



**The Swan, Salford**  
**01908 281008**  
**[www.swansalford.co.uk](http://www.swansalford.co.uk)**

**I** f there is a chill wind blowing through the bank balance of anyone who isn't smugly hanging onto their job as a hedge fund manager then it was not in evidence at the Swan in Salford on a Saturday evening recently. The place was packed.

Perhaps it was a last hurrah before the new Coalition government bans fun and going out altogether. Or maybe it is because the bookings have escalated as a result of the growing reputation of this stylish country pub.

There are restaurants hereabouts in which the more customers there are, the more frazzled and snappy the staff become. At The Swan, the largely young and energetic crew on duty remained attentive, cheerful and unfazed by the merry throng of diners, all hell-bent on enjoying themselves.

I suppose that if it were an intimate dinner for two that you were after, The Swan is probably not the ideal choice of venue. But although the atmosphere was lively it didn't encroach on our conver-

sation - if anything, it made the experience more relaxing.

The deli board choices are made for a hopelessly indecisive person like me. A bit of this and a bit of that, whether it's fish, meat, fish, cheese, vegetarian or a combination of all of them; it's a pick and mix dream all served on a rustic wooden board with bread and chutney.

Sardines can be fiddly little blighters; fresh and simply cooked they can be superb. They were, though it was a shame that the vines in which they should have been wrapped had all been eaten.

Creamy risotto with crab would have made a terrific light supper dish. As a starter it needs to be tackled by someone with a hearty appetite. He who chose it has such a thing - and loved every forkful of it. The sweet potato, pea and broad bean salad is a little helping of summer in a dish. The regular menu of main courses includes old favourites such as locally sourced sausages and mash, char-grilled steaks and whatever fish is fresh on the day. I tucked into excellent smoked haddock and spinach.

Disappointment that the lamb special had all been snaffled up by those who had dined earlier was forgotten when rack of lamb was produced as a worthy alternative. The meat was pink and

succulent, the ordered side dish of vegetables beautifully cooked. And the salmon fish-cake, so often just a slab of potato hiding no more than a flake or two of indeterminate fish, was light and oh, so tasty.

Pure greed (and the thought of that impending Coalition ban on good times) tempted us to each try a Swan Summer Pud. Reports indicated that the chocolate and mint Bavarois was deliciously rich but not too heavy, the strawberry and balsamic ripple knickerbocker glory - a retro delight and, if you love an eggy combination of vanilla, cream and crisp caramelised sugar, the Crème Brulée was heaven in a ramekin. The cherry pie with ice cream nearly finished me off. But the combination of the warm, golden shortcrust pastry and the fat, ripe cherries meant that leaving it was not an option. A bottle of Ladera Verde Merlot was perfectly good and, at £14.50, perfectly priced. With drinks in the bar before and with tea and coffee to finish, the meal worked out to £33.75 per head. And, Mr. George Osborne, it was worth every penny.

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