



ACORN HOUSE

If you like your restaurants eco-friendly, they don't come much greener than London's Acorn House, the brainchild of executive chef Arthur Potts Dawson, former head chef at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen and the River Café, and restaurant manager James Grainger-Smith, who helped set up Fifteen.

Since it opened its doors in November 2006 the business has attracted some high-level admirers, with restaurant critic Giles Coren dubbing it "the most important restaurant of the past 200 years" in the *Times*.

Every aspect has been designed to be as sustainable as possible, from sourcing and waste to fixtures and fittings. The focus on sustainability is real and heartfelt. It's not bolted on to

the business model; it is the business model. As Potts Dawson explains: "This is what I do, it's how I live. Even without the tsunami of green interest I'd still be doing this."

The restaurant uses small independent suppliers, with a bias towards local and seasonal produce. Its delivery vans

ACORN HOUSE

69 Swinton Street, London WC1X 9NT
Tel 020 7812 1842.

Website www.acornhouserestaurant.com

Cuisine modern London

Seats 66

Service breakfast, lunch and dinner served Monday to Saturday

Covers 100-110 a day

use LPG or electricity rather than regular fuel, and Potts Dawson says anyone who wants to supply the restaurant has to "toe the line".

One thing Acorn House doesn't do is flag up its sourcing policy on its menus. "That's very 1990s," says Potts Dawson. "If you put words like 'organic' on menus, you're defeating the object. Everything should be ethical, sustainable and organic. It's about accountability now, not traceability."

Energy-saving devices, such as low-wattage lighting, abound, with the power supplied by Ecotricity, which sources its power from wind. There's no energy-guzzling walk-in freezer, and much of the fresh produce is stored on shelves in the restaurant for use that day.

All its kitchen waste is recycled and returned as compost by Aardvark Recycling, which also recycles its other waste materials such as plastic and paper. At its next site, the Water

House, on Orsman Road in London's Hoxton, due to open in October, paper will be banned, and the pair aim to be completely carbon-free.

Potts Dawson says the Water House will be "a step forward from Acorn House". They even plan to use water from the adjacent canal to both heat and cool the space.

In the meantime, the experimentation at Acorn House continues. Potts Dawson and Grainger Smith plan to start composting all their kitchen waste on site and have invested in a machine that can turn 40kg of waste into 4kg of compost and liquid waste for their kitchen garden. They also plan to set up wormeries on site and are experimenting with using bokashi bins to turn their waste cooking oil into a compostable substance.

Right now the pair are also busy planning a temporary "guerilla restaurant" with more than 200 seats for the four-day 100% Design Show at London's Earls Court in September.

FOOD AND DRINK



Arthur Potts Dawson (left) and James Grainger-Smith have created a model green restaurant at Acorn House

Roux-trained chef Potts Dawson has devised a "modern London" menu based on locally sourced seasonal ingredients and a pledge to buy Fairtrade products where possible; but he isn't afraid to relax the local-sourcing policy in areas such as Italian cured meats, although imported produce is shipped rather than flown in.

The wine list is heavy with organic, sustainable options, including the English Chapel Down range, while beers include ales from Greenwich brewers Meantime.

Coffee is supplied by Illy, which has a good track record on sustainability, and customers are offered free filtered tap water, although there is a bottled option from Belu, which uses compostable bottles and donates profits to clean water projects.

If it's juice you're after, imported fruits such as oranges are out. It's a choice of apple or apple, which is juiced on-site using locally sourced fruit.