

# 020 CASTLE HOUSE

Castle Street, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 2NW

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[www.castlehouse.co.uk](http://www.castlehouse.co.uk)

Head Chef - Claire Nicholls

Wine Selection - Mike Lowe

**T**ucked away in an elegant quarter of Hereford, a two minute walk from the magnificent Cathedral, Castle House is a boutique townhouse hotel owned by a Herefordshire farming family.

With its elegant Grade II listed Georgian architecture, 24 luxurious suites or bedrooms, and terraced garden leading down to the old Hereford castle moat, Castle House has a very relaxed and informal

atmosphere. The Restaurant and Castle Bistro, among the finest in Herefordshire, are the domain of Claire Nicholls, who sources her ingredients from local farmers and producers, as well as the owner's nearby Ballingham Farm.

Claire has worked at Castle House for more than 11 years and as Head Chef for nearly eight. Passionate about food from an early age, she started cooking at the age of six! Claire trained at Hereford Technical College and the acclaimed Birmingham College of Food. While living in Hong Kong for two years, she discovered a love for Asian food which has influenced her cooking, but Claire is steeped in her roots, sourcing produce from the Marches and, when possible, pedigree Hereford beef and lamb reared by George Watkins on the family's farm.

Claire admits "I am so lucky because Herefordshire has an abundance of fruit and vegetable producers, most of whom I know personally. We are most famous for our apple and pear orchards but there is so much more! Great asparagus, wild game, pedigree Hereford beef, rare breed pork and lamb. Our strawberries, raspberries and blackcurrants rival most other UK counties' soft fruits and local Farmhouse cheeses are outstanding. We may be a small county (sometimes confused with one north of London) but we've got a lot to talk about and be proud of."



Photograph by Simon Milton

Since buying the hotel in 2006, owner David Watkins continues to invest in Castle House's future, ensuring it maintains its reputation for luxury and quality service. In 2008 he introduced the Castle Bar and Bistro, shortly followed by a new garden suite, the refurbishment of the rosetted restaurant and the opening of Number 25, a Georgian townhouse with eight luxury guestrooms, just yards from the hotel. Most recently the very popular garden terrace has been extended for more *al fresco* diners.

Castle House is the perfect base for breaks in Hereford and the Wye Valley. From here you can explore the charming city of Hereford with its world-famous Mappa Mundi and the breathtakingly beautiful countryside beyond.





With such an abundance of fresh, local produce at her fingertips, including the family's Ballingham farm, Claire Nicholls' Castle House menus reflect all that is great about Herefordshire. The award-winning restaurant is elegant not stuffy and the Castle Bar and Bistro is more informal. Afternoon tea is another favourite with locals and guests alike and the 'secret' terraced garden beside the old Hereford Castle moat is an absolute oasis in sunny weather.

# GUINEA FOWL TERRINE, RIESLING JELLY, CARROTS & CUCUMBER

SERVES 6



*Churton Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough 09  
(New Zealand)  
The wine has the pungency of a good  
Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, expressed by a  
lovely minerality on the nose and palate.*



## Ingredients

### Terrine

6 Guinea Fowl legs  
1 litre chicken stock  
1 leaf of gelatine  
5g parsley  
5g chervil  
salt and pepper

### Jelly

100ml Riesling wine  
1 leaf gelatine

### Carrots And Cucumber

2 carrots  
1/2 cucumber  
100ml fresh orange juice  
pinch of salt

## Method

### For The Terrine

Place the Guinea Fowl legs into a casserole dish, and then cover with the chicken stock. Place in an oven at 160°C for approximately one hour or until tender and falling off the bone. Remove from the stock and flake the meat lightly into a bowl. Reserve 100ml of the *liquor*. Place one leaf of gelatine into cold water to soften, when soft place into the cooking *liquor* and dissolve. Chop the herbs and gently mix into the leg meat with salt and pepper to taste.

Line a small terrine mould or *dariole* with clingfilm. Put 2cm of the leg mix into the bottom of the terrine, then spoon about a tablespoon of the stock and gelatine mix onto it, and then repeat until the leg mix is used up. Fold over the edges of clingfilm to cover the terrine then weight it down and leave in the fridge to set for at least two hours.

### For The Jelly

Warm 50ml of the Riesling in a saucepan and soften the gelatine in cold water. When soft add to the wine and dissolve. Remove from the heat and add the remaining 50ml of wine.

Pour into a small container approximately 5cm by 5cm lined with clingfilm and leave in the fridge to set for about two hours.

### For The Garnish

Grate one of the carrots and cook with the orange juice for 15 minutes with a pinch of salt. Then blend till smooth. Peel the other carrot and cucumber to create strips for garnishing later.

### To Serve

Turn out the terrine and slice, gently turn out the Riesling jelly and dice. Garnish with carrots.



# FILLET OF HEREFORD BEEF, ASPARAGUS, BRAISED SHIN, WATERCRESS SPAETZLE, CEPS

SERVES 4

 Esterhazy Pinot Noir, 2010  
(Austria)

*Bit of a revelation to those new to Austrian wine,  
this is a delicious forward mouthful, with all the  
fruit of pinot noir but none of the farmyard.*

## Ingredients

4 x 170g fillet of beef  
16 fresh asparagus spears  
350g braised shin of beef  
100g peas  
300ml beef *jus*  
4 ceps

### Spaetzle

50g watercress  
2 eggs  
100g flour  
salt and pepper

## Method

### For The Beef

Braise the beef shin well in advance, for about three hours in a low oven. Flake the meat and leave to one side. Trim the fillets and tie up into the size you like. Leave in the fridge until required.

### For The Spaetzle

Place the watercress into a blender, leaving a few leaves for garnishing, and blend with the eggs and flour to form a smooth thick batter. Place a saucepan of water on to simmer, then pour the batter into a colander and push through into the water to make small dumplings. Poach for five minutes and place into iced water. Then drain.

### For The Asparagus

Prepare the asparagus and *blanch* in boiling salted water for two minutes then plunge into iced water and drain.

### For The Jus

Reduce the *jus* until it becomes sticky then fold in the shin meat.

Panfry the fillet for four minutes. Add the ceps, turn the fillet over and cook for a further four minutes. Now leave to rest for three minutes.

Warm the spaetzle in a little butter. Reheat the asparagus then add the peas to the shin mix.

### To Serve

Cut the fillet through the centre, place two piles of spaetzle on a heated plate, and place the fillet halves on top. Make three piles of shin and scatter with asparagus and ceps.



# WHITE CHOCOLATE & WASABI ICED PAVÉ, STRAWBERRY LOLLY, STRAWBERRY SOUP

SERVES 4



Margan Botrytis Semillon Hunter Valley, 2008  
(Australia)

Strikingly powerful fruit containing ripe  
aromas of lemon, fig and honey with great  
acidity and freshness.

## Ingredients

### Iced Pavé

14 egg yolks  
250ml cream (semi-whipped)  
70g sugar  
40g white chocolate  
1 tsp wasabi paste

### Strawberry Lolly

125ml strawberry purée (90g strawberries  
blended with 35ml water)  
50g sugar  
2 gelatine leaves  
squeeze of lemon juice  
4 lolly sticks  
4 egg cups

### Strawberry Soup

100ml strawberry purée (100g blended  
strawberries)  
50ml apple juice  
10g sugar

## Method

### For The Iced Pavé

Place the egg yolks into a mixing machine and whisk until light and fluffy. Gently melt the chocolate in a bowl over a pan of simmering water (*bain-marie*). Place the sugar into a saucepan with just enough water to dissolve it. Heat to 120°C, carefully pour onto the yolks whilst whisking and whisk until cool. Fold in the chocolate, wasabi and cream, place into 60mm rings and freeze for about three hours

### For The Strawberry Lolly

Warm 50ml of the strawberry purée with the sugar and lemon juice, soak the gelatine in cold water until soft, remove and dissolve in the strawberry and sugar mix.

Add the rest of the purée and set over iced water. When nearly set, remove from ice, pour into the egg cups up to half way, place a lolly stick in the centre of each then set in fridge for ten minutes. Top up with the rest of the mix and return to the fridge until later.

### For The Soup

Blend the strawberry purée with the apple juice and sugar to make the soup.

### To Serve

Turn out the jellies gently by using the heat from your hands; use this method also for the pavés. Sprinkle a little icing sugar on a plate, sit the pavé on top, lie the jelly down then pour the soup into a shot glass and serve immediately!

