

# Rathfinny Tasting Room

## *Vine & Dine*

“It’s like being in Sonoma,” declares Emma as we pass thousands of grape vines glowing golden in the late autumn sun. I can see what she means but with a gun-barrel view of the Cuckmere Valley from the top of the drive, the Rathfinny Wine Estate couldn’t be anywhere but Sussex. The spectacular scenery continues inside the Tasting Room restaurant, with a panoramic glass wall looking out over regimented vines that recede into the lee of the Downs. A kestrel hangs in the breeze. We take it all in whilst enjoying a glass of fizz; Rathfinny Estate Blanc de Blancs 2014 (their first vintage) for David, a glass of their 2015 rosé for Emma, a chalk-filtered South Downs mineral water for me.

The menu is modern British, regularly updated to reflect the best local, seasonal ingredients, and today there are nine dishes. Between us we order them all and tuck into grape and rosemary focaccia, treacle soda bread, and delicious butter, whipped and salted with samphire.

Our starters soon arrive. Mine is a generous portion of al dente tagliatelle with wild mushrooms and shavings of winter truffle, packed with earthy, umami flavours. Emma has chosen Sea Trout tartare which is topped with an icy horseradish granita and served with charred cucumber, caviar and a dressing of shiso tea. And David’s crisp Wagyu calves tongue comes with chicory, garden peas and radish, with a hot onion



broth poured at the table. My main course is a baked munchkin pumpkin; one of those cooking-apple-sized pumpkins that, until now, I’d thought were purely decorative. It’s filled with goat’s cheese and roasted until tender, along with the salsify and beetroot that accompany it. With a dab of chestnut pesto it makes for a tasty winter lunch; the richness of the goat’s cheese balanced by the roasted squash. Emma enjoys a saddle of venison, cooked to pink perfection and served with local naga onion and a miniature hot pot of venison ragu, and David has a fillet of wild Sea Bass with puntarella, haricot beans and mussels, in a

pool of broth. Each dish is styled to perfection, in keeping with everything else about the place.

To follow we have a selection of Sussex cheeses that come with a pleasingly sharp damson jam; a quince terrine with hazelnut, dark chocolate and blackberry, and a sticky stout pudding with poached pears and clotted cream which puts me in mind of Christmas. It’s an enjoyable end to a very enjoyable meal and we’ve been extremely well looked after throughout. But the real showstopper has been that view. We all turn our chairs to face west and sip our coffees as the sun sets over the ridge of the Downs, splashing the clouds with pink. *Lizzie Lower*

**2 courses £30, 3 courses £35. Weds, Thurs, Sun 10am – 5pm. Fri & Sat, 10am – 9pm.**

**[rathfinnyestate.com](http://rathfinnyestate.com) / 01323 870022**