

# Food

## Let's do lunch with...

Craig Dunn



Craig Dunn is the executive chef of The Royal Clarence Hotel in Exeter (pictured). He is competing in TV's *Britain's Best Dish* next Wednesday. So, you're on TV this week...

That's right, making a rabbit dish. It was a lot of fun doing the filming up in London.

**How did you cook the rabbit?** I confited the legs, rolled the rabbit in pancetta and served it with artichokes and wild mushrooms.

**Sounds delicious, did you win?** I'm sworn to secrecy! You'll have to watch the show.

**You've got a strong Scottish accent, were you representing Scotland?** No, mad as it may sound, I was

representing the South West, even though I've only lived here since May. **What brought you to Exeter?** I was head chef for three years for Michael Caines Abode in Glasgow, he offered this job to me and I thought, why not?

**You've travelled a lot for work, you could say, over the years...** I spent a long time working on cruise ships. By the end I was in charge of 76 chefs, cooking evening meals for 1,800 people. It was quite an experience.

**Do you work as hard now?** This job starts at 8am in the morning and I'm here all day until the end of service at 11pm. So yes, it's very full on. But I really enjoy it. **We saw Michael Caines giving the MasterChef contestants a lot of work on TV last week - is that what it is really like?**

It was the dumbed-down version, service is usually much more intense. **And do things ever go wrong?** You have timers and systems to try to avoid mistakes but every so often something will go awry, chefs are only human no matter how good the kitchen. One minute all is calm, the next it really isn't! **What do you make of the food in the South West?** I thought we had great cheese in Scotland but the standard here is

phenomenal. The Westcountry cheeseboard we serve up here at The Royal Clarence is stunning.

**Which cheeses stand out for you?** The Quicques cheddars are fantastic, so is Beenleigh Blue and the Sharpam brie-style cheese from Totnes. It's astonishingly good.

**Have you had a chance to eat out much since you've been here?** Literally not at all. At first I was so busy working and finding somewhere to live. Then just as I got settled, I spent all my spare time filming *Britain's Best Dish*. I'd like to check out some of the restaurants of the other South West contestants in the show, such as Matt Mason of The Jack in the Green. I hear he's very good.

**You also put on a very special dinner this week...**

We celebrated 100 years of *The Michelin Guide* with a tasting menu gala dinner. We did all Michael Caines' classic Michelin dishes, such as crab ravioli with crab bisque, beef fillet with ox cheek and foie gras with quince puree and jelly.

**Sounds stunning...** It was a chance to show what we can do. The Royal Clarence has been a hotel for as long as Michelin has been going, so it was a double



celebration, not to mention all Michael's Michelin star achievements over the years. **Do you enjoy Michelin-style cooking?** It's always good to be the best you can be, but the most important thing is that the customers are happy. It's a very busy kitchen - we don't stop!

See Westcountry chefs compete in Britain's Best Dish every evening next week on ITV1 at 5pm.

# A taste of autumn from an inspirational top young chef

Becky Sheaves visits an up and coming restaurant for some inspiring seasonal recipes



Ben Palmer is only 25 but is already head chef at Barclay House in Looe. Not a bad place to be, considering Barclay House scooped Best South West Restaurant at this year's Taste of the West awards.

Add to that a rave review (now framed and on the wall) from this paper's Food Inspector and it is clear that Ben - and Barclay House - are getting things very right these days. So when it comes to good ideas for some inspirational autumn dishes, it seemed like a good idea to visit the beautiful seaside town of Looe, to see what Ben is up to at the moment.

"I'm really into some rich, rewarding recipes now that the days are getting shorter," he says. "The fish being landed here at Looe is so good and there is great meat to be had locally. For a pud I'm really enjoying rice pudding, made in a completely luxurious fashion with lots of Cornish cream."

The fishing at Looe is rightly renowned the length and breadth of the South West for the top-quality fish landed on the quay there daily.

When I visit, Ben has fresh John Dory from the market that morning, which he is pairing up with wild mushrooms for a beautiful starter or light lunch. "It is such a sweet-tasting fish with a great firm texture," he says. "But this recipe works well with red mullet too."

Many chefs cook the once-neglected pork belly these days, but few prepare it as Ben does, rolled up like a Swiss roll and sliced, which looks stunning on the plate. He's teaming it with quince, which is in season now: "It's like a cross between apple and pear in flavour, with a hint of apricot. So it is perfect for pork," he says.

Finishing the dish off is that most Cornish of delicacies - hog's pudding, a spicy pork sausage with offal and oatmeal. It's much-loved in Devon too, but if you can't find some, any good quality pork sausage would be a close match.

As well as quinces, dark-skinned local plums are ready now, which Ben serves with a sublime rice pudding, with Cornish cream and milk infused with vanilla, to make a dessert that is almost dangerously moreish.

It's an ideal dessert now the days are getting darker as winter approaches.

All in all, these recipes are perfect for an impressive autumn dinner party or just a really special family meal, so why not give them a try?

## Grilled John Dory with Woodland Mushroom Soup

Serves 2-3

3 fillets of John Dory  
2 generous handfuls of mixed wild



Ben Palmer adds wine to his cooking at Barclay House, Looe PICTURES: EMILY WHITFIELD-WICKS

**mushrooms (Ben uses yellow and pink oyster mushrooms, chestnut and shitake mushrooms), save a few to garnish**  
250ml vegetable stock  
1 tbsp creme fraiche  
1 tbsp white truffle oil  
1 good pinch each of fresh tarragon and coriander, chopped, plus a few sprigs of either or both to garnish  
1 tbsp unsalted butter  
olive oil

- Pan fry the mixed wild mushrooms in the butter and a little olive oil. When tender, set a few aside to keep warm and add the stock and creme fraiche to the pan.
- Simmer for 5-10 minutes. Add seasoning to taste and puree until it is smooth. Add the tarragon and coriander to finish and set aside to keep warm.
- Brush the fish with a little olive oil and season, then place under a very hot grill for 3-4 minutes until just cooked through. Place the fish on top of a bowl of the hot soup. Garnish with herbs and a few extra pan fried wild mushrooms.

## Twice Cooked Cornish Pork Belly with Quince and Hogs Pudding

Serves 3-4

1 piece of local pork belly (enough to feed four people)  
1 star anise  
2 quinces, peeled and chopped  
100ml water  
75g caster sugar  
juice of ½ a lemon  
8 slices of hogs pudding  
330ml farmhouse cider (Ben uses cider from Cornish Orchards)  
250ml vegetable stock  
1 handful of chopped mixed root vegetables for roasting  
2 tsp honey  
1 tsp fine spice  
olive oil  
rock salt

- Roll and tie the pork belly with string into



Clockwise from top: Pork belly with Quince and Hogs Pudding; grilled John Dory with Mushroom Soup; Rice Pudding with Plums in Port

- a Swiss roll shape (or ask your butcher to do this). Place the root vegetables in a roasting tin and drizzle over a little olive oil, then put the pork on top.
- Rub the pork skin with rock salt to ensure a crisp finish. Place in the oven for 4-5 hours on a medium to hot heat until tender. Cool and refrigerate overnight. When ready to cook the meal, remove from the fridge and cut into thick slices.
- Place the quince in a pan with the water, sugar, star anise and lemon juice and boil until soft. Puree until smooth and pass through a sieve, cover and keep warm.
- To make the gravy take the roasting pan with the vegetables still in it, gently heat up and add the vegetable stock and cider. Bubble and stir with a wooden spoon, mashing everything together for maximum flavour. Strain the gravy and skim off any excess fat.
- Fry the pork slices in a heavy pan until crisp on both sides, then glaze with honey

- and spice. Cut the hogs pudding into thick slices, 1-2 per person and fry on both sides until golden brown.
- Serve the pork with a spoonful of quince puree, hogs pudding and spoon over the cider gravy. Great with mashed potato, purple sprouting broccoli and a glass of good cider.

## Vanilla Rice Pudding with Sliced Plums in Port

Serves 3-4

300ml whole milk  
100ml double cream  
3tbsp castor sugar  
1 vanilla pod  
100g pudding rice  
A pinch of nutmeg  
1 tsp butter  
4-5 ripe plums

- 1 star anise  
½ a cinnamon stick  
1 clove  
strip orange zest  
50ml port
- Heat the milk, vanilla and cream in a saucepan gradually, to infuse the vanilla. Add the rice and cook slowly, stirring all the time to make sure the bottom doesn't catch and burn.
- After 25-30 minutes the rice should have become soft and fluffy. At this stage, stir in the sugar and butter and place to one side to keep warm.
- Heat a large frying pan until hot, add the sugar, plums, orange zest and spices until they start to caramelize.
- Add the port and reduce until the liquid turns into a sticky syrup.
- Serve a bowl full of rice pudding with a few spoonfuls of the plums and a drizzle of syrup.

# This week

## BUY... local treats

**Vintage cheese truckle (£45/ Godminster Cheese)**

Made in Bruton in March 2010, this special edition cheddar marks cheesemaker Godminster's 10th anniversary. Buy online at [www.godminster.com](http://www.godminster.com)



**Fantastically fruity muesli (£4.79/ Dorset Cereals)** This roasted and toasted muesli tastes delicious and boasts a Great Taste Award gold star, too. Buy online at [www.dorsetcereals.co.uk](http://www.dorsetcereals.co.uk)



**Monthly meat box (£32/Field and Flower)** Premium Somerset pork, lamb and beef straight from the farm in the Gordano valley. Call 0845 6899 007 or visit [www.fieldandflower.co.uk](http://www.fieldandflower.co.uk)

## TRY... foodie events

**Bangers and beer** It's beer and sausage week at Otterton Mill, East Devon, with local sausage tastings and guest beers from Otter and Teignworthy breweries. Monday October 31-Sunday November 6, visit [www.ottertonmill.com](http://www.ottertonmill.com). **Shellfish Cookery** Cook local shellfish at Treloarren, south Cornwall, with New Yard restaurant's chef Ollie Jackson. Tuesday November 1, £30 to include wine and tastings, call 01326 221595 to book.

**Fungi Foray** Find wild mushrooms at

Killerton House near Exeter tomorrow and next Sunday with expert Nigel Pinhorn. From 2-4pm, Sunday October 30 and November 6, adults £7, children £3.50. Booking is essential on 01392 881345 or e-mail [killerton@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:killerton@nationaltrust.org.uk).

**Bake Italian** Learn how to make pannetone, foccacia and ciabatta with a new course run by Vicky's Bread of Helston. Saturday November 5 or 12, £150 including lunch and ingredients, call 01326 572084 to book.

## By The Glass with KIM COULSON



Had I known just how useful a knowledge of chemistry would be to my life right now, I really would have listened more at school. The proper balance of acidity is needed in wine to ensure it is neither too sharp (high levels of acidity) or too flat (levels of acidity too low).

So pH testing is now a big part of my life. This is because Mr C has been hard at work this week pressing the last of our 2011 grapes. And chemistry has been giving us some big smiles - high sugar levels and low acidity means everything is heading the right way for some truly outstanding wine.

As well as scientific methods, though, we also rely on good old-fashioned tasting along the way. So as the delicious juice emerges from the press it is tried by all the Polgoonies, big and small. And the verdict is an overwhelming thumbs up. From Grandma to Georgia, our youngest, everyone loved today's pressing.

It couldn't come at a better time.

We are down to our last few hundred bottles of red wine from 2010 already and they will run out long before the 2011 vintage is ready. It's frustrating when the market is there but you just can't magic up more of your product. Nevertheless, it's still an improvement on the 2009 vintage, when we had run out of all our wines by the middle of the summer holidays. We won't ever produce huge volumes of wine here but as long as what we make is top quality, we will be happy.

It's been quite an exhausting few days, and I admit I went to two parent-teacher meetings in my wellies. My first question? "Are they studying plenty of chemistry?"

Kim Coulson runs Polgoon vineyard, near Penzance, with husband John. See [polgoon.co.uk](http://polgoon.co.uk).

**IN NEXT SATURDAY'S WESTCOUNTRY LIFE... >**

**FOOD:** Rosa Mashiter tells you how to get the most out of the Game Season, and offers a delicious recipe for a venison casserole