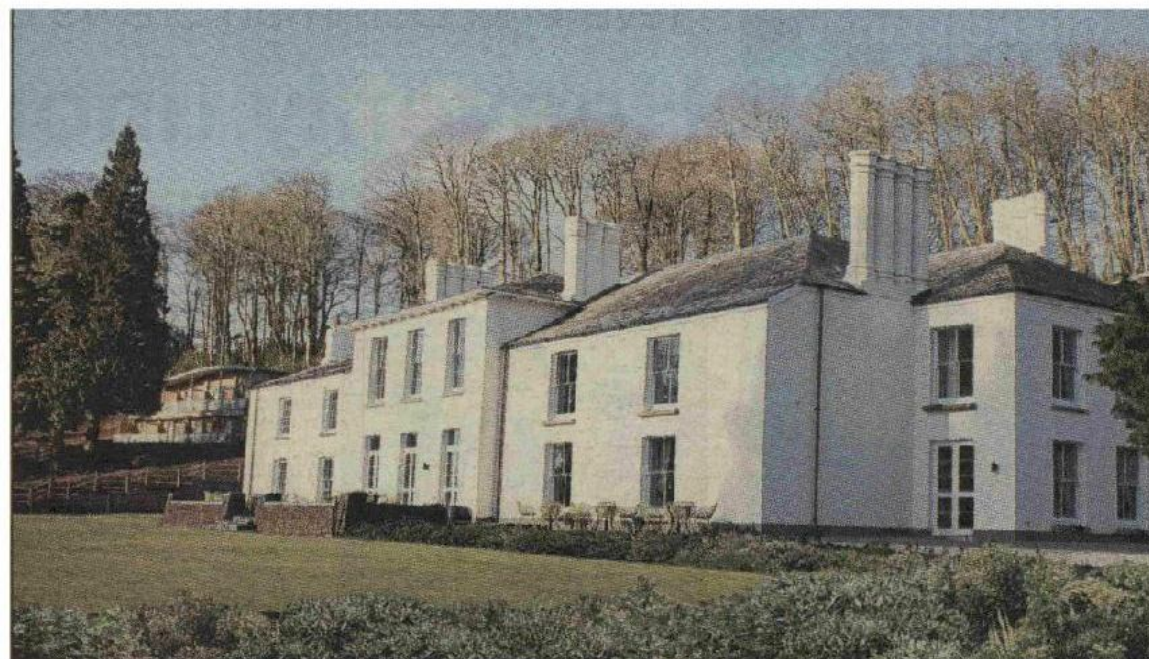
Dessert was chocolate delight, nothing to write home about compared to the masterpieces I'd already tasted; and a towering banana soufflé, which was declared a winner.

These dishes are a work of art, with the extras to boot – think foams and reductions, gold leaf and truffles.

Arboretum is a proper, sophisticated, fine dining restaurant – with the atmosphere to match. At times it felt stuffy, and neither of us really relaxed (although perhaps that says more about us than it does the restaurant).

It's a real dinner jacket type place, with a quiet hush hanging over it. A guffawing belly laugh would have been completely inappropriate.

Eating at the Arboretum is an experience. Just make sure you go with an empty stomach.



The Cornwall Hotel and Spa and, left, head chef Tom Bradbury.