

Basement is a real bargain

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DON'T you just love it when you're nicely surprised? The Basement Cafe in Padstow is one of those places I've walked past dozens of times, but never really noticed.

I won't be making that mistake again.

This cute little bistro with its open kitchen and ridiculously good deals is a real gem of a find. But don't just take my word for it.

One couple drove 40 miles two nights in a row to eat there, leaving a message on a customer feedback form saying they were so impressed with the standard of food presentation, service and price.

Owner David Flide, 31, a Padstow boy born and bred, was thrust into the business by his dad seven-and-a-half years ago.

It was David's birthday, and he was travelling in New Zealand when he got a phone call from his eager dad saying the lease was up on a little cafe in Padstow.

"I said 'no thanks'," remembers David. "But when I came back a few months later the lease was signed and it was ready to go.

"For the first couple of years we tried out different ideas and various menus. Every year we put back any profit we made and gradually, it's become what it is today."

Menus are a mix of classic French, modern British, Indian, Chinese – you name it, and David and chef Matt Sheldon have probably done it.

One thing they both agree on is that fresh, local produce is a must. "The quay is only 20 yards away, so we can't exactly get away from it," said David.

Inside, it's only got space for 22 people, making it a perfectly cosy, relaxed retreat on a blustery autumn night.

We started with grilled tiger prawns, garlic butter and mixed leaves and a potted ham hock with piccalilli and toast. Both lovely, but nothing out of the ordinary.

It was the next two courses where this restaurant showed its true colours.

We had a monkfish pathia, served with rice and naan bread, which on paper, just doesn't work – but it was sublime. It was packed with fresh fish, and the sauce didn't overwhelm its delicate flavour.

Our second dish was a Cornish steak and mushroom pie with creamed potato, which was full of tender steak and without a doubt the best pie we'd ever tasted.

On to dessert, and The Basement delivered again.

We went for a sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and clotted cream and a treacle tart with fresh raspberries, both of which were second to none.

Let's not forget, all this for the bargain price of £15-a-head.

The wine list is small – only five whites and five reds – but it's well chosen, and reasonably priced at between £13 and £22 a bottle.

It also had tips for food and wine matching, which was a thoughtful touch.

Cornwall's food capital could have been a tough town to crack, but The Basement has found a niche market between the pubs and restaurants.

Best of all, I'm pleased to be giving credit to a hard working local lad for making it such an obvious success.



David Flide and his partner Emma-Kate Morey in The Basement's undercover outside harbourside area. Picture: Tim Neale 0910id04605basement

