



RESTAURANT

No 11

Where?

11 Brunswick Street, Edinburgh
(www.11brunswickst.co.uk/brasserie)

As I make my way along the greys of the residential streets where boutique restaurant and hotel No 11 is tucked away, the skies are turning rapidly darker shades of charcoal.

The monochrome colour scheme continues inside the Georgian property, built in 1822 and the work of Edinburgh architect William Playfair. It was formerly home to the Black Watch Club among others, and restored by current owners Hamish and Susan Grant.

I have walked past it many times – and am glad to finally get a glimpse inside, with the dining room slate grey verging on black, with a small number of tables (it seats about 25) covered in white tablecloths and with grey chairs.

We're seated by the open window and I get a better look at the room's features, including a bar at the back, and piano facing a wall dominated by a striking handpainted mural that includes depictions of and quotes from key Enlightenment figures. Among these are Playfair, and David Hume, who tells diners: 'A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence.'

The à la carte menu is surprisingly extensive, including several steak options, but we choose the seasonal menu, at £23.95 for a two-course dinner and three for £29.95. I'm originally going to go for main and dessert, but decide to go for the treble after spotting the starter option of warm Arbroath Smokie, cherry tomato and artichoke tart with rocket and Parmesan.

This being my maiden voyage into Arbroath Smokie waters, I wonder if the flavour will be a very intense start to the meal. But such fears evaporate on arrival of what is a light, filo pastry case where the filling lets the smokiness and richness of the fish shine but not overpower.

Then, to the mains. My dining partner has opted for the two courses, selecting the warm confit of duck, with sticky chilli beetroot, Jersey Royal potatoes and smoked bacon salad with a roast chilli and orange dressing. Silence descends, before noises of approval from the other side of the table, and I pilfer a mouthful of tender duck with crispy skin.



I have chosen the homemade open lasagne of fish and shellfish in a tomato, fennel and samphire broth, and along with my glass of reddish Bordeaux rosé (Domaine du Seuil 2007; £7.85 for a 250ml glass), it brings a flourish of colour that contrasts with the surroundings.

The 'lasagne' element is less evident than I expected and limited to merely one slightly incongruous pasta sheet on top and another underneath, which to my mind makes it far more a fish stew. There's a welcome aniseedy edge to the broth, which includes clams, although a prawn still in its ochre shell may add further colour to the dish's appearance, but the flesh inside has dried out completely. The portion is also so generous that I find it difficult to finish and I later learn that No 11 stresses that it can adapt portion sizes to suit. (This really should be a more widespread concept).

The desserts are excellent, mine the warm chocolate fondant with homemade vanilla ice cream. As I have seen from *MasterChef*, a dish chosen by so many is handled skilfully by few, and this is thankfully an example of the latter. It is the size – but thankfully not the texture – of a hockey puck and my spoon cracks through the slightly crisp exterior to a smooth inside. Our other option is the cranachan, served in a compact

cylinder where pale rich creaminess sits on top of the intense bright red of the raspberry layer.

Service is prompt and efficient – and my request for an iced coffee, which is an option often dismissed outright by many restaurants – is not just taken on board immediately but executed in style.

The combination of the tables not being too close together and the restaurant's residential location also make for a welcome tranquil spot to escape from the noise not too far further afield. Shakespeare's quote about how 'unquiet meals make ill digestions' may not be among the rich wisdom on the walls of No 11, but it seems an apt verdict nonetheless. ■

The Verdict

How much? Dinner for two, excluding drinks

£53.90

Food **8/10**

Ambience **9/10**

Total **17/20**

NEWS BITES

Something to chew over

At last, real wine gums, made from actual wine.

With a choice of merlot, chardonnay, rosé and riesling that promise earthy, floral, botanical and fruity flavours, these sweeties come with tasting notes of velvety textures of ripe plum and black cherry with a soft finish for the merlot.

And as they are alcohol – and gluten, fat, nut, gelatin, and lactose free – the inventor of the original wine gums, teetotal Methodist confectioner Charles Maynard, would still have been able to try one.

And no, we won't be sharing them with the kiddies, they're all ours. Cheers, er chews!

Real Wine Gums, from £7.49, from [The Fowndry](http://www.thefowndry.com) (www.thefowndry.com)

