



TOM DOORLEY

Eats and drinks

tom.doorley@dailymail.ie

Cork may be our second city, but it's got L'Atitude

L'ATITUDE 51

1 Union Quay, Cork
Phone: 021 239 0219 www.latitude51.ie

I'LL probably get into trouble for repeating this, but what the hell? I'm used to that. Once upon a time, and a long time ago it was, a friend of mine pitched a rather ambitious architectural plan for part of Cork and was told by one of the local planners, 'You have to remember that Cork is not so much a small Dublin as a large Fermoy.'

Now there are a number of ways of interpreting that comment and it should be remembered that my friend was from Dublin. It may have been quite a subtle put-down, of course. Or it may simply be true.

Cork doesn't have nearly enough serious - and that doesn't automatically mean expensive - restaurants, considering that it is the country's second city.

And so, when we ate and drank in Cork's newest restaurant (or wine café as it succinctly describes itself) and loved every moment of our repast, we ended up wondering if the city is ready for L'Atitude 51.

This used to be An Crúibín, of course. And Cork wasn't ready for that, or the restaurant upstairs, The Silk Purse.

Upstairs is now a wine school and the lovely bar downstairs serves nibbly food (platters of meats and cheeses, olives, good bread) and a few hot dishes with salad.

There's a gâteau of the day too. It's a lovely mix, a delightful environment and the wine selection is one of the very, very best in the entire country. And it's run by two wildly enthusiastic young women, one Irish, one French, who are fired with missionary zeal. I really hope that this venture works for them; it thoroughly deserves to.

It should appeal to wine enthusiasts who know their stuff (there's no Sancerre or Chablis, by the way, which is refreshing), some of whom would be happy to eat cardboard while they drone on about the hooch. And it should appeal also to people who like small portions of good food and the sharing of plates. And finally, it should appeal to be people who are equally appreciative of good food and of simplicity. Hopefully, that will be enough of a market. We grazed the menu and I think this is how it works best.

We kicked off with the lightest, most delicious pork scratchings I've ever had the privilege of eating. They were warm from the oven and generously salted.

Likewise, at €2.50 each, there were good olives and a little selection of charcuterie including some smoked



L'Atitude: What we need but are we really ready for such quality?

dipped good bread in nutty Tuscan olive oil and feasted on arancini of ham and cheese.

Arancini is, essentially, risotto moulded round a filling, bread-crumbed and deep-fried. Ours were two very generous mini rugby balls (€7.50) and they came with a salad of baby spinach and dressed with sundried tomatoes in olive oil.

We also had a divine - that's the only word for it - tartiflette that was

among the evening's specials which are advertised on a blackboard.

THIS is a baked dish of potatoes, Reblochon cheese, cream and smoked bacon lardons. It was steaming hot, rich, smoky, savoury, comforting, glorious. And just right for a cold winter's evening of the sort that they have in the Haute-Savoie which is where tartiflette originates. I have never had better.

The name, of course, implies that there's pastry involved but no; it comes from the old local word for potato, 'tartiffa'.

Now that's the kind of the comment that will really get the conversation going if you try serving it at a dinner party. Or possibly not.

I would urge the people of Cork to take L'Atitude to their hearts.

And I am doing so for an utterly selfish reason.

I want it to thrive so it's still there when I want it. And I could imagine myself wanting it rather a lot. The bill was a few euro shy of €70 and we both ate and drank very, very well. Which is what this place is about.

wine CHOICE

THIS is one of the most interesting and innovative wine selections I've seen in ages, more than 60 sourced from 11 suppliers. Most are available by the 75ml taster, 150ml glass and 250ml carafe. It's invidious to single out any but I have to mention the deliciously

dry and different *Versus Furmint* from Hungary (€3.75, €7, €11 or €30 a bottle) and the ripe, fragrant red *Chateau Ventenac Reserve* from Cabardès in southern France for €25 a bottle (and pro rata for smaller quantities).



smart MONEY

A PLATTER of five meats and salami costs €12.50 with plenty of bread. A couple of glasses of red at €4.50 brings the bill for two to €21.50.

little BITES

I WAS delighted to see that QC's in Caherciveen, Co. Kerry has been named Bord Iascaigh Mhara's BIM Seafood Restaurant of the Year 2012. It's an old favourite of mine and owners Kate and Andrew Cooke bring lots of visitors to this part of the legendary Ring each year, not just for seafood but also their accommodation and activity breaks. See www.QCbar.com



JAMIE MARFELL, winemaker at Brancott (formerly Montana) Estate in New Zealand, will be hosting a wine tasting at the Odessa Club in Dublin on Tuesday, January 31. Admission is free but you will have to apply by email to brancottstateireland@gmail.com (and giving your date of birth). Jean Smullen of News-talk's Moncrieff Show will also be taking part.

CONOR DEMPSEY'S winter menu at Dax in Pembroke Street, Dublin, looks tempting. As is the pre-theatre menu, offering two courses for €25.50 from 5.30pm to 7pm, Monday to Friday. Browse what's on offer at www.dax.ie. Don't forget, you don't have to go to the theatre afterwards.

GLOBAL sales of Irish whiskey are up more than 11 per cent and the sale of the Cooley Distillery firm to Beam (owner of Jim Beam) is to raise the world profile of our spirits even further. It's always sad to see an Irish company being sold to a multinational, but as Cooley chairman John Teeling says: 'It would take us 30 years to achieve what Beam can do in ten.'



Jamie Oliver

Don't miss his EXCLUSIVE weekly column inside TV Week FREE with **The IRISH Mail** ON SUNDAY