

BLACKADDIE HOUSE

No stranger to Michelin stars, easily bored chef Ian McAndrew stays sharp by changing the menu in his Scottish hotel daily. *Andy Lynes* went to visit

When Ian McAndrew won his first Michelin star in 1982 as executive chef of Eastwell Manor in Kent he was the youngest British chef to do so. He won another at his own restaurant, Seventy Four, in Canterbury in 1985, and also ran 116 Knightsbridge in London and the Boat-house Brasserie in Hythe before moving to Norfolk in the late 1990s to concentrate on his culinary consultancy business.

He returned to the stove in September 2007 when he took over the Blackaddie hotel in southern Scotland with his wife, Jane.

Set in two acres of grounds in the Dumfriesshire village of Sanquhar, the converted 16th-century rectory features nine bedrooms and three suites overlooking the Nith salmon river. The à la carte menu is served in the 20-seat main dining room, while a bar menu is offered in the second 16-seat dining room at the rear of the property, which is also used for private dining and breakfasts.

McAndrew leads a brigade of three and, impressively, cooks at every service, including breakfast. The restaurant menu offers four choices at each stage and changes on a daily basis, partly to take advantage of the fresh Scottish produce but also because the chef admits to being easily bored. "I get very fed-up with the dishes very quickly, and they very rarely come back the same," he says.

Although dishes can be as simple as potato velouté finished with home-made gnocchi (£5.75), they're often complex assemblies that call on McAndrew's prodigious technique. Starters and main courses might feature one ingredient treated three ways, such as peas, which he serves as a stripe of simple purée made with mint, fresh whole peas and pea shoots to



garnish a summery main course of saddle of rabbit (£21).

"I serve one saddle of farmed French rabbit per portion. I pan-fry the loins and kidneys and make a white stock from the bones, which I reduce and enrich with veal stock. I confit the bellies in duck fat and garlic, finely shred the meat, deep-fry it and scatter over the dish," explains McAndrew, who also makes a "croque" by sandwiching black olive, anchovy and chorizo tapenade and Parmesan in bread and pan-frying it.

POTATO MILLEFEUILLE

The dish is finished with a potato millefeuille made from thinly sliced potato layered in a terrine with butter, seasoning and thyme that's cooked at 170°C for an hour, then pressed, cut and pan-fried to order.

McAndrew's menus feature local produce including Scottish venison and seafood, such as a starter of grilled fillet of plaice on a broad bean, lemon and thyme risotto, brown shrimp butter and pancetta (£10). "I've got an Orkney scallop dish with a wild mushroom and truffle vinaigrette (£12.50) on at the moment using summer

truffle, truffle oil, Madeira and fresh girolles that I pick myself," says McAndrew. "I'm serving it with cauliflower, slow-cooked with garlic, shallots, potato and cream, that's blitzed to a creamy crush, poached leeks and shaved summer truffle."

Desserts are no less ambitious. McAndrew makes a rhubarb mousse by poaching the fruit in water, lemon juice and sugar and straining the mixture through a muslin to separate the juice and pulp. He sets the juice with leaf gelatine in a ring mould and folds whipped cream into the cooled, puréed fruit which is then spooned on the jelly and refrigerated. He then makes a classic caramel and uses half to make a toffee foam by adding milk and whizzing with a hand blender, and adds sesame seeds to the remainder using it to dress the plate along with chunks of caramelised pineapple.

McAndrew is reluctant to put a label on his food, conceding only that it's in a modern vein. "What I look for always is big flavours and visual impact," he says – and on the evidence of his current menu he's been successful in finding both.

SAMPLE DISHES FROM THE MENU

STARTERS

- Salad of crab, asparagus and baby courgettes with crab mayonnaise, topped with red mullet **£11.50**
- Grilled fillet of mackerel on a celeriac purée with goats' cheese, beetroot vinaigrette and baby basil **£10**
- Trio of duck, salad of air-dried duck breast with baby vegetables, rillettes of confit duck and seared foie gras on Puy lentils **£10.50**

MAIN COURSES

- Fillet of 28-day dry-aged Scotch beef with a salad of seared Moroccan marinated beef and steak tartare, fondant potato **£28.50**
- Seared sesame-coated tuna with white asparagus and a salad of soft-boiled quails' eggs, tapenade, pesto and tiger tomatoes **£22.50**
- Cannon of lamb with a warm lamb terrine, roast baby artichoke, tomato and sweet pepper salsa and aubergine caviar **£24**

DESSERTS

- Rhubarb mousse with toffee and sesame sauce, toffee foam and pineapple **£10**
- Custard tart with strawberry sorbet, elderflower-macerated strawberries, strawberry dust and dried strawberries **£10**
- Warm hazelnut brownie with salted chocolate fudge, vanilla parfait, fudge sauce and home-made treacle ice-cream **£10.50**