



CUISINE

# FLAVOURS TO SAVOUR

**A modern inn with 18th-century roots and 21st-century twists, The Miller of Mansfield dishes up creative flair with every morsel on the plate. Giselle Whiteaker has her taste-buds tantalised.**



Walking into The Miller of Mansfield in Goring-on-Thames in South Oxfordshire, my friend Alex and I know we're in for a treat. A warm welcome waits within the aged walls of The Miller, which has been a place of refreshment and repose for nearly 400 years. The corridors whisper secrets as we creak our way upstairs to the gorgeous Edwootton room, overlooking the village green. Each of the 13 rooms and suites at The Miller are individually styled, combining original features with 21st-century tastes. Our room is no exception, with dramatic Cole & Son floral wallpaper acting as the backdrop for a stunning industrial-style, chrome, four-poster bed, an antique armoire and a spectacular cowhide rug. On the edge of the bed, a slate tag inscribed with "Sweet Dreams" sits with a striped paper bag holding two deliciously sticky cookies that we quickly devour, hopeful that they are harbingers of the flavours to come.

After a stroll along the Thames Path by the river, we take our seats at a table in the cosy dining room. We're excited to sample the fare on Nick Galer's tasting menu - Nick and Mary are both former team members of The Fat Duck Group and claim a two-fold food ethos here: eat fine food without formality and think of food as more than just fuel, and savour each dish. It sounds like a good plan.

The bread at The Miller is superb, matching the name, and it isn't long before a trio of canapes arrives: mushroom soup with truffle, cod brandade, and a savoury éclair. The three are packed with intense flavours that whet the palate in preparation for the next course. The soused mackerel with buttermilk, celeriac remoulade and dill is elegantly presented, the vinegar drawing out the subtle underlying flavours of the fish. It's simple, yet complex, speaking of spring days filled with sunshine.



Next up is a plate of thinly sliced smoked venison, accompanied by celeriac and dotted with horseradish cream that perfectly complements the rich, game flavour, giving the dish levity. “That cream is phenomenal,” Alex comments. “That’s what makes this dish.” Swiping my fork through the last tiny smear on the plate, I have to agree.

I approach the next dish with trepidation. I have never been a fan of monkfish due to its unusual, rubbery texture, but my fears are unfounded. A wedge of spiced monkfish tail sits on ratte potatoes, with a wedge of grilled sweetcorn perched on top, drizzled with Pernod sauce and garnished with cumin popcorn. The sweet, firm flesh of the monkfish is enhanced by the corn, the Pernod sauce and cumin popcorn adding a savoury tang. It’s delicious.

The final savoury dish is perhaps the most traditional, yet with contemporary panache. Roasted Hereford sirloin of beef sits on layered potato, with a smattering of acid onions and Armagnac sauce. A dollop of bright yellow watercress mayo provides a burst of colour and piquancy to the dish, which is superb. The medium-rare beef is tender and rich, the heady aroma of Armagnac rising from the plate. It’s the perfect finale for this portion of the meal.

Then comes sweets, not one, but two. We kick off with the delightfully tangy Szechuan pineapple with coconut sorbet, lime gel and micro basil, before moving on to the Pistachio Eggy Bread with wild elderberry, Yuzu fruit curd and elderberry sorbet. Both are refreshing, rounding off the meal in a burst of light, rather than stuffing us to the brim. After a meal of this calibre, there shouldn’t be any space left, but the macarons served with our pot of tea are irresistible. They melt in the mouth all too easily, sliding down our gullets as we sigh in satisfaction.

The Miller bills itself as “... a warm and welcoming inn serving fine modern British food.” It is, but it’s far more than that. It’s a welcome bolthole for the avid foodie, with none of the pretention; a place to appreciate provenance and savour the flavours of the land; a welcome escape.

**To learn more about The Miller of Mansfield’s award-winning food, produce provenance and storytelling, friendly service, and a great night’s sleep, see [www.millerofmansfield.com](http://www.millerofmansfield.com)**





## WILTSHIRE HOGGET LAMB, CONFIT ONION, JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE PUREE AND HOT POT

Serves 8

### Lamb Ragu for Hot Pot

100g	Lamb Fat
500g	Lamb Mince
1x	Large Donkey Carrot diced
.5x	White Onions diced
1x	White Leeks diced
1.5x	Cloves of Garlic sliced
2x	Star Anise
¼	Bunch Thyme
200ml	Water
200ml	Reduced Beef Stock
10g	Tomato Puree
250ml	Red Wine
10g	Worcestershire Sauce
10g	Dijon Mustard
15ml	Red Wine Vinegar

### Lamb Loin

1x	Lamb Loin (saddle) from a good butcher
300ml	Olive oil
10g	Thyme
10g	Rosemary

### Lamb Sauce

1kg	Minced lamb shoulder (or minced lamb)
500g	Carrots sliced
500g	Onions sliced
5g	Whole Star Anise
80ml	Olive Oil
80g	Unsalted Butter
750g	Cold Water

### Mint Oil

2 bunches of mint (to give 200g blanched mint)
200g veg oil

### Mint Vinaigrette

250g	Mint Oil (from above)
20g	Chardonnay Vinegar

### Savoy Cabbage with Chive

1x	Large savoy cabbage, finely shredded
5g	Finely chopped chives
20g	Garlic butter
2lt	Water

### Red Cabbage Puree

1x	Jar of pickled red cabbage
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### Confit Baby White Onions

6x	Baby white onions peeled whole.
100g	Lamb Fat melted

### Lamb Ragu for Hot Pot

Place a large pan over high heat and begin to brown the mince in batches in the lamb fat. Reserve the mince and fat for later use. DO NOT clean the pan. Place the carrot and onion into the pan with some lamb fat and sweat for 5 minutes.

Tie the star anise and thyme in a muslin bag. Add the leek, garlic, star anise and thyme. Sweat for a further 10-15 minutes. Add the tomato puree and stir in and cook for 2 minutes. Add the red wine and reduce to a syrup. Add the cooked lamb mince back into the mix and add the water and reduced beef stock. Bring to the boil and reduce into the ragu. When the liquid has reduced, finish with the Dijon mustard, red wine vinegar and Worcestershire Sauce. Cook for a further 5-10 minutes until thick and glossy. Cool as quickly as possible in a large container. Reserve until ready to portion and reheat.

### Lamb Loin

Place the loin into a large container with the olive oil, thyme and rosemary and marinate for 4 hours in the fridge. When needed, remove from the marinade and pat dry with kitchen cloth. Season with fine and coarse salt. Place into a hot pan with some lamb fat and brown off till golden brown on all sides. Place into a 200°C oven for 3 minutes, remove and rest for 5 minutes. Carve and serve.

### Lamb Sauce

Prep/slice the carrot and onions in a food processor. Place half the butter and oil into a large sauce pan and wait for the butter to foam. Add the minced lamb shoulder and cook until dark golden brown. Remove the lamb from the pan and set aside. Add the other half of the butter and oil and add the carrots and sweat until soft, stirring occasionally. Once the carrots are soft, add the onions and star anise and continue to cook until the onions are soft. Return the seared lamb to the pan and stir so the meat and vegetables are thoroughly incorporated. Add the water and bring up to the boil, skimming off any impurities that rise to the surface.

Simmer keeping the sauce very clean by skimming of the impurities for 4 hours.

After 4 hours, remove from the heat and allow to stand for 10 minutes before passing through double muslin cloth. Chill as quickly as possible. Once chilled remove the fat from the top and reserve.

Place the stock into another saucepan and reduce over a controlled heat. Skim to remove the impurities when necessary. Reduce to sauce to taste and consistency. Season with good quality red wine vinegar, lamb fat and Rosemary oil. Once reduced and finished chill as quickly as possible.

### Mint Oil

Blanch the mint in boiling water for 20 seconds. Cool in iced water. Squeeze the excess moisture out then dry between C fold sheets. Place in a powerful blender and blitz until smooth. Drip through a tea towel over night in the fridge.

### Mint Vinaigrette

Emulsify the oil and vinegar together in a bottle and reserve for service.

### Savoy Cabbage with Chive

Bring the water to the boil and add a good pinch of salt. Place the cabbage in batches into the boiling water for 30 seconds and then plunge directly into iced water to stop the cooking. Ring the water from the cabbage and dry on tea towels. When you are ready to cook, place the garlic butter into a medium heat saucepan and then add the cabbage, lightly fry and season with salt. Add the chopped chives and serve.

### Red Cabbage Puree

Separate the pickling liquid and the red cabbage. Place the red cabbage into a food processor and blitz on full for 1 minute. To get a nice puree consistency use the reserved pickling liquid to loosen the red cabbage. Serve the puree cold.

### Confit Baby White Onions

Place the baby onions into a medium sauce pan and add the lamb fat. Place over a low heat, (not over 100degC) and slowly confit for 2 hours. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the onion to cool naturally. Slice the onions in half and fry the open side in a hot frying pan until dark golden brown. Serve.