

Wales pub guide: The Bunch of Grapes, Pontypridd

Good things come in threes at the Bunch of Grapes, Pontypridd

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3:25PM GMT 10 Mar 2011

Good things come in threes at the Bunch of Grapes. First, it's a popular community local, if the busy quiz night in progress is any guide. "What is the ingredient used in beer to give bitterness?" intones a voice rich with the deep bass of the Valleys (is that a hint of the timbre of local hero Tom Jones?). I stop myself from blurting out the answer (hops, as you must know).

Secondly, it's foodie heaven. The menu is modern British pub grub with a French twist: their seafood is sustainable and the meat comes from a local butcher with his own abattoir. The pub has its own in-house deli where sausages, burgers and bread can be bought, and people are already putting their names down for the cookery classes that are planned for the near future.

If my meal was anything to go by, I would readily sign up. My starter of Gower cockles and pancetta was deliciously chewy and briny, while the crisply battered whiting and chunky chips adhered to the equation of success for such a plateful: crunchy batter + moist fish + noble chips = heaven.

And the final member of the trio? This 19th-century former alehouse is also pure paradise for lovers of beer and cider; not altogether surprising given that the pub is one of three (that number again) in the area owned by the award-winning Otley Brewery.

Nine hand pumps offer real ales from Otley (alongside others), plus bottled beers from around the world. There's also a select choice of proper farmhouse ciders. Beer festivals are held every two months (they were still talking about the New Year's Eve event during my visit) and tutored beer tastings are on the agenda.

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[Staffordshire pub guide: The Coopers Tavern, Burton-on-Trent \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/pubs/8303093/Staffordshire-pub-guide-The-Coopers-Tavern-Burton-on-Trent.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/pubs/8303093/Staffordshire-pub-guide-The-Coopers-Tavern-Burton-on-Trent.html)

Otley's O3 was a crisp and bouncy best bitter, while Steel City's Black IPA was an intriguing hybrid of citrusy and chocolatey notes. In the interests of numerical harmony I had another.

While you're enjoying this triumvirate of great pubbiness, take time to admire the great décor. Until the brewery bought it 10 years ago, this was pretty much your average, bog-standard boozier — “the place had the feel of a colour chart”, one wit informs me.

The pub was stripped to its basics, an old fireplace was uncovered and the current incarnation is clean, modern and incredibly comfortable.

George, however, remains. A ghost with a mischievous bent, George is allegedly responsible for popping light bulbs and generally shifting stuff around. Who can blame him? If I were an ex-regular marooned in the spirit world I'd be loathe to leave such a haunt. It is a wonder that he hasn't invited a couple of spectral pals to round up a ghostly trinity.

The Bunch of Grapes, Ynysangharad Road, Pontypridd (01443 402934; www.bunchofgrapes.org.uk)
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