

In Association With Perrier



and white (Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire, €7.50... your designated driver is in denial about the new laws), otherwise €35 for a main course would have been absurd. I had grilled Dover sole on the bone. Crisp and golden, firm yet moist, it was divinely simple. Vanessa's Dalkey lobster thermidor was complicated, as French preparations with brandy and egg yolk and Gruyère are. But you can have it cooked as you wish. Three side dishes were minted new potato, spinach and courgettes Provençale. All delightful, and for once not ruined by butter.

This quantity of food rendered the starters a mistake. But it was lavish rather than obscene. We could have sat there for hours, picking bones and excavating flesh. I advise dispensing with starters and going straight to fresh catches. And ditching the car to try the fine wines (some organic), sherries, aperitifs and so on, which we missed.

We agreed to see puddings, not expecting a tray of dainty reincarnations from the 1960s to appear. Rhubarb crumble, chocolate cake, strawberry sponge, apple strudel, Bailey's cheesecake and strawberries and profiteroles in trifle glasses. Wheeling them in is an old-time way of getting patrons to stuff their faces. It didn't work, I'm afraid.

The bill was less than expected, €140 with service. We felt heart-warmed meeting Mervyn Stewart. He is a true Dublin character and his food is local and fresh. The atmosphere is light: no music or shrieking drunks, just conversations. And Dalkey habitués look surprisingly normal. We loved Guinea Pig. It may sound like a dodgy laboratory experiment, but it's more the aging household pet in the dysfunctional family of Dublin restaurants. Aging, but not ailing.

YES

Philip

■ AGE: 29

■ RESTAURANT
Restaurant Har

■ STYLE OF CO
Modern, high-c
the finest local i

■ FAVOURITE
IN DUBLIN: T
Fitzwilliam.

■ DEATH ROW
Scallops in the s
Porterhouse stea
peppercorn sauc
chocolate fonda