

"I don't know why I have done this," says Julian Leefe-Griffiths proprietor of the George & Dragon, Speldhurst, when talking about his new venture the Black Pig Pub & Dining Room, Tunbridge Wells. "I mean it's not like its easy running a pub, especially at the level we try to work at."

Jane Murrell



The Black Pig pub & dining room Pig Heaven!

And that's true, for the George and Dragon has won quite a few awards like two Michelin Bib Gourmands, Alistair Sawdays Organic Gastro Pub of the Year and a Good Food Guide rating. So what made him want to do it again?

"Well Pigs probably," says Julian. "One of my suppliers at The George & Dragon is the affable Earl De la Warr, and when not lounging in ermine at The Buckhurst Estate he can often be found looking after his rather fine herd of Large English Black Pigs. After eating a few of these young porkers I decided that Black Pigs should be a bit more widely known."

When the old Orson Welles pub in the heart of Tunbridge Wells came up for sale it was in a pretty poor state. Not only was it closed

but it had had a fairly chequered past. Julian continues: "The thing is, sometimes a pub needs a name change, it shows that there is going to be a new start."

"But what name? – Pigs. Black Pigs. The Black Pig (No, nothing to do with Captain Pugwash), The Black Pig, Pub & Dining Room - *It's English, It's Local & It's Tasty*."

"And that's sort of what we are about," says Julian. "The menus change with the season but are based on Gastropub classics albeit with a fair bias towards all things porcine."

"We offer a choice of three different types of ham board: firstly a local cured English ham served with homemade Piccalilli; secondly, a Tuscan ham with Focaccia & pickled vegetables; and lastly, Pata Negra Ham (*Spanish Black Foot Pigs*) with Roasted Padron Peppers & Almonds, (*which although imported are so good you can't leave them off!*).

"The whole vibe is to make an informal eating house where you can as easily drop in for a pie and a pint as indulge in three courses and a bottle of claret. The most important thing is that the food should be

rustic and tasty whilst being organic, local and ethical. The eating environment is relaxed, funky and convivial."

"We try to ensure that all of our food suppliers are organic or biodynamic. It's something of a Jamie Oliver/Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall love-in, with a bit a Ray Mears throw in. All the veg is grown in soil in a field (*I know this might sound a bit mad but much of your veg from supermarkets is hydroponically grown in sand, which gives no blemishes, no diseases, and, in my opinion, almost no flavour*).

"The meat is from organic suppliers and non-intensively reared. The beef is from Sussex, chicken from Fairlight farm and the pigs from local sites. We also take pride in knowing all our fish are from sustainable stocks, so when you are tucking into a Crispy Beer Battered Cod, or a bucket of chips & zingy homemade tartare, you can rest easy – again it's local, line caught and tasty."

"The wine list has over 40 wines, with 13 by the glass. Again we chose interesting small producers who offer excellent quality at reasonable cost. We also stock the unbelievably good English sparkling wine Nyetimber, which needs to be tasted to be believed. And if you're a beer drinker, we keep the ever-reliable Sussex cask bitter Harveys Best."

Julian concludes: "To sum it all up what we are trying to do is good, organic food, full of flavour, in a relaxed environment."

"Welcome to Pig Heaven"

