

# An Ingatestone institution

When rose growers Mr and Mrs Jones started the Ingatestone Garden Centre in 1938, it is unlikely they could have envisaged that, 75 years later, customers would still be visiting.



Nowadays though, people are as likely to come for a cream tea as a tea rose, and the garden centre tearooms are a popular destination in their own right, for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea.

It's not surprising: all of the tearooms' cooking and waiting team are extremely friendly; the breakfasts are hearty; the pies are famous locally, and the delicious scones and cakes are freshly baked on the premises.



The self service, cafeteria style, tearooms are light and airy, with a huge glazed wall looking out onto the charming gardens, where pleasantly scattered tables and chairs nestle amongst the mature trees and shrubs.

Restaurant manageress Julie Hunter says: 'It's a real testament to the quality and value we offer, that regulars have been visiting us for years. The Garden Centre is on an eight-acre site, and the restaurant, while cosy, has the advantage of space. We can accommodate over 100 people, so coach parties are always welcome and we have disabled access and facilities. The restaurant is the perfect stop off, as we are just minutes away from the A12, but are completely screened by mature planting.'

"We regularly play host to many

organisations including cycling and knitting clubs," says Julie, "and our mid-week and Sunday roasts always prove very popular."

The Ingatestone Garden Centre is worth a visit at any time of year, but during November and December the centre pulls out all the stops for Christmas, with a huge festive department featuring decorations, children's toys, food tastings and demonstrations from various giftware companies.

And to help get into the Christmas mood, why not try a glass of mulled wine and a delicious mince pie? All made, of course, on the premises.

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