

foodscene around the world



a forthright feast

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT AND A DECADE IS NOT TOO LONG FOR THIS GEM.

Ten years after Harvey Nichols opened the first formal destination-dining restaurant in a British department store (Fifth Floor Restaurant in its Knightsbridge, London store), it has opened the Forth Floor Restaurant, Bar & Brasserie on the fourth floor of its new Edinburgh store. No, there isn't a spelling mistake in the restaurant's name but rather a clever pun highlighting the striking views of the Firth of Forth (the Scottish name for the mouth of the River Forth) that the restaurant offers. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows, and a balcony running the length of the restaurant, also offer superb views of the Edinburgh skyline, dominated by the spectacular Edinburgh Castle, which is particularly magnificent when lit up in the evening.

The wood, glass and steel interior is very modern: white leather bucket seats, white walls, concealed lights forming a striking polka dot pattern on the white ceiling, and blonde wooden floors. Tables are draped with white linen on linen and set with sleek flatware and simple glasses. The "intelligent" lighting (designed to change depending on the amount of natural light entering the restaurant) creates very different effects in the day and at night. As the evening progresses, the room is washed in warm yellow and red light, which can change rather suddenly as passing clouds alter the conditions of the natural light available. This works quite well with the otherwise incongruous upbeat '80s music playing in the background on the evening I dined there. The brasserie and bar is separated from the restaurant by frosted glass panels, allowing brasserie diners to enjoy the views and restaurant diners to catch a glimpse of the store's wide variety of interesting wines and spirits in the adjoining Wine Shop.

Head Chef Stuart Muir earned Knockinaam Lodge, in Scotland's southwest, a Michelin star before going on to stints at The Balmoral in Edinburgh and St Andrew's Old Course Hotel and Golf Resort. He is passionate about the ever-expanding Scottish restaurant scene and the growing use of local produce, and plans to change his menu quarterly to make the most of local, seasonal fare. Though a satisfying broth in its own right, his cream of cauliflower soup is further lifted by the salty tang of raw Loch Fyne oysters (just warmed through by the soup) and a sprinkling of caviar. Scallops, from the cold Atlantic waters off Oban, are a very popular entrée — perfectly caramelised, yet retaining translucence and succulence in their flesh; their sweetness complemented by smoked bacon, and a honey and caper butter. This being an autumn menu, a good range of fresh mushrooms and a sweet red onion compôte, accompanies the venison, served as requested, perfectly rare. A grilled fillet of sea bass arrives looking like a boat on a sea of creamed leeks — the skin crisp, the flesh moist, and the lot topped with a sprinkling of vibrant red capsicum juliennes.

Forth Floor Restaurant is one of those rare venues where the desserts actually live up to the rest of the menu. A perfect tarte tatin is a rare





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thing; here it is a disc of deliciously crisp, buttery pastry topped with a perfect spiral of golden, translucent apple that are like pieces of amber, served with a Calvados sauce, and the plate dotted with blueberries and red currants. Other classics include a vanilla crème brûlée with a thick burnt caramel topping and flecks of vanilla seeds, and a crumbly, rich pear and almond tart. The selection of cheeses is equally tempting, and showcases Scotland's long established yet only-recently-recognised cheese making industry. Sample a

cow's milk blue from nearby Lanarkshire, a hard ewe's milk cheese and a soft goat's milk cheese from the Highlands, accompanied by a piece of waxy honeycomb and fresh Scottish oatcakes.

The fourth floor of the store is also home to a large food market selling fresh produce and groceries with a strong emphasis on locally sourced products as well as international delicacies. **WD**

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