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Indulge in a farm-to-fork fantasy

GREAT BRITISH BOLTHOLES

THE CLIVE ARMS, Ludlow, Shropshire

JOHN BETJEMAN wasn't wrong when he described Ludlow as probably the loveliest town in England. It's an absolute corker: narrow, medieval streets curl around the feet of one of the country's oldest stone castles like a contented cat.

Ludlow is also prized for its culinary heritage: it's home to Britain's first food festival, and at one point its restaurants boasted three Michelin stars. Not bad for a tiny town in Shropshire.

These days the Michelin glory days have been replaced by something more zeitgeisty – Local To Ludlow is a community of shops, restaurants and artisan food makers championing local produce. They include Ludlow Farmshop, set on the 8,000-acre



BRETT CHARLES

Oakly Park Estate, three miles out of town. You can watch butchers prepare the estate's beef, lamb and Gloucester Old Spot pork; cheese and ice cream being made from the farm's milk; and on-site bakers cranking out loaves and cakes from 4am daily.

It's a genuine farm-to-fork experience eating at The Clive Arms, the estate's Georgian coaching inn. My husband Nick

and I were ensconced in the new Plymouth suite, with a huge bed, comfy chair, free-standing bath and Lewis & Wood wallpaper.

At dinner we started with heirloom tomatoes in a peach and basil liquor positively bursting with fresh flavours.

My main – cod fillet with foraged mushrooms – was delicious, while Nick swooned over the honey-mustard-glazed ham hock with



BLISSFUL: A free-standing bath and a vast bed at The Clive Arms

soft duck egg and chips. Another highlight was the cheeseboard – the award-winning Cheese With No Name blew our socks off.

After a good night's sleep and breakfast featuring three types of farm-smoked bacon and chocolate croissants fresh from the bakery, we set off on a glorious walk through the Oakly Park Estate into Ludlow.

We stopped for cinnamon rolls and coffee at CSONS at The Green Cafe – a delightful riverside spot overlooked by the magnificent 11th Century castle. Huffing uphill, we arrived outside the

imposing castle and medieval market square. This is the location for the fortnightly farmers' market (organised by Local To Ludlow) and the square was heaving with stalls selling local honey, ale, cheese, bread, smoked meats – it's like a greatest hits of the Ludlow food scene.

The USP: It's a fantastic base from which to explore historic Ludlow, ride the Severn Valley Railway and visit Stokesay Court, location for 2007 film *Atonement*.

The rooms: Three brand new suites, featuring drench showers and hand-woven blankets, plus 14 courtyard rooms.

The food: The restaurant has serious food cred and serves dishes featuring fresh seasonal produce from the Ludlow area.

Jennifer Cox

The Clive Arms, Ludlow, Shropshire
B&B doubles start from £95 a night (theclive.co.uk)