



# The Class of 2011

## FOOD PUB OF THE YEAR

### NAGS HEAD INN

Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire  
Director/general manager: Adam Michaels

A run-down drinkers' pub three years ago the Nags Head Inn under its current owners is a freehouse that has undergone a major transformation and gained a reputation for its food and locally sourced cask ales.

#### Describe your food offer?

With a French executive chef the food is described by Adam as Anglo/French cuisine that "is not too fancy and is probably a bit more British than French as we use a lot of local produce – especially meats, game and vegetables". It is some of the smaller details that add the Gallic aspect to the food such as bone marrow jus and foie gras. The main menu is changed seasonally and is largely the same for lunch and dinner following the jettisoning of lighter bites. There is also a short pub menu that is popular at lunch time when it accounts for 40 per cent of orders. What is available from local suppliers determines what goes on the daily Specials menu.

#### What innovations have you used for your menu?

The introduction of home-smoked meats and fish has proved extremely popular and Adam says "every day we are questioned about this". The Pub Menu was brought in only eight months ago and has worked well in the current climate as the limited option two and three-course menu is very competitively priced. Another innovation has been the focus on offering hard-to-source items.

"People come time and again for these. We've had partridge on the menu and people know about it but they can't get it in local supermarkets so they don't get to cook it at home. We've also had roasted squirrel on the menu," says Adam.

#### How do you promote your menu?

Adam commits one day per week in the office to working on marketing, which is all done in-house. This includes creating advertisements and press releases for local media, and creating the pub's newsletter that goes out to the 3,000 people on its database. Marketing to existing customers has been very successful, with 90 per cent of bookings for a recent gourmet night (one is held each month) coming from regulars. The most effective method for bringing in new customers is the website, which is constantly tweaked to ensure it appears high on searches. The pub benefits greatly from its five letting bedrooms that help drive people into the dining room.

#### Why should you win this award?

From being a rundown pub Adam says "after only one year sales really picked up and we started to gain lots of regular customers". This has continued and led to a fourfold increase in food sales over the past 36 months. Current trading is also strong, with sales in January 17 per cent up on last year. Despite overheads rising he says gross profits remain steady. The quality of food has also gained the pub numerous nationally-recognised awards.



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### FINALIST FACTS

- **Style of outlet**  
Freehouse
- **Wet/dry/accommodation split**  
25/65/10
- **Average spend**  
Lunch – £25, Dinner – £35
- **Covers per week**  
650
- **Employees**  
14

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