

LOW SIZERGH BARN, NEAR KENDAL

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YOU know what you're eating is the real deal when you can watch how it makes its way to the plate.

There's something strangely satisfying about seeing the farmers do all the hard work while you sit in relative comfort enjoying the end result.

At Low Sizergh Barn, just outside Kendal, pretty much everything on the menu comes from the nearby farms and estates.



The 17th-Century barn is a working farm, farm shop, gift gallery and craft centre, and is also home to a tea room.

Rated as the second-best farm shop in England by one national newspaper earlier this month, it came as no surprise that on the horrendously wet day I visited, the cafe was heaving.

A couple of seats were available, in the corner, under the television.

I thought nothing of it until I realised everyone was staring in my direction.

To my relief, it wasn't me they were looking at but a large screen relaying live coverage of cows being milked.

An everyday task that you wouldn't think twice about watching if it was on TV at home, but when it is happening in the barn below it takes on a strange fascination.

The menu is pretty standard fare for a tea room, but that's understandable – it's all about sampling what comes from the surrounding fields.

Between two of us, we settled for a meat salad plate (£7.50) – a selection of cured meats from the deli downstairs – and I had a jacket potato (£5.75) with Cumbrian bacon and cheese made from milk produced on site.

My large plate was filled, and as the potato was the standard size, something else had to make up the space. Salads, beetroot and even a small serving of rice was an interesting take on the usual lettuce and cucumber that normally serves as a garnish.

After that, there was still enough room for that quintessential part of visiting any tea room.

Low Sizergh Barn is proud of its selection of scones and cakes, all baked using flour from Cumbrian millers.

Even though they were all on display right there on the counter, the waitress insisted on bringing them to the table – making the obstacle course of low beams slightly less hazardous for me.

A packed currant slice (£1.80) and a home-made scone with a large dollop of cream (£2.40) – using the milk from the cows downstairs, obviously – hit the spot.

All the food was delicious, probably because I knew it hadn't been bought in and microwaved, and the servings just about justified the prices.

Not especially expensive, it seems that people are happy to pay a little bit more for quality.

With the tea room only a small part of the attraction, Low Sizergh Barn pitches itself as more of a day out for the family.

It lies just yards away from the busy A591, but it could be a world away.

I'd like to see how many people would be milling around the tea room on a warm summer's day, but when the rain comes down it's definitely a great place to seek shelter.

Karl Steel

Verdict: out of five

Atmosphere - 4

Food - 4

Service - 5

Value for money - 3

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