

Matt Price will head up the culinary team at the historic Douneside House in Tarland, which has, for the last five years, been the North East Scotland's only AA triple rosette-awarded restaurant.

With previous Head Chef roles at The Vineyard at Stockcross in Berkshire, and securing 3 AA rosettes at the Airds Hotel on Scotland's west coast, Matt brings 13 years' experience to his new role, including a stage in the world-famous New York restaurant, Eleven Madison Park, at the time Number 1 in the World's 50 Best Restaurants list.

"I'm delighted to be here at Douneside House – the property has a rich history and well-known association with the RAF, but it has also developed an enviable reputation for its hospitality in recent years, an aspect I'm looking forward to consolidating," explains Matt. "The people are fantastic and the surroundings are absolutely stunning - I only arrived in February but already the place feels like home."

He is particularly looking forward to making the most of the property's Royal Horticultural Society-accredited kitchen garden, from where much of the inspiration for his dishes will come: "Using fresh, local, seasonal produce is hugely important to me – as it should be - I've created an enormous spread sheet of what we'll be growing in the garden to tailor our menus around. Production obviously slowed a little last year due to the pandemic, but when the garden here is up and running, we're talking about over 80 different fruits and vegetables."

Heading up a team of seven in the kitchen, Matt and his chefs will prepare a range of mouth-watering dishes, from Scottish Retired Dairy Cow Sirloin served with glazed brisket, onion and madeira tart and garden greens; to 64c local duck eggs, with morels, broad beans and mushroom tea. Most importantly though, there is a resounding focus on taste and quality, as he explains: "Having spent time in Asia, I'm a big fan of Eastern flavours - fresh, clean and fragrant, they often find their way into my cooking. I use cream and butter when they're called for, but on the whole, I prefer a lighter touch, which I believe is a more modern way of eating. That said, it all starts with the produce"



“I’m looking forward to a great salmon dish,” he continues, describing just one of the highlights of Douneside’s new menu. “Using wild Atlantic salmon from John Ross in Aberdeen, we cure then marinate it for five days in soy sauce and treacle, then serve it with a five-spice-braised beetroot and stem ginger filo tartlet, with avocado and wasabi gelato on the side. We present it quite simply on the plate, but you can taste the hard work that goes into it behind the scenes.”

A fussy eater as a child, Matt stumbled upon his passion for cooking trying to impress a girl in his teens. “I was seeing someone who was much more into food than I was, so I took it upon myself to learn how to make macaroons. I made them twice a week for months, and it certainly caught her attention!”

Guests to Douneside House can enjoy Matt’s macaroons as part of their re-vamped Afternoon Tea offering, which will be served Thursday to Sunday between 1400-1500 in the relaxed surroundings of the Conservatory or cosy Piano Lounge.

Guests dining at Douneside may also benefit from the wisdom of one of Scotland’s best regarded sommeliers, James Payne. Operations Manager at the property by day, during service hours, James will advise guests on the best wines to pair with Matt’s culinary creations, and as former UK Sommelier of the Year, he is well qualified for the role.

“With our carefully curated drinks and wine list, we aim to offer guests a bespoke opportunity to enjoy a drink – alcoholic or otherwise - that pairs perfectly with Matt’s delicious new menu,” he explains.

Lunch is available seven days a week from 1200-1400 in the Conservatory overlooking the terrace garden. On Sundays a traditional roast is served, alongside the Conservatory lunch menu. The dinner menu is served seven days a week between 1900-2100. Guests are invited to enjoy pre and post dinner drinks in Douneside’s cosy bar, with its wide range of craft beer, gin and whisky.

Douneside House

<https://www.dounesidehouse.co.uk>