

## Blue is the colour

Wednesday, June 17, 2009, 10:21

TELLING a chef his mussels were superior to a Michelin starred rival is a pretty big compliment, writes Zoe Bourdeaux.

But it had to be done. The huge, firm, juicy mussels at the Blue Tomato were noticeably better than those we'd tried recently down the road at the St Kew Inn, home of Paul Ripley.

(I'm talking mussels of the mollusc kind, not the abs and pecs sort. On those muscles, I couldn't comment.)

I'm not exaggerating when I say these mussels were enormous – at least double the size of what you'd normally find and losing nothing in taste. On top of that, they're from just five miles away at Porthilly. Talk about ticking all the boxes.

The fact I've devoted the opening lines of this review to mussels proves just how special they are – because by now I really should have mentioned the restaurant's view.

Unlike most Port Isaac establishments which are down towards the harbour, Blue Tomato's view hugs the cliffs right up to Tintagel.

It really has to be seen to be believed. And that's coming from a Cornish girl, accustomed to dramatic skies and sweeping vistas.

I'd go as far as to say I can't think of a restaurant view in the north of the county – or possibly anywhere in Cornwall – that beats it. (Cue swathe of e-mails voting otherwise).

At this point in the article, I'm debating whether I need to write any more. Best mussels around, best views around. What more do you need to know?

Blue Tomato, which opened just nine weeks ago, is the younger sibling to the successful Blue Tomato Cafe at upmarket Rock.

It's got a relaxed, continental feel and head chef Tim Appleby likes to be experimental with the food, which makes it difficult to label.

Let's go back to the mussels (again). Take the core ingredient, add rice, sultanas, coriander and stuff it back into the shell. How do you categorise that? The best I can say is the menu's got a strong Mediterranean/North African/Lebanese influence.

As well as the mussels, we tried a near-perfect Tom Kaa (Thai coconut seafood soup) a crab terrine and asparagus bruschetta. Local of course.

I can vouch for one of the most popular meals, crab linguine with lemon, chilli and parsley, which was divine, as I'm told, was the sirloin steak.

We weren't going to cram in dessert, but our unflappable waiter Timmy told us we'd be missing out if we didn't try the "epic" sticky toffee pudding. So, of course, we had to give it a go. Epic it certainly was.

If I had to make one criticism of the Blue Tomato, it would be price.

It ain't cheap (crab linguine £17) and this ain't Rock.

The small but perfectly formed wine list was the same, starting at £15 a bottle. We shared a delicious New Zealand sauvignon blanc which came in at £26.

Don't let price put you off, it's just I really don't want this place to be saved for special occasions.

Just as we were about to leave, chef Tim brought out some smoked mussels for us to try. A new one on me, but they were something else. What was this man doing to me?

With a laid-back vibe and to-die-for views (not to mention those mussels), the Blue Tomato has just become my new favourite eatery.

