

LOCAL FOOD



STEPHEN WHEELER, commercial manager at speciality food company Mise en Place, now part of Cheltenham-based Creed Foodservice, is responsible for sourcing the best food ingredients for top chefs across the country

SOME of Britain's best known food has formed part of our daily fare for so long that it was named after the region or town where it first appeared, and Gloucestershire is no exception.

The originators of the Gloucestershire Old Spots Breed Society called the breed 'Old' Spots because the pig had been around for as long as anyone could remember.

They originated around the Berkeley Vale on the southern shores of the River Severn and were usually kept in the cider orchards of the area, hence its other name – the 'orchard pig'.

Local folklore says that the spots on its back are bruises from the falling fruit.

Gloucester cattle are an ancient breed that go back to the 1200s.

Farmed for their high quality meat and milk, the Gloucesters were also strong draught oxen and herds extended from Devon to Essex.

Double Gloucester cheese has a percentage of milk from Gloucester cattle to earn its name.

In 1796 the Gloucester cow Blossom provided the first anti-smallpox serum to Berkeley local Sir Edward Jenner, the pioneer of vaccination, as he noticed that milk maids were free of smallpox.

The Cotswold breed of sheep, sometimes known as the 'Cotswold Lion' was introduced to Gloucestershire by the Romans.

Their wool known as the Golden Fleece was a major export up to the 19th century, and played a major role in the development of the Cotswold towns and villages.

In Norman and Saxon times, history records enormous flocks in the hills around Cirencester – Edward III demanded 30,000 sacks of Cotswold wool annually for the Royal household.

The first purebred line of sheep to be registered in America were Cotswold.

Tewkesbury mustard is a blend of mustard flour and grated horseradish root, and was developed there in the 17th century.

Shakespeare's Falstaff casts the insult "his wit's as thick as Tewkesbury Mustard", but by the late 19th century "he looks as if he lived on Tewkesbury mustard" was Gloucestershire slang for an austere countenance.

The parsnip-shaped Cheltenham beetroot is making a comeback, and Gloucester Royal and Gloucestershire Costard apples are being preserved in local orchards.

Great local food has been around for a long time in the Cotswolds.

Mise en Place
THE SPECIALITY FOOD COMPANY

Is this the best of the county's brill bunch?



The inviting dining room at 5 North Street

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The old cottage's exterior

WHERE I come from, mushy peas are something that ooze around your bag of fish and chips.

In Winchcombe though, or at 5 North Street at least, they are a thing of beauty. The smashed little vegetables propped up a single parcel of pasta in my starter that looked like a work of art.

It was tortellini of ham hock and grain mustard, mushy peas, sweetcorn puree and toasted sesame dressing.

Sabrina's seafood dish was equally impressive on the eye – home cured salmon, lime infused crab, chive creme fraiche, confit peppers, mange tout and fennelcress salad and crab dressing.

Chef Marcus Ashenford isn't just a master presenter though, his food tasted beautiful.

Our starters alone showed why he is the proud keeper of a Michelin star.

Marcus owns the restaurant with his wife Kate who runs things at the front of house.

And house is the right word to describe the restaurant.

The dining room is the front of a pretty Winchcombe cottage with exposed beams and various awards on the mantle pieces and window ledges.

It's tiny compared to most restaurants, but it's always packed and there's a warm atmosphere.

Kate brought us two mini loaves of bread ahead of our starters – one apricot, the other sesame seed and both warm and delicious.

A warning here though – the bread is so good that you will eat lots of it.

And if, like us, you get through the equivalent of a few sandwiches each of the stuff, you won't have room for pudding.

Especially as Marcus sends out various