



TUESDAY 31ST JANUARY 2017

JAMES CLOSE

THE RABY HUNT INN & RESTAURANT

Summerhouse, Near Darlington

County Durham DL2 3UD

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7.30pm for 8.00pm

Louis Roederer Brut Premier and canape reception

Five-course signature menu

£130 per person

Wines to complement every dish are carefully selected by Craig Bancroft and the wine team

Please enquire for exclusive wine package price

James Close has recently been recognised as one of the leading chefs in the UK with the award of two Michelin stars. He was the only new two starred chef in the 2017 guide and is one of only 21 chefs in the entire country to hold the prestigious accolade. In addition, Close was named Chef of the Year 2017 by the Good Food Guide for his 'talent and commitment to excellence'.

Not bad for a self-taught chef who started out as a pro-golfer at Thirsk golf course before moving to London to work as a labourer. His only professional chef experience before opening Raby Hunt with his family in 2009 was catering weddings at Headlam Hall in Darlington where his main duties were 'washing up and cutting carrots'. Within three years of opening the restaurant, Close bagged his first Michelin star.

Occupying a handsome, ivy-clad 19th century inn located on an old drovers road in the

quiet hamlet of Summerhouse in the North East of England, Raby Hunt is a 30-seat restaurant with rooms. The cosy dining room is clean, modern and inviting with white painted walls, polished wood flooring and floral patterned upholstered chairs.

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Close cites a meal at leading avant garde Spanish restaurant El Celler de Can Roca in Girona as the experience that made him decide to become a chef. His five and ten-course seasonally-led tasting menus created from local ingredients share the modernist sensibilities of the establishment that inspired him. The perfectly balanced progression of

visually stunning dishes, all 'inspired by simplicity' might start with something raw, perhaps a slice of scallop with grapefruit and be counter balanced by a richly tempting salt crust cooked artichoke skin stuffed with an offal ragu and topped with frozen duck liver parfait. Vegetables are as core to the menu as meat and fish, as exemplified by the exquisite signature salad made of 28 different, carefully prepared vegetables, herbs and flowers.

In his review, Observer restaurant critic Jay Rayner called Close an 'impressive young chef with some very good ideas', picking out duck breast with ragu of offal with crushed hazelnuts and sea bream with cod's roe cream and spinach for particular praise.

In addition to holding two Michelin stars, Raby Hunt is placed at 42 in the Top 50 of the Good Food Guide and has been named 17th best restaurant in the country by the Sunday Times and is Living North Restaurant of the Year. James Close is listed in Debrettes.

