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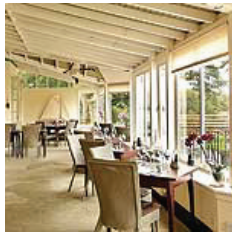
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## Lake of Menteith - Menuwatch

Olivia Greenway  
Thursday 24 June 2010 14:41



**The Lake of Menteith hotel in Perthshire has welcomed new head chef Graham Campbell to the fold, whose simple, quality-driven menu is already wowing the locals. Olivia Greenway reports.**

Graham Campbell is Oban-born, so it seems natural that his move as head chef was to a Scottish restaurant, even though it's on the other side of the country. The 16-room Lake of Menteith in Perthshire was bought by hotelier Ian Fleming in 2005 and under his ownership has undergone a complete refurbishment. Campbell took up his post as head

chef at Easter, moving from Duisdale House on the Isle of Skye. He previously worked as joint head chef of the Ballachulish hotel, alongside Ross Sutherland, where he gained a Michelin star in 2008.

As the hotel's name suggests, the property overlooks Menteith Lake. The 50-seat restaurant has been pared down to stylish simplicity: there are no tablecloths but simple linen napkins; the full-length windows flood the dining room with natural light and the view of the lake is the piece de resistance, with a myriad of water birds delighting the diners. Not many restaurants offer binoculars on the window ledges.

Campbell serves breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner, seven days a week and as well as the main restaurant, there is a bar area seating 26. He leads a young team of six - he is only 27 and his sous chef Duncan Campbell is 20. The brigade makes nearly everything in-house: ice-cream, bread, fresh pasta, cakes and biscuits. "It's the only way I can keep control and keep the quality in check," Campbell says.

The lunchtime menu is à la carte, while the evening menu offers three courses for £39.95, including an amuse-bouche and coffee, with a choice of four dishes for both starter and main, and five desserts including cheese. On Sundays, a set lunch is served at £18 for two courses and £24 for three. The clientele is mainly made up of holidaymakers and locals, who are lured by a loyalty scheme offering a 15% discount. "Local customers are an important part of our business and we want them to know that we recognise that," says Campbell.

While the hotel already enjoys a good reputation, Campbell is keen to go up a gear with the dining offer and his attitude to his cooking is as refreshing and unstuffy as the restaurant itself. Ingredients are of the utmost importance to him and he will only use imported produce as a last resort. He uses Scottish, seasonal produce where possible but not just for the sake of it.

"Local produce is nearly always better quality-wise but I won't use something just because it is local," he says. "Goosnargh duck is a superb product but I have real problems with getting a reliable supply, so I get Barbary or Aylesbury Duck from southern England."

A lakeside hotel is a natural home for serving fish and Campbell makes sure it features prominently on his menu. The Orkney scallops are best sellers and he

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serves them with pan-fried watermelon discs and puréed aubergine.

"Sea bass is also popular; I think the halibut is a much better fish, but for some reason it has fewer takers," says Campbell. "I pan fry the fish then serve it with crushed new potatoes and black olives, sugar snap peas and broccoli florets as well as a vanilla velouté made from scallop roes."

Although the menus are short, they can please a variety of people, from diners who prefer simpler fare to those who like a bit of excitement. For example, a comforting pâte of Perthshire chicken livers, thyme, chorizo, grape chutney and homemade oatcakes (£5.95) sits next to the imaginative lightly curried Finnan smoked haddock and coriander yogurt with poached egg (£6.95). In the evening it could be lemon olive oil ice-cream with fig cream and pine nut and lemon purée or the more familiar vanilla crème brûlée with orange purée and caramelised orange segments.

Having won a Chef Medaille d'Or for dinner excellence at the Scottish Hotel Awards 2010, Campbell says he is enjoying his new challenge for the time being but ultimately he'd like to go it alone. He's certainly one to watch in the future.

**Lake of Menteith hotel and Waterfront Restaurant**  
 Port of Menteith, Perthshire, Scotland FK8 3RA  
 Tel: 01877 385258

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