



French toast of the town: Tom Kitchin learnt his craft in the kitchens of several Michelin-starred experts, and his cooking shows knowledge and passion

Seriously ambitious

Given his surname, it might seem as though Tom Kitchin was destined to be a chef. Born in Edinburgh, Kitchin has spent the past decade working with some of the big-hitters of the kitchen brigade in France and London. Between them, Guy Savoy, Pierre Koffman and Alain Ducasse have more stars than the sidewalk outside Mann's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. Kitchin has worked with

FOOD & DRINK

The Kitchin

★★★★☆

all of them and has brought their classical French cooking techniques to bear in his own restaurant.

Open for less than a week when we visited, The Kitchin sits in a Commercial Quay unit that has seen the demise of several restaurants that were pitched at a similar level. Time

will tell if this latest operation is nimble enough to escape the sabatier of Damocles that has fallen on previous occupants.

The dining room is dark grey, enlivened with the occasional burst of flowers and colourful pieces of blown glass. A bookshelf running along the back wall contains two bulky statements of intent: Alain Ducasse's *Grand Livre De Cuisine* (which sounds less intimidating in English: the *Big Book Of Cooking*) and the *Larousse Gastronomique*, the Bible of French cooking.

A window shows the kitchen, and a mirrored backdrop allows diners to watch the chefs at work. As far as is possible, most of the chairs face this window. The muted colour scheme, the big, scary cookery books and the window focused on the kitchen all serve to say: this is serious food. Pay attention and no napping at the back.

The menu is concise, with four starters and six main courses. The pricing is competitive

given the restaurant's ambitions and the usual Edinburgh inflation. We both chose fishy starters. Tartare of mackerel (£7) for me and hand-dived scallops (£8.50) for she. The mackerel was beautifully presented with a circle of minced fish surrounded by a fence of cucumber and a further surrounding circle of finely diced beetroot and cucumber. Surprisingly, the fish wasn't oily or overpoweringly strong. Instead, the dish was light and fresh. The

scallops were properly seared on the outside while sweet and fleshy within. Crisp strips of pancetta added a different texture but the florets of sautéed broccoli seemed superfluous, as did the quail's egg in the middle of my mackerel.

My main course was a pink, juicy loin of lamb (£18) with chickpeas, a red onion compote, Szechuan pepper and lemon zest. That might read like a recipe that is trying too hard to be contemporary but it worked well on the plate. The sweetness of the caramelised onions mixed well with the tang of the citrus.

The other main course of chicken stuffed with spinach and artichokes (£17.50) came with a creamy potato gratin spiced with nutmeg. Again the flavours were neatly balanced, the sweet aniseed of a tarragon juice contrasting with the earthy spinach.

We split a reasonable if unadventurous cheeseboard (£6) of Brie De Meaux, Mull Cheddar and Dunsyre Blue. More fun was provided by the chocolate tart (£5.50) that came with a pleasantly sharp marmalade dressing.

There is an intriguing match of traditional and more experimental ideas at play in The Kitchin. It will be interesting to see how well it gels as the place develops its own identity. That's assuming it lasts longer than its predecessors. I hope it does.

Jonathan Trewh

78 Commercial Quay, Edinburgh, Tue to Sat 12.30pm to 2.30pm and 7pm to 10.30pm. Tel: 0131 555 1755.
www.the.kitchen.com