

# Locals' number One

STRATFORD – it's just down the road, it's posh, and we go there for the weekends or Bank Holidays.

As for eateries, you probably expect a merry-go-round of tables run by restaurateurs hell-bent on getting bums on seats and cash in tills without caring what's on the plate.

True. This happens. But like all great tourism-dependant places, if you want the good stuff you have to go where the locals go. Would you seriously expect a discerning Stratfordian to sit in some multi-franchise gastro-pub blissfully un-

aware of the age of the scampi and chips under their nose?

Of course not, and that's why you'll find places like the One Elm – on the corner of Birmingham Road and Shakespeare Street – full of locals. And there's a good reason why. In fact, there's a whole menu of reasons.

The Elm – an imposing Victorian

building finely whittled with contemporary décor – simply has one of the finest and most well-balanced menus of any restaurant in the Midlands.

Too often things get ruined by the over-excitement of a chef and manager who try to run when they should be walking. But here, there's something special going on – the fine balance is everywhere.

You only have to study the range of offerings to realise just about any starter would marry up to any main course.

Everything has a superb balance and synergy – even the wine list smacks of attention to detail

with some truly superb bottles that gently ooze class.

All in all, there's a simple message here – you can go to Stratford and chew your way through yesterday's re-heated leftovers, or you can dine out in style with the locals.

I know what I'd rather do.

*Darren Parkin*



■ FINEST: The One Elm in Stratford. MB180108REST\_2