

Pub ploughs a quality furrow

TOM MACK likes to think he nose his stuff — and he's sniffed out a winner at The Cow and Plough

A big part of tasting, so the scientists say, is smelling. And my nose was only a few feet into the Cow and Plough when I started tasting good things. The pub, at Stoughton Farm Park, off Gartree Road, between Leicester and Stoughton, is big on healthy, organic food and local meat especially. And with the restaurant at the far end of the pub, the smells drift straight down the long bar area, which is a pleasant bonus in a smoke-free pub.

The setting is comfortable and interesting. Plenty of old wood, but still soft on the eye.

Stoughton Farm Park is a great, rural location, based in at what used to be Stoughton Farm World — a petting zoo that closed down following the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak.

These days, the farm has a couple of shops, but the ever-expanding pub seems to be the main attraction.

The first food to be brought to our table was a plate of bread.

Four huge, doorstep chunks of the softest, moistest bread I had tasted in a long time. It was bursting with flavour



WHOLESOME FEAST: Alex Awan and Emma Davison serve up lamb kebab and cod fillet at the Cow and Plough

and boded well for the rest of the meal. Accompanied by a great bottle of white wine, costing a reasonable £11.95, my wife, Polly, and I tucked into our wholesome feast, which at 7.30pm on a Friday cost only £13.95 for a starter and a main course.

To start, I had tiger prawns, pan fried in garlic and parsley butter. The prawns came with crunchy crostini bread and salad. The flavour and soft texture of the prawns and leaves combined well with the bread.

Polly had a confit of duck with black

butter dressing, which also came with crostini and was another delicious, wholesome taste.

Feeling prepared to place my trust in the chef, I decided to get adventurous for my main course and chose Moroccan Langton lamb kebab with tsatsiki

and spiced couscous. The taste of the lamb was excellent. It was well cooked with a subtle crust on the outside, yet was tender in the middle. Meanwhile, the powerful tastes of the couscous and tsatsiki battled it out on my tongue.

Polly had herb-encrusted chicken on nettle risotto with mushroom sauce, which was as tasty as it sounds (and far tastier, if nettle risotto sounds a little off-putting).

Once again, the chicken was real, dense meat and not the sort of chicken breast you would find on most super-market shelves. The main courses

FIVE-STAR VERDICT

THE COW AND PLOUGH, STOUGHTON FARM PARK LEICESTER

Phone: 0116 272 0852

Value	★★★★★
Service	★★★★★
Atmosphere	★★★★
Food	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

came with bowls of vegetables, including cauliflower and roasted carrots.

The staff were friendly and not only knew about the food but were clearly pretty proud of it.

The overall feeling was that our meal, which had cost less than £40, was great, wholesome ingredients turned into brilliant, but simple dishes for a very reasonable price.

The only disappointment about The Cow and Plough is that it is not just around the corner from my house.

PICTURE: ALISTAIR LANGHAM / 177447-02