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restaurant review

# Garden Room to the rescue

**LAWRENCE POOLE** makes amends by taking his girlfriend to a classy hotel

**A**S GET out clauses go, my girlfriend had to admit it was a pretty special one. Faced with making amends for a desperately undercooked chicken sh, the daunting prospect of scouring recipe books for something which fell within my limited culinary expertise was looming ever nearer. The ping of a new email arriving in my inbox would prove my salvation. Would I like to sample the delights on offer at a Stoke Poges country hotel? A very relieved 'yes please' was swiftly dispatched.

Built as a family home in 1690, Stoke Place is just a short drive from errands Cross, with their Garden Room restaurant positioned in front of pretty green lawns and a fishing lake.

Having being bestowed two rosettes and four AA stars, head chef Craig Van der Meer is keen to spread the word about his taster menu.

Featuring seven courses, each one complemented by a different wine from around the globe, it was not difficult to be won over by such subtly prepared cuisine.

Suitably refreshed by a glass of Brut Rose Champagne, the beetroot consommé starter did not, upon first glance, appear particularly enticing.

Elevated by a cleverly crafted goat's cheese foam though, the dish did succeed. The two main courses proved the highlight though.

Beautifully cooked scallops with fennel puree and rhubarb worked wonderfully, followed by a tender blend of seared fillet of beef with tongue and cheek.

In such decadent surroundings, the meal was aptly rounded off with lashings of ice cream and chocolate.

Serving the rum and raisin ice cream with crispy bacon and brioche sounded adventurous and it was, but just about worked, while the soft chocolate and peppermint sorbet



which followed brought things to a sweet-toothed close.

The service was warm and friendly throughout, if a little claustrophobic, and it was a real treat to sample so many wines in one place – even if the New Zealand Cabernet Sauvignon was a little harsh on the palette.

We departed as a gaggle of giddy wedding guests arrived for the following day's festivities – pondering just what delights awaited them.

● The Garden Room at Stoke Place, Stoke Green, Stoke Poges, Bucks, SL2 4HT. To make a reservation call 01753 534 790 or visit [www.stokeplace.co.uk](http://www.stokeplace.co.uk).



■ **DECADENT SURROUNDINGS:** The view from Garden Room restaurant, and a look around the facility. Photos contributed

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