



**MOUTH-WATERING:** The haggis and pork creation in a crisp pastry. Steaks, left, cost just £18 from 4pm to 7pm on Sundays. Pictures by Kenny Elrick.



# The ultimate sausage roll – and that’s just for starters

By Ben Hendry  
Food & Drink Reporter

**I**t’s fair to say this visit to Fennel in Inverurie had been a long time coming...

We had been on our way out there about a year ago when my car conked out before even making it out of Aberdeen, prompting an apologetic cancellation call from a side street somewhere near the Cornhill Aldi.

Several months, one new engine and a somewhat depleted bank account later, we made it – and hopefully it would be worth the wait.

## FENNEL

The first thing that catches my eye on arrival is the aquarium bubbling away near the entrance.

Though I never make it across for a closer inspection myself, it seems to enthral younger visitors and a waiter cheerfully points out some fish to one eager diner.

We had decided to have a walk around Kemnay before dinner, making the most of the early spring sunshine by taking in the stunning ruins of Fetternear Palace.

And glancing over the menu, I am glad we had that long walk, as there

are so many tempting dishes I like the sound of.

## THE FOOD

“I can’t believe you’ve come to a nice restaurant and ordered a sausage roll!” came the incredulous remark from across the table.

Indeed, from a starters menu featuring one of my all-time favourites (Cullen Skink), wild mushroom pate, cranberry and sweet chilli chicken wings and plenty more... I had opted for a sausage roll.

But I had faith in Fennel that this would be something a bit special – and indeed their haggis and pork offering (£9.95) was just that.

The crisp pastry was packed solid with succulent meat, and the brown sauce and whisky concoction on the side was a perfectly tangy accompaniment.

My friend Denny, fresh from frowning at my sausage roll, tucked into her smoked salmon terrine (£10.95), which came with pickled shallots, sour cream, pressed cucumber, sourdough and a quail’s egg.

She gave it two thumbs up, praising the creamy texture and the way all the flavours worked together perfectly.

Feeling peckish, we also ordered the parmesan and truffle oil hand-cut chips (£4.95) to share.

And to wash it down, Denny had a glass of Malbec (£9.20) while, as I was driving, I perused the mocktail menu.

Handily, for a place which must derive a lot of trade from people heading out from Aberdeen, there was a good selection. I went for the mojito.

We were chuffed to see that Fennel offers some great deals on the weekend, with steaks down to half price from 4pm to 7pm on a Sunday. That means a cut

“

**‘I can’t believe you’ve come to a nice restaurant and ordered a sausage roll!’ But I had faith in Fennel that this would be a bit special**

which might normally set you back £36 comes in at just £18.

With this in mind, Denny couldn’t resist trying the rib-eye – with peppercorn sauce and chunky hand-cut chips on the side.

The medium-rare, chargrilled offering was cooked to perfection and packed with flavour – with the marinade especially impressing her.

She praised it as “putting many steakhouses to shame”.

Meanwhile, I went for the ox cheek carbonnade (£21.95) which was served with a mound of buttery mash and an array of roasted vegetables. Perfect Sunday dinner comfort food.

I’m quite predictable when it comes to dessert and can seldom resist a sticky toffee pudding. If they are on the menu (and they usually are), chances are that’s what I am having.

So while I went with the old faithful (£8.95), Denny chose something more unique from the specials menu – a milk chocolate, peanut and banana cheesecake with cappuccino ice cream (£8.50).

My sticky toffee pudding was excellent, with a dark treacly sauce and a texture just the right amount of gooey.

Denny enjoyed the cheesecake, but thought the banana flavour slightly

overpowered the others. While she pondered over the flavour combination, I was scraping my bowl clean. Sometimes there’s no shame in sticking with what you know, I suppose.

As we were leaving, our eyes widened at the sight of the Sunday roasts being paraded from the kitchen to a family nearby, drawn by a gravy-drenched Yorkshire pudding perched precariously atop a mound of meat and veg.

We quickly resolved to come back another Sunday, and we won’t leave it a year next time.

## THE VERDICT

With good food and excellent service, Fennel is rightly a favourite among Inverurie residents and visitors.

Being an independent business just adds to its allure.

The prices are reasonable given the quality of the offering, while the venue is suitable for both a special milestone and a casual meal out on a school night.

**FOOD:** ★★★★★

**SERVICE:** ★★★★★

**SURROUNDINGS:** ★★★★★

## FENNEL RESTAURANT

10 Burn Lane, Inverurie, AB51 4UZ  
01467 670065, fennelrestaurant.co.uk

**Price:** £112.90 for two starters, parmesan truffle chips, two mains, two desserts, a red wine, mojito mocktail, Tia Maria coffee and cup of tea.

Disabled access: Yes

Dog friendly: Assistance dogs only



The sticky toffee pud, top, and an exotic banana cheesecake, right, all served in Fennel’s convivial surroundings.

