

# Bowled over by fine dining experience



The Parish Oven offer a warm welcome along with fabulous home-cooked food

**JUST days before our annual Christmas party at Thorpe Salvin's Parish Oven, I was a bit of a bah-humbug, ranting about how un-Christmassy I felt.**

2009 at the Guardian has passed in a bit of a blur with many changes and December seems to have landed on us from nowhere.

But any festive doubts were immediately swept away like freshly-fallen snow – thanks to the warm welcome from Carol and Graham and their team.

And I think it's safe to say during our meal we all felt a cosy glow warm enough to roast a big bag of chestnuts with.

The Parish Oven has always delivered top-notch home-made grub in gargantuan proportions for a handful of pounds all year round – and this Christmas was no exception.

Quite how Carol and Graham offered what they did for the princely sum of £13.95 a head for

## THE PARISH OVEN, THORPE SALVIN

the Christmas Fayre lunchtime menu is beyond me, but we were all bowled over by the dining experience.

As a seasoned Parish Oven diner, I was aware of the food marathon ahead, and so plumped for the palate-cleansing and wonderfully-light fan of melon, served with clementine and rum syrup, and topped with citrus sorbet.

My colleagues were a little more eager, with the baked creamy garlic and lemon mushrooms topped with a chive and parmesan crust proving a popular choice.

Watching them scoop up the tantalisingly garlicky sauce with hunks of ciabatta bread was enough to make me feel green with envy, and I started to wish another starter was included in the menu.

The prawn cocktail with tomato and brandy mayonnaise and cream of vegetable soup with a stilton croute also went down well, and it was not long before the main course onslaught began.

There were six mains on offer, from the usual turkey or beef

sirloin dinner with all the trimmings to some more unusual dishes, such as roast apricot and rosemary lamb served with a sweet plum sauce and ale gravy.

My traditionally-minded workmates all commented that you got 'a lot of meat for your money' and that the turkey and beef were tender and succulent, all served with an array of yummy vegetables.

Guardian editor George Robinson went for pan-fried chicken stuffed with garlic mushrooms wrapped in smoky bacon, and said the recurrent glaze was deliciously sweet – perfectly complementing a dish of supreme quality grub.

"I just love this place," he was heard to proclaim as he staggered out into the afternoon air after our mega Christmas feast.

I opted for the vegetarian cauliflower and almond gratin topped with dauphinois potatoes and mozzarella cheese – a nutty and cheesy triumph.

The Parish Oven is famous for its home-made chips, and we were all delighted they made a Christmas appearance, with

oodles of brimming bowls delivered to the length and breadth of the table.

By now our waistslines were starting to bulge, but we weren't going to let that get in the way of dessert. Diners had the choice from a selection of cold desserts such as rum and black cherry roulade or a cheese platter.

I, along with many others, went for the Christmas pudding served with a rum sauce and brandy butter – it was probably one of the best choices I had made all year.

The creamy sauce and melting butter on top made every mouthful a guiltily delicious treat.

Those still surviving rounded things off with tea or coffee served with some chunky home-made mince pies.

Carol and Graham always go that extra mile for their customers and, true to form, they heated up some mulled wine for us to take on the second round of our Christmas do.

Snow was starting to fall as we left the pub – rounding off one of the biggest and best Christmas meal experiences to date.

Visit [www.parishoven.co.uk](http://www.parishoven.co.uk) or call 01909 770685.

Chantal Spittles  
★★★★