

EATING OUT

Ee-usk, North Pier, Oban



A FINE CATCH

Ee-usk is a bright, modern, vibrant restaurant with a distinct city feel. Its vivid lime green paintwork, chrome and steel staircase, large glass curtain walls and blond wooden tables are bang on trend.

The mezzanine floor, seemingly suspended in the large open dining room, made me think of some of the modern warehouse conversions I have seen on London's South Bank or even in New York's harbour area.

But you don't have to travel that far to enjoy the metropolitan pizzazz of Ee-usk. No, you just have to head to the somewhat less on trend and distinctly un-city like location of Oban.

Now don't get me wrong, I like Oban. I used to love it when I went there as a child on family holidays. I remember being enthralled by the pipe band playing on the pier and intrigued by the enigmatic McCaig's Folly that looms over the town. The shops catered for all our holiday needs - plastic sandals and fishing nets for exploring the rock pools along the shore on sunny days and comic books and cheap board games to keep us amused when it was raining.

I even remember the food. Pokes of chips,

sticks of rock and ice cream with that almost fluorescent raspberry sauce which you only ever really get in Scotland. The very thought brings back so many memories.

But Oban as a destination for the good-food loving adult I have grown into, I was not so sure. I had heard of a few decent places opening up but they all seemed to have closed again before I got there to try them out. My recent experiences of eating there had left me distinctly underwhelmed.

I was desperately keen to find a great place to eat in Oban so it was a bit surprising that I had managed for so long to have overlooked Ee-usk, situated prominently on the pier head and painted brilliant white with a bright red roof. The scallops were on the small side but meaty and wonderfully fresh.

My partner went for the salmon mousse which was served with a well-dressed salad and slices of deliciously crispy toast. I had a wee taste and confirmed his opinion this was a workman-like mousse with a good balance of flavours between the fish, lemon and seasoning.

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have done had there not been a cruise ship moored directly opposite.

Ee-usk is Gaelic for fish, or at least it is a phonetic spelling of the word so it is no surprise that given its location and name that fish dominates the menu.

I ordered a glass of a New Zealand Riesling which was as florally fragrant, crisp and refreshing as you could have wanted. A great wine to go with fish of any description.

I chose a starter of seared scallops with a hollandaise sauce. They came with a small portion of spicy rice which I must admit sounded a bit out of keeping with the rest of the dish but was in fact a wonderful accompaniment to the perfectly cooked shell-fish.

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EE-USK
NORTH PIER, OBAN.
PHONE 01631 565666.

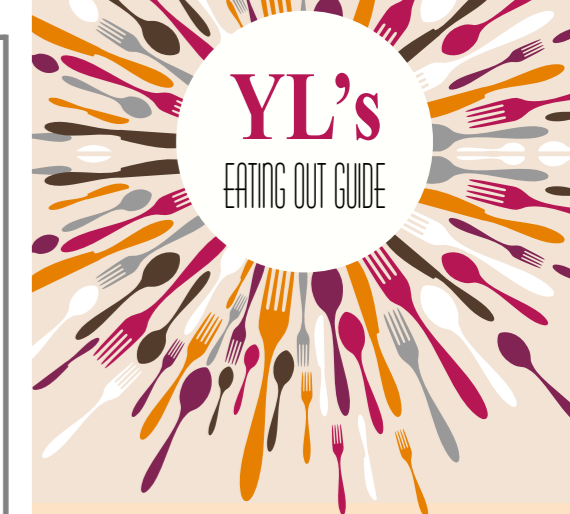
- 1 SCALLOPS ST £9.95
 - 1 SALMON MOUSSE £6.95
 - 1 SEA BASS £17.95
 - 1 HALIBUT £21.95
 - 1 CREME BRULEE £5.60
 - 1 CLOOTIE DUMPLING £5.45
 - 1 DIET COKE £2.25
 - 1 175ml 32 RIESLING £8.90
 - 1 TEA £1.90
 - GRACE LEFT £8.00
- £88.90**

I am a bit of a sucker for any dish that comes with mashed potato so could not look past the sea bass served with creamy leeks and savoury mash. The fish was beautifully cooked and went exceptionally well with both the leeks and the mash. It was real comfort food that was perfect for a cold wet day.

My partner's halibut also came with the creamed leeks but with what were described as Ee-usk chips. I am not sure just what made them Ee-usk chips as I never got to try one, but I was assured they were brilliant.

My partner loves crème brulee so as soon as I saw it on the menu I knew he would be having a portion. I was determined to resist temptation. But then the waiter told me they had clootie dumpling on as a special. Safe to say both desserts were polished off and two satisfied customers were soon on their way.

I still feel a bit embarrassed that it has taken me so long to try out Ee-usk for the first time (YL first discovered it in 2005) but I can assure you it will not take me 15 years to go back for a second time.



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FOOD ★★★★★ ATMOSPHERE ★★★★★ SERVICE ★★★★★