



Above:  
The Janssen  
family

“Head chef Marcus Janssen’s menu – inspired by son père Victor – left us spoilt for choice from starters to desserts: we could have eaten anything and everything”



instant hit in Durban. ‘No wonder,’ said Mrs K, licking her lips. My crab mousse was equally delightful, rich and creamy and enveloped in top-notch smoked salmon, topped with avocado purée, which I spread on fingers of crisp focaccia.

The main courses like halibut in vermouth, tournedos of Alan Jackson’s Alderley Edge Aberdeen Angus and roasted breast of guinea fowl presented more difficult choices. But I’d read in *Cheshire Life*’s ‘meet the chef’ feature that if Marco Pierre White walked in, Marcus Janssen would serve him. medallion of Scottish venison on Maris Piper rosti with seared foie gras, blackberry and thyme jus. And there it was on the menu for £21.95; all I can say is that I reckon MPW would have enjoyed it as much as I did.

There was an admirable confidence about the cooking; every single component of the dish – including the sprig of fresh redcurrants – was relevant

and presentation was exceptional. Blondie opted for herb-crust rack of Highland lamb with potato gratin, braised baby fennel, confit lamb wonton, minted pea purée and rosemary and redcurrant jus (£19.50); first class ingredients, expertly combined, cooked and presented. A bottle of 2008 Rémi Jerome Merlot from the Languedoc (£14.95) from a well-chosen, moderately priced list on which South African whites offer particular value, proved an admirable accompaniment.

We rounded off in style with a superb valrhona chocolate fondant, berry compote and white chocolate cappuccino for her (£6.25) and an equally delicious Cox’s apple tarte tatin with vanilla pod ice cream and saffron honey for him. ■

La Popote Restaurant, Church Farm, Manchester Road, Marton, Cheshire SK11 9HF. Tel: 01260 224344. [www.la-petite-ferme.co.uk](http://www.la-petite-ferme.co.uk)

## Meal in a minute

Digest this mini-review  
in 60 seconds

**The Cholmondeley Arms,**  
Wrenbury Road, Malpas,  
Cheshire SY14 8HN  
01829 720300  
[www.cholmondeleyarms.co.uk](http://www.cholmondeleyarms.co.uk)



**What’s on the menu?** Celebrity chef Clarissa Dickson Wright’s favourite Cheshire pub, set in the county’s deep south next to the grounds of historic Cholmondeley Castle, has been reaping awards for its use of regional produce since opening in 1988. From starters like grilled Kidderton Ash goats’ cheese with spicy plum chutney (£6.50) to mains such as Cholmondeley steak and kidney pie (£8.95) and grilled fillet of hake with butter and lemon (£12.95), the fare is appetising, local, comforting and skilfully prepared. My opening seared pigeon breast with beetroot, chilli and lentils (£6.25) had lovely depth of flavour and my wife’s hot baked prawns with sour cream and garlic (£5.95) looked and tasted a treat. Both our mains – Anglesey black bream with samphire and shrimp butter (£12.75) and fillet of wild sea bass with parsnip mash and velouté sauce (£14.95) – made the best use of top quality fish. Syrup tart (£4.75) was a tour de force. Peach-ladri Australian Coldridge Estate Chardonnay (£12.95), chosen from a moderately priced list proved a worthy partner. The selection of cask conditioned real ales is also a source of pride.

**Décor** The Cholmondeley Arms is still recognisable as the village school it was until 1982. High ceilings and huge windows give a light, airy feel and the fact that if two items of furniture match, it’s probably by accident, adds to the charm provided by prints of local scenes and bric-a-brac.

**Ambience** Relaxed and unstuffy despite lofty accolades like ‘one of the country’s truly great pubs of the millennium’, Miss Dickson Wright was signing copies of her new book over a spot of lunch when we visited.

**Service** Completely informal from a seasoned retainer – and we didn’t want for anything.

**Cost** Our excellent lunchtime spread with those top-end fish dishes totalled a few pence over £60 including the wine. Good value for the quality on offer.

Stuart Royle