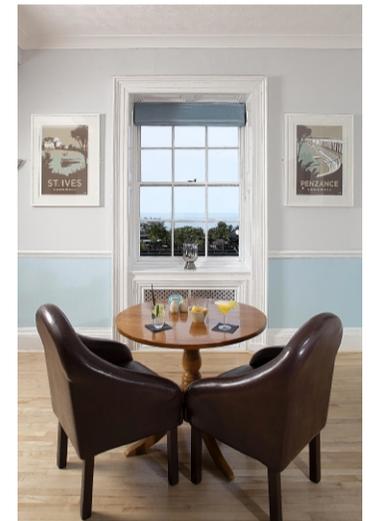




What's
Food & drink



● Lucia's pan-fried sea bass fillet served with a smoked haddock and crab risotto.

Treated like a princess at the Castle

Not a horse-drawn carriage in sight at Tregenna but there is food fit for a king

TREGENNA Castle: A beautiful 18th century hotel harbouring 72 acres of secret gardens and woodlands, overlooking the sublime Cornish coastline and beautiful bay of St Ives.

It was my first time dining at the magnificent mansion and as I travelled along the windy path which leads to the grand entrance – once the home of Samuel Stephens in 1774 – it was dark outside and the shadows of the fortress fell beside the window of my chariot on the regal route to the castle.

Well, that's my dream. But in reality there's no horse-drawn carriage or floating fairytale attire and, instead, my boyfriend is driving me in his old, rusty (he would argue, trusty) silver Ford Transit Connect. Perhaps not quite the princess voyage I had envisioned but dining at the castle, I definitely received the princess treatment.

If you're looking for a lovely meal in St Ives, Tregenna may not be your immediate thought. Home to 70 self-catered properties, 80 bedrooms, an 18-hole Academy golf course, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, an on-site fitness suite and beauty rooms to relax, the castle is the perfect setting for a vacation.

However, locals may be missing a trick because subtly secluded inside the St Ives kingdom is the brasserie, open all-year-round and not just to the travelling types.

Located at the heart of the castle, the brasserie, led by executive chef Ross Cook, is open from 10am each day with an à la carte menu from noon until 9pm. Forget fine dining with miniature posh portions or a gastro pub trying to be something it's not, Tregenna is cooking honest, hearty, home-cooked comforts that don't shy away from large portions packed with plenty of flavour.

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Looking after us for the evening was senior sous chef Matt Green and restaurant manager Laura whose excellent service and friendly chit-chat in between meals immediately made us feel welcome.

To start, I highly recommend the Tregenna Scotch egg (£5.75). The peppery sausage meat covered in a crispy breadcrumb coating and oozing with a runny yellow yoke on a fiery mustard cream dressing is utterly delicious and truly unforgettable. Great value for money, the dish is enough for two if you're only looking for something light to start, compared to the three small scallops with goat cheese, pesto and spicy chorizo (£7.95). Wonderful in flavour but a little on the small side for the boyfriend whose egg envy encouraged the gentleman next to me to make a joke he'd made the wrong choice. It's okay, I shared the Scotch egg and everything was forgotten when his surf and turf arrived.

This dish is all about the meat so the mountain of skinny fries and house salad which were fighting for room on the plate were never going to compete with the rare 8oz British beef fillet steak (£24.95). Melting in the mouth, the juicy steak topped with king prawns in garlic (£4.50) was cooked just as requested and the side of chunky mushroom sauce (£1.95) complemented the meat beautifully.

For my main, I'd chosen the pan-fried sea bass fillet served with a smoked

haddock and crab risotto (£19.50) from the specials menu.

The creamy, vibrant, yellow rice was al dente, full of body and packed with flavour thanks to the pieces of smoked fish. And as if that wasn't generous enough, the fillet of sea bass – delicately sat on top – made for a light lemony accompaniment.

More than we really needed to eat, portion sizes are plentiful at Tregenna but that didn't prevent us delighting in a third course. That's when the real show-stopper arrived.

As I delved into the banoffee brûlée (£5.95), I can honestly say it was one of the best desserts I have ever tasted. Silky-smooth banana-flavoured custard nesting on a pool of rich toffee sauce, complete with a crisp caramel coating which cracked like glass. There were so many elements of flavour and surprise, from the pieces of banana hidden in between mouthfuls of milk chocolate buttons, to the tempting chocolate chip cookie sat innocently on the side of my plate, waiting to be dipped, dunked or devoured. I was in food heaven.

When you eat at Tregenna, you'll learn that it really is all about the flavours.

The restaurant isn't excessively extravagant – its décor is quite simple with its leather chairs and wall art which pays homage to St Ives – and you're limited for views of the bay depending on where you're sat but once you lock eyes on the menu, you'll find all of your favourite foods from fish pie to beef bourguignon, cooked to a refined restaurant standard.

What could be better than dining on home-cooked comforts inside a beautiful Cornish kingdom....

To book a table call 01736 795254 or see www.tregenna-castle.co.uk

