

The Garrack

The restaurant at the Garrack looks out over the hotel's gardens and across St Ives Bay.

When my husband and I arrived, we were struck by how cosy the place was, from the entrance foyer to the bar and then the restaurant, which was divided into three smaller rooms. A touch-sensitive lamp lighted each table – what a lovely idea, we could have it as bright or as shaded as we wished.

Off-season, the Garrack prunes its menu so that each course has a choice of four items, ensuring that everything is as fresh as can be. Even with this choice, Clive and I had trouble deciding what to eat. It all sounded so delicious!

In the end, Clive chose the pheasant and venison terrine encased in pancetta with cranberry compôte and a homemade cranberry and apricot bloomer. I had the wild mushroom, blue cheese and basil frittata with soft leaves and a red pepper coulis. Clive's terrine was rich and tasty, and as I adore any kind of cheese, my frittata won me over.

We decided to forego the next course of asparagus soup with crème fraîche and fine herbs and went straight to the main. Clive had the pan-roasted fillet of locally sourced beef, which came with a suet and oxtail steamed pudding and tarragon jus. I chose breast of guinea fowl with black pudding, a cassoulet of winter vegetables and blushed tomato pesto. The dishes came with a side order of bok choy and glazed carrots. Clive's beef was beautifully cooked and so tender. My guinea fowl was very tasty and mixing it with such unusual items as black pudding and pesto was inspired.

After two substantial dishes we felt quite full, but couldn't resist a

dessert and Clive had the chestnut and chocolate truffle cake with white chocolate anglaise and chocolate-chip ice cream, while I chose the pear and raspberry frangipane with melba sauce and crème anglaise.

We moved to the lounge for coffee and homemade fudge – another cosy room with huge comfy sofas and a roaring fire. Feeling contented, it would have been easy to nod off, so I thought it was time to search out the chef.

Neil O'Brien has been chef at the Garrack for one-and-a-half years and it would be hard to find someone more enthusiastic or committed. After 30 years in the business (part of which was spent at a restaurant in Oban), Scotsman Neil insists on using only the freshest ingredients.

"I like mixing unusual ingredients together," Neil explains. "But they must be fresh and preferably local: 75% of the ingredients I use are sourced locally." He showed me a page in the menu that listed local suppliers he uses, from Celtic Fish and Game, to Hanson Fine Foods and Camel Valley Cornish Wine.

Stephen Kilby is the second generation of the Kilby family to run the Garrack. Situated at the top of St Ives and along a narrow lane, the hotel and restaurant has relied mainly on the holiday trade in the past: the hotel has 18 individually styled bedrooms, the majority of which have sea views.

"We are now trying to attract customers who want good quality food at an affordable price," says Stephen. "The Garrack is on the outskirts of the town and can get overlooked. People think this is just a hotel: they do not have to stay here although, of course, they can if



they wish. We just want them to enjoy a meal in our relaxed and informal restaurant." □

LESLEY DOUBLE

The Garrack Hotel and Restaurant, St Ives, TR26 3AA

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www.garrack.com

Managers: Michael and Stephen Kilby

Chef: Neil O'Brien

Opening times: Evenings 6.30pm-9pm, Sunday Lunch 12.30pm-1.30pm

Prices: Two courses £22, three courses £25, four courses £28.50

Sample Menu

Starters

Pan-fried Looe day boat scallops
Wok-fried Asian-style beef salad
Cornish fish and shellfish
bouillabaisse with black olive and herb soda bread

Main Courses

Fillet of red mullet, pea puree, vanilla and ginger butter sauce
Butternut squash, Stilton and asparagus risotto
Roast saddle of venison with colcannon mash and red beet pickle

Desserts

Strawberry meringue with clotted cream and strawberry sorbet
Garrack's fresh fruit salad platter
Trio of Cornish cheeses