



Perrotts garden bistro

Southern Comfort

Mairead Robinson heads south to sample the gourmet delights at the luxurious Hayfield Manor Hotel in Cork City.



I have always loved Cork - both the city and county - and I have to admit that they really have the edge when it comes to great Irish food. From the renowned English Market - where Queen Elizabeth enjoyed the highlight of her recent Irish trip - to the artisan food producers of West Cork - Cork really does shine when it comes to great food. We decided to find somewhere in Cork where we could enjoy a lovely dinner in special surroundings, and first of all we thought of Cork's premier 5 star hotel, Hayfield Manor.

It opened in 1996 by Joe and Margaret Scally who have generations of experience in traditional hotel keeping and they have personally overseen the design and décor of this very stylish hotel. This is the hotel that brought elegance and luxury to Cork well before the Celtic Tiger came to town with all the new developments in its path. We thought we would pay Hayfield Manor a visit to see how it was fairing now, and what the dinner options were.

We were not disappointed. There are two dining rooms at Hayfield Manor, Orchids is the fine dining option with a la carte and table d'hôte menus, but it was not open on the night we visited.



Orchids restaurant

Instead we ate in Perrotts Garden Bistro which has an internationally influenced menu with daily specials.

We checked out the cocktail menu in the lounge for an aperitif while we studied what was on offer and made our choices. By the time we were seated overlooking the manicured gardens, the decisions were made. From starters including chowder; crab; caesar salad; coconut pancakes and butternut squash salad and smoked salmon, we decided to share the Hayfield Manor starter plate for two - which contained a mini portion of the main starters and a shot of the soup of the day. This was an excellent choice and we cleared the platter with the butternut squash salad with feta, pine nuts and a lovely sweet dressing proving a real hit. On to the main event, and here our choices contained quite a few classics with recommended wines by the glass to accompany each course

respectively. We had already spoken to the French sommelier, Sandra, who discussed with us which wine would work best for us. We opted for a Malbec from Argentina which Sandra had recently added to her list, and it was a delicious foil to our



The attractive exterior of Hayfield Manor



meat choices. I went for the chef's recommendation of the week, which was rump of Kildare lamb with roasted vegetables and an apple and mint relish. Our other main was fillet of beef with tempura of tiger prawns on a roast garlic mash. Nessa, who loves fillet of beef, deemed this one to be one of the best she has enjoyed recently, and was cooked exactly as ordered. Meanwhile, I loved the lamb, which was pink and succulent, just as it should be. Other main courses included rib eye of Irish beef; chicken jalfrezi; grilled fillet of lemon sole; pan seared sea bass; open smoked chicken burger; 8 oz beef burger and fish with whunky chips. So there really is plenty of choice here to suit all palates and tastes.

Desserts of a cheese plate and a blackberry and apple crumble completed our dinner. I did notice that suppliers are listed on the menu, which is important as I always like to know the provenance of the food I am eating. I also liked that the menu was so varied and while not quite the fine dining option, it certainly provided a good gourmet experience. Service was excellent, both waiter and sommelier were attentive and

knowledgeable while not at all intrusive.

I can see why Hayfield Manor continues to be one of Cork's most popular hotels. It is almost in a little world of its own tucked away in a secluded walled garden beside UCC just ten minutes walk from the heart of the city. Business conferences and family occasions, private parties and friendly get-togethers all enjoy the special ambiance of Hayfield Manor. Sunday Lunch is a real treat in Orchids Restaurant with four courses of traditional fare costing just €32 and is available every Sunday. Perrotts Garden Bistro also offers dinner from €49 and there are regular special offers and packages available. While the food is key in enjoying a good meal out, the ambiance is very important to ensure the experience is really special. Hayfield Manor ticked all the boxes for us.

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