

with Helen Perry

## entrenous



The overwhelming sense of hospitality at Annabelle's never fails to leave me with a sense of being appreciated. It is no use trying to sneak in unnoticed, owner Susan Cho, is quick to spot patrons who have been there more than twice and I must confess, I just cannot keep away from this cosy St Heliers venue.

### ***Eclectic mix at Annabelle's Restaurant***



So when hubby and I popped in recently we soon found ourselves being warmly greeted. And, yes, this genuine welcome was followed by excellent service and a wonderful meal but no more outstanding than that delivered to guests at every other table.

On this occasion I managed to have a word with Susan about new additions to her menu, the success of her monthly wine and food match evenings and the excellence of her chefs.

Head chef Campbell Sprague, who joined the restaurant team eight months ago, has devised a number of new dishes, a quality wine list and successful blackboard specials of which we chose several to make up our own evening meal.

In particular, the scallop and smoked salmon entrée was superb. A delicious, light meal, nicely constructed and presented, it was fresh, flavoursome and well textured. I've been craving it ever since. We also shared a plate of panfried calamari, which came dressed with rocket, a side of tataré sauce and a squeeze of lemon - just as I like it.

Our mains came from the house specialties

- venison with roasted beetroot, kumara mash and a port wine jus for hubby and the lamb rack with basil potatoes and caramelised apples for me. Both were divine and so tender a standard table knife sliced through the meats easily.

This turned out to be an especially happy evening. We could not fault the cuisine and felt it reflected the very high standards set by Campbell (pictured). And it seems trainee chef Jason Peng has benefited from the head chef's tutelage over recent months. Now in his third year of training, Jason won two bronze medals at the recent New Zealand Culinary Fare in Auckland.

With the kitchen at Annabelle's in such good hands it is no surprise that monthly wine and food match evenings have also



been a big hit. The next, on Monday, October 30 features Kim Crawford wines, with a company representative on hand to give his thoughts on the match. The evening is virtually sold out, just two or three spots left, although Susan and Campbell invite enquiries and add that they are currently organising the November event which focuses on Clevedon Coast oysters.

In the meantime, the Annabelles team also offers a comprehensive out-catering service, ideal for people planning Christmas events. Menu options range from substantial finger foods through to buffets offering a wide range of gourmet dishes.

Obviously Annabelle's is serious about catering for the wider needs of patrons and is well set up to provide for dining out or in-homes celebrations - a pleasing service in a world where people are often too busy to do for themselves.