

“To achieve perfection, I strive for 150%, then, if I make a mistake, what I do is still 100%”.

As a philosophy, you can't aspire higher. Michael Riemenschneider achieves this twice a day in his new job as partner and Head Chef of The Abbey Restaurant in Penzance. Ben Tunnicliffe put the restaurant on the map, gaining a Michelin star. Michael's ambitions to go a step further are no less than he deserves.

He joined the Old Coastguard Hotel in Mousehole late summer 07 as Head Chef to Barney Mason's Executive Head Chef and together they raised the standard of traditional food, based on seasonal and local ingredients. When he heard that Ben Tunnicliffe might be leaving, he and the Old Coastguard's owner Bill Treloar approached proprietors Michael and Jean Cox about taking over the lease. With the Cox's seal of approval, they opened to the public within four days of receiving the keys and have thereby brought a new culinary vocabulary to the south west.

Where a normal, domestic cook would use 5-10 ingredients for a dish, and a professional chef perhaps double that, Michael's creativity will treble the number. For the langoustine with pearl barley, jus crustace and asparagus he uses a veal head, cheeks, tongue and brain just to flavour the barley. The result is a controlled deluge of flavours, bombarding tastebuds I didn't know I had. The delicate fish tails sat atop a rigid rectangle of the intense, sweet meat distillation jammily holding the grains of barley together, which told of the hours of reduction necessary, as did the distillation of langoustine shells in the jus. Four delicate asparagus spears squared the dish with a sharp green outline. I gave it 11 out of 10 both visually and for its taste.

The Roe Deer chop was succulent and fell apart, the tiny Olive Brittle that accompanied the meat was crisp and chunky; the John Dory brilliantly matched the little Capelletti which contained the lightest foie gras mousse.

Then to desserts: the taste of the Iced Passion fruit, with whisky and baked chocolate croquette, was so intense, I closed my eyes and was enveloped with a tropical warmth. Michael told me to dip my spoon through the fairy-light chocolate foam, through the curried mango and into the Coconut Panacotta: I did as I was told and the flavours melded perfectly. A tiny little Kilner jar contained the sticky, slightly chewy rye bread pudding, the more intense acid flavours of a sorbet balanced by a sweet and creamy Charlotte all prettily presented on the Citrus Assiette.

And I haven't even mentioned the amuse-bouches – a new and exquisite medley of a tiny, crisp saffron cornet with juicy duck rillettes, a smooth triangle of foie gras mousse somehow speared with a lolly stick, another Bassetts Allsorts' circle of lemony chicken, and another baby cornet filled with fruit mousse.

Not content with creating the food the Gods couldn't refuse, The Abbey's Maitre d' Luke Richardson and Sommelier Romaine Petitcolin are happy to recommend a glass of wine to accompany not just each course, but to suit the tastes of the individual diner. So our table of four not only shared the four desserts, but our education was extended with four very different pudding wines (names to come if required).

Altogether an out of body experience which persuades me that Heaven does exist on Earth. 150% of Michael's gastronomic effort will do me fine!