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EATING ANIMALS

How nose-to-tail eating – and a revolt against food waste – is being spearheaded by some of the UK's best chefs.

FERGUS HENDERSON CAUSED a sensation when he opened his restaurant St John in London in 1994. So did his 1999 cookbook *Nose to Tail Eating*, which put into writing the British chef's celebration and devotion to the odd bits of ordinary animals: from bone marrow and ox tongue to ducks' hearts and calves' brains.

The late influential chef and food critic Anthony Bourdain once referred to *Nose to Tail Eating* as 'The Book' and St John as 'The Restaurant', going on to explain how many chefs from around the world have made pilgrimages there to experience the food for themselves.

Today, while nose-to-tail dining isn't anything new, the age-old cooking discipline is seeing an exponential growth in popularity in the capital as chefs and restaurateurs strive to cut down on unnecessary food waste and champion sustainability. Although nose-to-tail eating might seem slightly old-fashioned in light of the growing popularity of plant-based diets, if humans must insist on killing animals to eat, it seems only sensible they also respect all of the beast's edible components.

For Farokh Talati, head chef at St John's, the philosophy behind nose-to-tail cooking all comes down to respect. 'The quality of cooking comes from respecting the food, respecting the animal and respecting the person whose job it was to rear that animal.'

Chef Budgie Montoya of Sarap, a Filipino-inspired pop-up that will soon become a permanent restaurant, echoes this. 'It's about respecting not only the animal but the entire food chain.' The approach to cooking minimises waste, which has a positive impact on the environment and is also a sustainable business practice, as 'small restaurants often benefit financially from making the most of lesser-used ingredients.'

Gordon Kerr, the owner of Blacklock, an award-winning steak and chophouse serving grass-fed meat, explains that the impact this approach has to the farming business. 'By using more of the animal, we use less animals,' he says, a practice which also allows farmers the time to care for the animals.

Dan Shearman, chef and founder of Carcass Cartel, a new event series that describes itself as 'a revolt against waste through modern whole animal eating, spearheaded by some of the UK's best chefs', believes that chefs aiming for zero-waste are often forced to be more creative. Nose-to-tail cooking is forward thinking in this respect, he says, and chefs and restaurateurs are positioning quality and sustainability as adjacent objectives. But nose-to-tail cooking still 'harks back to a time where wasting food was not an option, where cheaper cuts kept many families fed and nourished,' says Talati. Zoe Adjonyoh, of Zoe's Ghana Kitchen, adds: 'It has traditionally been a cooking style favoured by people who are impoverished.'

If nose to tail cooking in the UK was once about necessity and accessibility, today it has been ennobled. In practice this approach to eating is about the supply chain, with chefs speaking to their suppliers to see what is available to avoid waste or, like Blacklock does, look to purchase and use all of the animal. But it's a difficult approach for the average person to adopt on a daily basis.

Matt Chatfield, from the Cornwall Project, suggests that burgers can offer an easy way into understanding nose to tail eating. They are less intimidating than offal (which is a staple at St John's, for example) but still use the 'left over' cuts. He makes a correlation between the rise in popularity of burgers, with Instagram, and a wider understanding of nose to tail eating and meat quality. Although the burgers that make the rounds on social media are often high-end street food, as opposed to minced patties available in supermarkets, social media allows conversations on ethics



1. Andy Bates, a chef from Carcass Cartel.
2. Elizabeth Haigh of Kaizen House.
3. Dan Shearman, founder of Carcass Cartel.
4. St John's bone marrow.
5. Gordon Kerr, owner of Blacklock.

“Nose-to-tail cooking harks back to a time where wasting food was not an option, where cheaper cuts kept many families fed”

and sourcing to reach more people. But this discussion still privileges those that have time and money – how does nose-to-tail become common practice? For most people, accessibility comes down to what's available in the supermarket. The influential writer and academic Raj Patel is cautiously optimistic, citing a backlash against cheap and poor quality supermarket meat and

the rise of new 'super-farmers'-markets' from New York to Tokyo, which show a desire from farmers and consumers to be more closely connected.

The year ahead brings with it a number of events that confirm nose-to-tail eating is around to stay. Carcass Cartel will be hosting two events in June with some of London's most prominent chefs: expect smoked bone marrow and ox cheek rendang buns from Elizabeth Haigh of Kaizen House, crispy fried skate wing and bones with fish sauce caramel from John Chantarasak of AngloThai, and crispy lamb's head and tongue with 'brain-aise' and fermented nashi pear from Carcass Cartel founder Dan Shearman.

In May, Montoya is hosting a pop-up at Great Gun Social with chef Jay Morjaria, which will include such dishes as 'dish sisig (head) & jokbal (trotters)'. The permanent butcher/restaurants The Quality Chop House and Hill & Szrok, both in London, are also still thriving.

Twenty years on from the publication of *Nose to Tail Eating* comes another book from Henderson, *The Book of St John*, which continues and extends the conversation. The man who heralded a global culinary revolution with his nose-to-tail philosophy was just as popular then as he is now.