



10 Minutes for the Planet
Eating Green - Restaurants with a
conscience ©
by Sarah Heath

Hello! I'm Sarah Heath and you're listening to 10 Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

The word is out: eco-friendly restaurants are in! Green dining has thankfully become fashionable, and happily not just out of necessity. A poll conducted across 60 countries worldwide showed that 66% of consumers, particularly millennials, are prepared to pay extra for sustainable goods including when it comes to eating out. People are more aware and justifiably concerned with where their food is sourced and want to feel comfortable that it fits with their ethical values. And restaurants and other food outlets have tuned into this new consciousness.

Many restaurants have taken up a more general environmentally-friendly, healthy ethic and go for organic, locally-grown, seasonal fruit and vegetables and free-range meat and even foraged herbs, and like to make as much in-house as possible to reduce their carbon footprint. But some are taking it to a whole new level!

One restaurant between San Sebastian and Santander in northern Spain, has taken sustainability to the very heart of its existence: the Azurmendi collects and uses rainwater, it has solar panels and a vegetable garden on the roof and uses a geothermal system for internal climate control which contributes to 90% of the building's needs. There are electric car-charging points in the restaurant's carpark and a seed bank set up in conjunction with the Basque Institute for Agricultural Research and Development. And all produce is from local farmers which has helped to revive the area's economy. Not surprisingly, it has won the World's Most Sustainable Restaurant Award twice. Oh, and it has three Michelin stars!

In France, a Parisian restaurant called Septime is also a double-winner of this award. They claim that their menus are 80% plant-based and they have opted out of selling beef dishes entirely. 99% of all their ingredients are sourced in France, vastly reducing their carbon footprint and they have a whole ingredient policy whereby the entire vegetable or animal is used in their cooking, meaning zero waste. They have bought an area of land on which to grow as much of their own produce as possible and work with local farmers on preserving 1,400 seed varieties in partnership with the Conservatoire du Goût. This is an

initiative linked to the EU's biodiversity strategy to involve the agricultural community on genetic resources.

The one-starred Relae restaurant in the Danish capital, Copenhagen, used an entire oak tree to make its tables and takes part in a scheme with an organisation called "Beyond Coffee" which aims to find new ways to use spent coffee grounds. This involves collecting the used coffee from restaurants to re-use in the growing of vegetables such as mushrooms. Their kitchen uses sustainably-sourced sea salt from an Icelandic company called Saltverk which is one of the few entirely sustainable salt producers in the world.

Scotland is renowned for its fresh fish and at The Captain's Galley, the owner and chef walks to the quayside each morning to handpick the fish he wants to order and prepare. His kitchen garden provides fresh herbs and their own chickens, the eggs. He also uses the old cooking oil to help power his car!

In the Far East, an Indonesian restaurant called Ijen also strictly follows a zero-waste philosophy: its tables are made from foam offcuts and recycled wood; the floor consists of a mixture of cement and broken crockery and glassware and the menus are printed on sustainably harvested paper stuck to recycled car tyres. All their fish is line-caught, the spirits they serve are home-made, and all waste is composted or re-used.

One London chef insists that too much food is wasted unnecessarily at the preparation stage. He believes that peeling vegetables is a waste, particularly as most of the nutrients are found in the skins of potatoes and carrots, for example. Apparently, several hundred years ago, the peel was the part which was consumed and the middle thrown away! If peeling is a must, the skins can be used to make soup. And an ingenious and delicious-sounding use of cheese rind removed from whole cheeses is to dip it in batter and deep fry it!

In the UK, there is an organisation called the Sustainable Restaurant Association whose president is world-renowned French chef, Raymond Blanc. They have three main areas of interest: sourcing good-quality produce; involving the local community by allowing them to use the restaurant space and creating environmental awareness through better training of staff.

The American equivalent is The Green Restaurant Association which certifies restaurants who practice sustainability and offers advice on how to achieve it.

Other slightly wacky, eco-friendly restaurant ideas include a bistro which provides uncooked lengths of fettuccine pasta to use as stirrers for hot drinks. Many, many establishments have leftover bread which is sent on to local chicken farms as feed. Eateries offering fish on the menu, now wait until they have their delivery of line-caught fish to see what type of fish it is before deciding the menu so no fish are wasted. Many

replace plastic straws with bamboo ones. And other more standard measures include not selling bottled water and composting food waste where possible.

And what about the massive fast-food chains? One Burger King branch in Delhi has provided a box for customers to put their unused sauce sachets in! A small step but a step nevertheless!

Tune in next week for more stories on the environment, here on English Waves.