

» 31 COLLEGE FORMALS SAMPLED BY VARSITY IN OUR COMPREHENSIVE FORMAL HALL REVIEW



CHRIST'S 43/60

At £4.70, Christ's formal is relatively cheap, with a lively traditional atmosphere. Charles Darwin is among the many portraits twinkling down on surprisingly good food. A long suffering statue of Milton is kissed on birthdays, but the raucousness only officially starts after the fellows leave the hall for cheese. **Elie Yoo**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	7/10

CHURCHILL 18/60

Buffet Service, a salad killed with vinegar, a main course that it was not possible to finish, a dessert worthy of a motorway service station; Churchill failed to fulfil any of the normal expectations of a formal hall. Our necessary trip to a well known kebab van afterwards was better value, had better service and provided considerably better company. Churchill: dine there at your peril. **Joe Gosden and Jamie Munk**

Starter:	4/10	Atmosphere:	5/10
Main:	2/10	Service:	2/10
Dessert:	3/10	Value:	2/10

CLARE 37/60

Clare Friday formal is a welcome opportunity for pasty grads to get out. Highlights this week included a large group of vodka-drinking Russians and the now weekly feature of a lavishly camp-sounding dessert: this time, ta-dah! "Spoonmata!" The night ended as always; in the MCR bar, drowning in whisky. **Claire Humphrey**

Starter:	5/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	2/10	Value:	8/10

CLARE HALL 55/60

Intimate atmosphere, fine dining, free flowing complimentary wine, cheese course, intellectual cultured conversation about fine art, opera, ballet and exhibitions. Not one for the drinking societies, but wonderfully Cantabrigian! **Catherine Hall**



Starter:	10/10	Atmosphere:	10/10
Main:	9/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	9/10

CORPUS 48/60

An excellent formal. The rich carrot soup delighted all on a cold winter's eve and was complemented by the pork and roast potatoes that followed. Fast, cheerful service and a jovial atmosphere furnished a generally pleasing ambience that represented outstanding value on the £7.30 investment. **Mike Kieley**

Starter:	8/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	9/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	6/10	Value:	9/10

DARWIN 40/60

Nothing particularly fancy but not bad at all – food is not "adventurous" but done well. They can be a bit militant with clothing. Blasé about gowns but turn up without a tie at your peril; wear jeans and you'll be lucky if you get to eat. Candlelit with receptions before and after. Solid. Like a Volvo. **Oli Robinson**

Starter:	5/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	8/10	Service:	6/10
Dessert:	6/10	Value:	8/10

DOWNING 45/60

If it is a formal meal that you're after, Downing is your place. Going to the loo or arriving late during the meal is strictly forbidden and can result in a formal ban. The candlelit atmosphere and food are, however, excellent. Tender racks of lamb, fresh bread rolls, delicious chocolate mousse and fun dinner banter. Downing: a formal of great food and company. **Jossie Clayton**

Starter:	7/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	6/10

EMMA 36/60

It wasn't clear if the meat was beef or lamb, but it was very tough. The people at the end of the table weren't too generous with the portions of vegetables which left me irritatingly shortchanged. Climbing over a bench to sit down and then being squashed between two people was another negative. **Cassell Carter**

Starter:	8/10	Atmosphere:	5/10
Main:	4/10	Service:	5/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	7/10

FITZ 44/60

Crinkle cut carrots make me angry. Cheap alternatives to real flavours borne of "cooking" makes me angry. Feeling that Fitz cooking staff do know what a nice meal should consist of, but haven't the ingredients or funding to put it into action, makes me livid. Dessert, however: consistently delicious. **Jack Dentith**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	7/10

GIRTON 36/60

The main course was a mixed bag, the duck being nice 'n' greasy but accompanied by a placenta... sorry, polenta that squirmed when moved and reminded me of human flesh. The creme brulée for dessert seemed to be the same stuff, but tasted a lot better. Brilliant setting for a formal, though. **Calum Aikman**

Starter:	7/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	4/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	2/10



MICHAEL DERRINGER

CAIUS 34/60

To start with, I were presented with a bowl of warm salty water masquerading as vegetable broth, which was fortunately soon replaced by a butterflied chicken fillet with garden herbs, crispy jacket potato wedges, buttered sweetcorn and mixed salad. Then a sherry trifle, which I, feeling full, passed on to Stephen Hawking. **Jessica King**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	5/10
Dessert:	3/10	Value:	7/10

HOMERTON 42/60

Homerton's formals are themed, but menus go out weeks in advance. Lively atmosphere, and the service was good. Quite expensive, but includes wine, and the portions are big. As gowns aren't worn, people make an effort to dress up, making it a special night of the week. **Cassell Carter**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	6/10

SIDNEY 47/60

Sidney hall is small enough to feel cosy without feeling oppressive and, being fairly full, the atmosphere was lively the night I attended formal. I was impressed by the printed menu cards, warm rolls and the selection of good wine on offer from the college. Service was fairly slow but unintrusive and the food was nicely presented and of good quality. **Jo Trigg**

Starter:	8/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	9/10	Value:	8/10

ST CATZ 34/60

So the food was crap – fishy soufflé and strange meat I didn't rate too highly – but the liberal attitude to penning and the inclusion of a cheese course went some way to making up for it. Catz hall is a nice setting for an evening meal, and though some felt it a little extortionate at £7.50 a head, a great night was had by all. **George Grist**

Starter:	4/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	4/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	6/10	Value:	3/10

TRINITY 39/60

The first course, pâté and garnish, was rather successful in truth. Second course, fish pie was precarious at the bone-less of times and the ice cream and chocolate sauce to finish was entertaining if unambitious. Despite the charming company and the grandiose architecture, the food and general dinginess were somewhat disappointing. **Monty Stagg**

Starter:	8/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	5/10	Service:	5/10
Dessert:	6/10	Value:	7/10

TRINITY HALL 30/60

The restrained classicism of the candlelit hall promised much, but sadly neither the food nor the cauliflower-spilt-in-lap service delivered on this. The combination of camembert fritters (no matter how tasty) with over-peppered steak and greasy-spoon mushrooms, followed by ridiculously rich mocha pots, left us feeling more than a little bit queasy. **Jane Reeback**

Starter:	7/10	Atmosphere:	6/10
Main:	4/10	Service:	6/10
Dessert:	3/10	Value:	4/10

HUGHES HALL 49/60

Formal at Hughes is pricey, but I wasn't complaining. The creamy spiced mushrooms starter and chocolate and raspberry torte were of top restaurant level. The marinated turkey steak main was a little disappointing, but Hughes Hall regulars seemed equally unimpressed indicating higher standards normally. **Adam Edelshain**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	9/10	Value:	8/10

ST EDMUND'S 40/60

The pre-formal drinks established a fun mood for the evening and later the vibrant ambiance emanating from every table served as confirmation of this. Whilst the first and second course were uninspiring, the apple crumble was outstanding and had everyone digging into the large, steaming bowls for more. The wine was superb. **Sarah Wilkinson**

Starter:	5/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	5/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	9/10	Value:	6/10

ST JOHN'S 37/60

As one of the cheapest formals in Cambridge, John's is certainly the college to visit if you're feeling skint. You get what you pay for with reasonably basic, slightly ropey fare, but the beautiful hall and friendly waiter service make up for this. Definitely worth a try. **Emma Inkester**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	6/10
Main:	3/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	8/10

WOLFSON 35/60

The formal cost £15.10. Although this included a glass of "champagne" on arrival, it still seemed overpriced, especially as the food wasn't worth the extra cost. The Kings and Wolfson Football teams were the only diners under the age of 50 but the service was very friendly. **Kirsty Dootson**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	4/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	5/10	Value:	2/10



KING'S 52/60

The King's formal is like no other; in that there is no official dress code, no Latin prayers, and no silly rituals for the fellows. You are not only allowed to get up, but mingling is positively encouraged between tables. Due to the absence of the "penny-gestapo" present in other colleges, raucous drunkenness is a common feature by the time coffee is served. **Larry Hench**

Starter:	8/10	Atmosphere:	10/10
Main:	9/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	8/10

LUCY CAV 39/60

Lucy formals are usually fairly sedate and always quite informal and friendly affairs. For the many live-out students it's a rare opportunity to socialise in college. Vegetarians and other special diets are well catered-for, though as ever there are complaints about small portion sizes. At £7.93 for junior members it's good value. **Carol Atack**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	5/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	8/10

MAGDALENE 38/60

Three courses and silver service for £3.75 isn't bad, but when two courses are poor the value's questionable (still, the tap water was nice). Legendary kitchen king Gary Love's crusade against penning was particularly impressive: candlelight was lovely, but so dark I could barely see my food, let alone pennies. **Elie Yoo**

Starter:	5/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	7/10
Dessert:	3/10	Value:	8/10

NEW HALL 42/60

Great atmosphere, lots of drunken groups of both men and women in the scenic surroundings of the dome. Great starter, vegetarian main course a disappointment, but special note should go to the gingerbread Pudsey bears and ice cream for dessert. **Catherine Hall**

Starter:	7/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	6/10

NEWNHAM 28/60

Despite scintillating company, the food was a bit grim. The hall itself looked a bit like a school canteen, and the mandatory half a bottle of wine each was preposterous. But I managed to share a gag with a porter after he neglected to punish some ridiculously drunken exploits, so there were some enjoyable bits. **Ben Reekes**

Starter:	3/10	Atmosphere:	3/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	4/10	Value:	3/10

PEMBROKE 51/60

Pembroke can boast fairly delicious architecture and an impressive menu of beef with capriciously cubed potatoes and a starter rather daringly involving butter-nut squash. All this to the backdrop of candlelight and banter of a charming, nay, delightful, quality. Somewhat curious penning and no-one ate the brussel sprouts, but nonetheless, chin chin! **Guy Stagg**

Starter:	6/10	Atmosphere:	8/10
Main:	9/10	Service:	10/10
Dessert:	8/10	Value:	10/10

PETERHOUSE 44/60

An effervescent atmosphere (with afros and dubious beards galore) was worth the modest asking price of £4.85 on its own. The excellent mackerel starter was followed by enjoyable, if somewhat more run-of-the-mill, dishes. The service was slow, but considering it was a week night, Peterhouse had much to recommend it. **Mike Kieley**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	9/10
Main:	6/10	Service:	5/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	8/10

QUEEN'S 44/60

Queens' formal is wisely organised on the assumption that by the time you hit pudding you are too sauced to notice. The food definitely got progressively worse, but the service was delightful and the hall scrubs up nice. They put on a good show and I was even asked to read Grace, which is nice. An excellent evening. **Bea Hunter**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	5/10	Value:	8/10

ROBINSON 44/60

Starter was a lovely and gooey risotto, followed by chicken wrapped in prosciutto, which was enjoyable but forgettable, with a rustic bread-and-butter pudding to finish. A tastefully reserved atmosphere was undermined slightly by the ugliness of the building. Pricey but better value than any restaurant. **David Brown**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	7/10
Main:	7/10	Service:	8/10
Dessert:	6/10	Value:	7/10

SELWYN 51/60

Conducted by candlelight in the wood-panelled hall, formal at Selwyn is a silver service yet relaxed and genial affair. Deliciously gooey baked camembert, followed by rich beef bourguignon made fine winter fare. A cute peach melba rounded off a great meal. **Rachel Cooper**

Starter:	9/10	Atmosphere:	9/10
Main:	8/10	Service:	9/10
Dessert:	7/10	Value:	9/10