As preparation for the festive season heats up in kitchens across Cheshire, Chester’s 1539 Restaurant & Bar Head Chef Dan Speak shares his musings on ‘the most wonderful time of the year’ and a traditional Cheshire Turkey Roulade Recipe for those cooking for friends and family.
WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BEST EVER CHRISTMAS DINING EXPERIENCE?
I've never been out for Christmas dinner, so would have to say my Mum’s Christmas dinner.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF A CHRISTMAS MEAL?
Brandy butter, any excuse to put alcohol in food!

WHAT ARE YOU TOP CHRISTMAS DINNER TIPS?
Get that turkey in early and cook it for longer on a low heat to stop it drying out. Baste, baste, baste!

WHAT WILL YOU BE SERVING AT HOME OVER CHRISTMAS?
We’ll be having turkey, but I won’t be cooking it and it will be thoroughly enjoyed after a busy day in the kitchen here at 1539.

ANY TIPS TO MAKE THE KITCHEN MORE FESTIVE?
We have a Christmas themed oven timer that goes off about 50 times a day, meaning its impossible to forget the time of year.

WHICH DISH ON THE 1539 FESTIVE MENU MOST EXCITES YOU?
Our Christmas sticky toffee pudding is to die for, very light but full of Christmas flavours and getting to eat all of the off-cuts!

YOUR FAVOURITE FESTIVE DINNER PAIRING?
Try cooking your parsnips with a bit of sherry, those flavours really go well together

MOST MEMORABLE NEW YEAR’S EVE?
I was working on a bar for the millennium, it was a great atmosphere, everyone was in high spirits. That’s what I love about new year, everyone coming together to celebrate the same thing and forgetting their differences.
Turkey roulade stuffed with sage and onion stuffing, served with cranberry and ginger chutney, sauté sprouts and chestnuts

CRANBERRY AND GINGER CHUTNEY

500g fresh cranberries
150ml port
100g caster sugar
Juice 1/2 lemon
20g finely grated ginger

Place everything in a pan and bring to the boil, simmer until all the cranberries have burst and port has reduced by 2/3rds

SAGE AND ONION STUFFING

150g good quality sausage meat
1/2 small onion finely diced
5 large sage leaves finely chopped
1 egg yolk
Salt and pepper
20g butter

Melt the butter in a pan add the onions and sage and slowly cook without adding any colour. When the onions have gone opaque remove from the heat and allow to cool. Once cooled mix onions, sausage meat and the egg yolk in a bowl, don’t be afraid to get your hands in just make sure you wash them well afterwards
**ROULADE OF CHESHIRE TURKEY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS**

**TURKEY ROULADE**

Sage and onion stuffing mix
10 oz turkey escalope
6-8 pieces of sliced pancetta

Between two pieces of cling film batter out the turkey to an even 5mm thickness, spread, remove from cling film and place flat on a chopping board, spread the sage and onion stuffing evenly and then roll the turkey like a Swiss roll and place on the side. Then on a piece of baking paper lay out the pancetta just slightly overlapping, place the turkey on one end and roll up in the pancetta. Roll the turkey up tightly in tin foil ready to bake, note the tin foil must tight to keep the shape of the turkey, greasing the inside of the foil will also help the foil not to stick!

Bake in an oven pre heated to 190 degrees C for 30 mins then remove the foil and cook for a further 10-15 mins.

**SAUTÉ SPROUTS**

200g sprouts
80g cooked chestnuts roughly chopped
20g butter
Salt and pepper

Take the sprouts and remove root and any discoloured outer leaves, finely slice the sprouts. Melt the butter in a pan when the butter is foaming add the sprouts and turn down the heat, let them cook out slowly for 4-5 mins until softened but still a little crunch and plenty of colour. Finish by adding the chestnuts and warming them up season to taste, be careful not to add the chestnuts to early or they will break up too much and discolour the sprouts

Serve the dish with vegetables and roasted potatoes and use any cooking liquor to make a beautiful homemade gravy

If you’d prefer to leave the cooking to Dan and his team and sample this dish as well as others on the festive set menu, book your table at 1539 over the festive period and enjoy a delightful dining experience from just £20 per person. Contact the restaurant on 01244 304 611 or book your table online at restaurant1539.co.uk