

Eating out <<



Claire Pitcher spent an enjoyable evening at the Bel & The Dragon in Godalming perfecting the art of cocktail making...

The Elderbubble, Bloody Caesar and Mojito – just three of the classic cocktails we made, tried and tasted at the Bel & The Dragon in Godalming recently. The team host a cocktail masterclass practically every Monday, brilliantly shaken and stirred by experienced barman Sonny Rutherford.

You can't really miss the Bel & The Dragon on the corner of Bridge Street, as it's a converted congressional church, dating back to the 1600s. It's been lovingly restored and the interior has plush booths for diners, an open kitchen and comfy bar area (to finish up your cocktails). Upstairs on the mezzanine it's a lot more church-like, with pews and up-close view of the pretty stained glass windows. Our masterclass took place up here; at a long table filled with fresh fruit and some more unusual ingredients, including chillies, coffee beans and ginger. We watched and learnt as Sonny expertly chopped, crushed and stirred the ingredients for the Mojito, finishing with a flourish using a sprig of mint and crushed ice. Then it was our turn, but we were set the challenge of putting a twist on the classic using the spread of fruit (and chillies) in front of us. Whoever made the best one would win a bottle of Champagne. Needless to say, my strawberry, basil and lime concoction didn't win. I need more practice. Next up was the Elderbubble, again demonstrated by cocktail master Sonny. You may be able to guess the ingredients (I'm keeping them under wraps as I don't want to spoil your surprise). After all the joking, banter and taste testing of everyone's attempts, the hour-long class had actually turned into more like two hours – brilliant fun and all for just £10. If you want

to complete the four-week course, it is £30. I can't recommend these classes enough – excellent value and just what you need after a dull Monday at work!

We all know drinking on an empty stomach is not advised, so general manager Wimpie Blatt showed us to a booth for dinner. The Bel and The Dragon prides itself on using local (and seasonal) ingredients wherever it can for their dishes, and that's at all of their six establishments. Everything sounds delicious on the a la carte menu, with starters ranging from poached duck egg and avocado and seared yellowfin tuna to crayfish and potted lobster. We went straight to the main course and on our waitress's recommendation I chose the roasted suckling pig from the rotisserie. Pork can be easily overcooked and tough, but this was tender and delicate in flavour. It had the perfect accompaniment too – spiced apple chutney, crispy crackling and duck fat-roasted potatoes. My husband (who is now much closer to becoming a cocktail master than I), devoured his medium rare, flat iron-cooked steak and 'thrice' cooked chips. A tiramisu was to follow, named after its creator, chef Kaz. Personally, I thought it could have done with some more marsala. As we finished dessert we couldn't help but notice we were the last ones in the restaurant. Unbelievably we had been there for four-and-a-half hours; which just goes to show what an enjoyable Monday evening we had.

Book a table and/or a Cocktail Masterclass on **01483 527 333**. Unfortunately, you can't book online, but take a look at their website at www.belandthedragon-godalming.co.uk