



THE OLIVE BRANCH AND THE BEECH HOUSE RUTLAND

THE RESTAURANT

The Olive Branch pub was originally three farm labourers' cottages knocked into one. It had been the heart of the village community and the owners have tried to keep it that way, eschewing the urbane in

favour of the rustic; blackboards hang off the local stone walls.

THE FOOD Pub classics like sausages with mustard mash, alongside beetroot risotto, a favourite ingredient of the chef Sean Hope. Northfield Farm in Cold Overton supplies the kitchen with all its bacon, sausages and black pudding.

THE CHEF Sean, the chef proprietor and a local, has hung on to his Michelin star since it was awarded in 2002. As a child, he got a taste for the place when washing pots in the kitchen and bought it 15 years later with business partner Ben Jones, after a stint under Marco Pierre White at The Criterion in London.

THE ROOMS In 2005 the owners of The

Olive Branch bought the house across the road, The Beech House, and have converted it into six bedrooms with tantalising names like Chocolate, Biscuit and Berry. Hand-stitched mattresses are shrouded in Egyptian linen sheets and duck-down duvets.

THE SETTING The buildings are in the village of Clipsham, two miles off the A1, in Britain's smallest county. Deene Park, the sprawling 16th-century house and garden that has been in the Brudenell family since the 16th century (one of them, the seventh Earl of Cardigan, led the Charge of the Light Brigade), is well worth the 20-mile journey. Open on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

EXTRAS There's a reason The Olive Branch won Michelin Pub of the Year in 2008. Besides the exhaustive list of real ales, seasonal homemade tipples include sloe gin, damson and strawberry vodkas, and fresh lemonade in the summer.

TARIFF From £100 per night for double occupancy of the Apple room.

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Above: chocolate roulade with raspberries at The Olive Branch. Top: The Beech House