

# Food & drink

Tempting treats for eating out or staying in

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IT WAS one of those days when everything that could go wrong did just that. The noon arrival in Oban was delayed by an hour thanks to unannounced roadworks on the A85 between Tyndrum and Dalmally.

I suppose we should be thankful that the Scottish Executive has, after several years, finally got to grips with the potholes that have dogged the road at Glen Lochy. Then again, there's simply no excuse for not having up signs warning of roadworks ahead, in much the same way that the bridge replacement work at Glencoe was announced at Tyndrum.

Now that I've got that off my chest, I can also tell you that the evening meeting I had to attend started an hour late and finished just before 8pm. That meant a quick dash back to the hotel before meeting friends for drinks.

At 8.30pm, many eateries in other towns across Scotland would be shut. Thankfully, in Oban, they remain open.

We had intended returning to the wonderful Ee-Usk on the pier, but as we walked along George Street, the very trendy Coast shone out like a beacon, with candles in its windows. Sandwiched between two of Oban's fish-and-chip shops, this restaurant, run by Richard and Nicola Fowler, is housed in a former bank.

To Coast's credit, you can find out all that it serves on the menu by the door.

Our taste buds suitably tantalised, we entered and found an elegantly designed eatery where the staff were particularly pleasant. They apologised countless times for our table beside the radiator, but what they didn't know was that we had been exposed to the elements for an afternoon and the heat was particularly welcome.

## An Oban treasure



The three of us had each decided on something different to test the chef, and none of us was disappointed.

My whole grilled Loch Linnhe langoustines with salad leaves, garlic and parsley butter were outstanding. This doubles as both a starter (£7.50) and a main course (£14.95).

The real treat was in the choice of the young lady. Her hot and cold smoked salmon was unquestionably a rare find. Presentation here was superb, with the cold salmon served as a pate in a small pot along with thinly sliced smoked salmon. I could have sworn the cold salmon was from the Loch Awe Smokehouse, but

will no doubt hear if I'm wrong.

My other dining companion had the west coast crab salad, a delightful combination of crab with Parmesan tuile, tomato and sweet pepper dressing.

Coast excelled in the main courses, too. I chose the fillet of Scottish pork wrapped in Parma ham with a Stornoway black pudding and date stuffing, Arran mustard mash and wild mushroom and red wine jus (£14.95).

The pork was cooked a treat and well complemented by the pudding from the world's best purveyor of black pudding, Charlie "Barley" MacLeod. The

Arran mustard mash was the perfect combination, with the mustard adding that extra zing to the tatties.

Coast excelled with the pan-fried monkfish served with green beans, spiced cauliflower, potatoes and a vermouth sauce (£15.25). The monkfish was done to perfection, delightfully moist. There was also an artist at work in the kitchen as the cauliflower was not served in chunks as is normal, but cut into the tiny florets.

The sirloin steak (£16.95) was full of flavour and done, just as asked, at medium rare. Not a chip in sight, either. We shouldn't really have had desserts, but did, and all cost



£4.95. I had the cheese (Dunsyre Blue and Isle of Mull) and biscuits, while the others had a rhubarb tart with home-made ginger ice cream and the chocolate and pistachio mousse with home-made cherry ice cream. There was a trio of voices saying well done with the ginger ice cream. Wow would be the only word that does it justice.

We washed dinner down with a bottle of Baron de Le Stac Reserve, a 2002 Medoc, at £17 – wonderfully crisp and fruity. With a bottle of water and coffee and tea, the bill came to a respectable £104.15 for three. Coast is, like Ee-Usk, a treasure for Oban, especially when the town these days seems to be filled with bus-tour parties who are not exactly noted for fine dining.

Coast acts the part, with a menu to cater for every taste,

excellent service and some real starch in the napkins.

● **Coast, 104 George Street, Oban. Telephone 01631 569900 or visit [www.coastoban.com](http://www.coastoban.com). Open Monday to Saturday, noon to 2pm and 5.30pm to 10pm. Sundays 12.30pm-2pm and 5.30pm-9.30pm.**

Quality of Food 5  
Menu Choice 4  
Surroundings 4  
Location 4  
Service 5  
Value for Money 5

SCORE (OUT OF 30)