

# The Marine Milford on Sea

Written by Emma Caulton

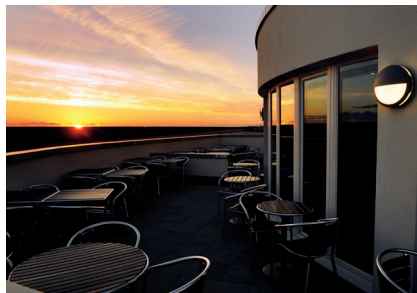
**S**pectacular is the only word to describe The Marine's location... Under the full moon waves curl high over the pebble beach yards from the restaurant's frontage and the spit curves away glistening like an oil painting towards Hurst Castle.

It was the location that owner Richard Thompson fell in love with; so much so he bought the café, rebuilding it as the art deco-style liner prow that now graces the shore. Richard and head chef Sam Hughes opened the trendy café downstairs (chunky black leather and chrome sofas dotted with purple cushions) last August; and opened the first floor restaurant on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings more recently.

A quiz night is in full swing in the café as we head past semi-abstract paintings of shoals of ocean-bright fish, through doors with portholes, and up stairs lit by blue halogen lights to the intimate semi-circular restaurant with a central atrium and globe 'chandelier'. The scheme is monochrome: white walls, charcoal tables, ebonised chairs with white upholstery, but unexpectedly accented by bright pink lighting. It's rather magical. The restaurant is wrapped around by a balcony of glass and decking which must have one of the best outlooks from a restaurant along this stretch of coast. (There's also a roof terrace with views that make you go wow.)

We're pampered with amuse bouches of melting just-seared tuna well-paired with a rich ginger dressing, plus piping hot duck spring rolls with chilli dipping sauce. This is followed by an intense chicken consomme served in a teacup.

The menu is reassuringly succinct, but as a fish-lover I'm still spoiled for choice. Colin picks from the set menu, I opt for specials. He has Dorset blue vinney, pear and walnut salad – a classic combination of textures and flavours with ripe pear, just toasted walnuts and a tangy blue on lightly dressed salad leaves. Simple yet perfect. My baked scallops with creamed



## THERE'S ALSO A ROOF TERRACE WITH VIEWS THAT MAKE YOU GO WOW

leeks and a rich veloute sauce St Jacques is an extraordinarily good update of a favourite. The scallops are nutty (there are three in each of two shells edged in herby mash) and the leeks in veloute is piquant. Between courses a blood orange granita with soft candied orange peel is a vibrant refresher.

For mains Colin has chosen generous towers of flavoursome rolled guinea fowl on a substantial pile of truffle mash, red cabbage, green beans and mushrooms. I have delicate fresh sea bass, roasted so that the skin is irresistibly crisp, served with the sweetest little mussels.

We finish by sharing a chocolate nemesis: a gooey fondant pudding that's paired with subtly flavoured, not too sweet homemade blood orange ice cream. Coffee comes with a plateful of homemade petit fours including (Colin's descriptions) 'astonishing' truffles and

'wonderful' passion fruit jellies.

Colin's entranced with the location and is already planning a night walk to Hurst Castle – but I would rather we went early morning – I can't think of a better excuse for tucking into eggs Florentine on the café's breakfast menu.

### ESSENTIALS

**Where** The Marine, Hurst Road, Milford on Sea SO41 0PY, 01590 644369

**What** Beachfront restaurant with breathtaking views serving excellent modern British cuisine  
**Service** Couldn't be friendlier or more relaxed

**What's the damage?** Very good value for the quality. Set menu: two courses £14.95, three courses £19.95; plus individually priced specials