

« THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WORLD SO WASTEFUL OF RESOURCES AS A RESTAURANT, EXCEPT, PERHAPS, A WAR »»



ACORN HOUSE

When I say that Acorn House is the most important restaurant to open in London in the past 200 years, there is a danger that you might misunderstand me. You might think I mean "important restaurant" merely in the way that restaurant critics usually mean it, which is that it represents a small potential change in direction for one wing of the catering business — the way people once talked of such joints as Kensington Place, Gordon Ramsay's Aubergine, the Eagle, St John and Yo! Sushi. But Acorn House is a different kind of important.

Acorn House is life and death important. Because it is London's first truly environmentally sustainable restaurant. Don't you dare titter! Don't you dare yawn and turn the page to see what Robert Crampton has been up to! Don't you dare curse me for a credulous tree-hugging Cameronian payer of lip service to ideas I do not fully understand!

This stuff matters. The Stern Report is true. Everything we are and have ever been is going to disappear unless we do something very serious about global warming very soon. If you really are one of those right-wing nincompoops who think that it's all a big con by the "eco lobby" to keep themselves in hemp underpants, and that everything will all turn out fine because everything always does, and in fact there's a completely independent scientist on the White House payroll who has proved that the world is getting colder and what we need is more carbon dioxide to stop the ice-caps getting too frozen, then, actually, you can turn the page. In fact, why don't you burn it, too. No, I know, why don't

you roll it up into a taper and use it to set fire to a penguin.

The rest of you, who are maybe just beginning to turn off the odd stand-by switch, have stopped revving your engine at the lights to make old ladies cross the road quicker, and no longer leave all the lights on when you go out at night to discourage burglars (because you've grasped that burglars are all so wiped out on crack these days that they don't have the mental quickness to associate the ideas of light and habitation the way they did in the good old days), well, you're all heroes. But I'll wager you still go out for dinner occasionally.

And there is nothing in the world so wasteful of resources as a restaurant. Apart, possibly, from a war. If we really cared about the future of humanity we would stay home and cook. Or we would go to Acorn House, which is built from organic and recycled materials, composts or recycles 100 per cent of its waste, demands positive animal husbandry, avoids industrial farming, uses green electricity, buys Fairtrade where it can, and pledges never to use airfreight.

When transporting within London, Acorn uses bio-diesel, take-away containers are eco-sensitive, and they purify water on site, so there are no road miles and no wasted plastic or glass (I'd rather share my table with a child murderer than a man who drinks Fijian water). And if you do want bottled water, there's Belu, sourced and bottled in Shropshire, carbon-neutral and non-profit-making, with all proceeds going to fund water projects in drought-afflicted areas (Africa, principally, one assumes, rather than London and the Southeast).

I know it might all sound a bit mental and over the top, but it's not. It's just sensible. Every restaurant in London could operate like this. And the ones that can't should close. I understand that you have to take your kids to school in something that, in extremis, would keep them safe from lion attack and nuclear war, but these are just restaurants. We don't, truthfully, need them at all.

And the thing is, Acorn House isn't a compromise. It is a great little restaurant. >>



ILLUSTRATION: PAUL SLATER

