

Best piece of the beast

CLEAN EATING

FORGET KALE – THINK COMPOSTING, CONTAINERS AND RECYCLED COFFEE GROUNDS

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A new “clean” eating movement is devoted to dining with an eye to the environment. Every year millions of tonnes of food waste are tossed into landfill, along with takeaway cups, plastic containers and straws, but with many businesses doing the hard work and research for you, getting involved can be as easy as showing up and dining in (or out).

Closing the loop

At Park Street Dining, an all-day café and restaurant in Melbourne’s inner north, composting is a staple of the business.

“Our Gaia composting unit can process 100kg

of waste a day,” says chef and owner Jesse Gerner. “We compost all food waste that comes in from tables, including paper towels, coffee grounds, seafood, meat – even small bones.”

The resulting nutrient-rich water and biomass is used for the on-site herb and veggie garden. For \$5 you can pick up a bag of compost while there, too.

Jesse also runs Melbourne tapas bars Añada, Nómada and Bomba, where an extension to the rooftop bar is underway. “We’re trying to do more in kegs to save on bottles, and looking at [buying] an under-bar glass crusher,” he says.

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In Sydney, Dan the Man is on a mission to become the first catering company in Australia to operate with zero waste. The caterers recently hosted a sit-down “nose-to-tail” dinner event.

“We invited the number of people that a whole lamb would feed,” says general manager Ilana Cooper. “There were two long tables, and wherever you sat at the table dictated the part of the animal that you got: literally from head to tail.”

At Dan the Man catered events, home-made sodas

are on offer to reduce plastics, and green waste goes to the local Rose Bay Community Garden, which offers public tours and workshops.

For those wanting to support the business and impress at their next event, Dan the Man delivers pre-prepped cheese and antipasto platters around Sydney, and custom-made serving boards and spiced nut mixes Australia-wide.

The daily grind

A booming coffee industry across Asia, Australia and New Zealand »



LEFT TO RIGHT: Dan the Man's nose-to-tail event, loading up an OzHarvest truck, Singapore's Aloha Poké encourages BYO containers, shopping at The Source Bulk Foods.



also accounts for a rise in waste. And it's not only takeaway coffee cups, but the used coffee grounds that end up in landfill.

A crowdfunding campaign helped get Perth-based Life Cykel – an initiative to use coffee waste to set up mushroom farms – up and running. The first farm opened in Fremantle in 2015, followed by farms in Margaret River, Melbourne and Noosa within a year.

Coffee grounds are collected from local cafés and restaurants, and used to fertilise mushrooms. Once the mushrooms have been picked and sold to local eateries, the leftover soil is given to community gardens.

Next time you head out to Margaret River, drop into participating wineries Brookwood Estate and Vasse Felix. In Fremantle head to The Flour Factory, a renovated, three-storey mill with a rooftop bar; oceanside Bib and Tucker; or the historic Norfolk

Hotel. In Melbourne, try the mushies at Higher Ground or Top Paddock.

Melbourne-based Reground also recycles coffee waste from iconic cafés St Ali, Sensory Lab and Allpress, and popular tourist spots including the Botanical Hotel and the Immigration Museum. Venues are provided with a Reground bin for coffee grounds, which is then collected and delivered to community gardens and home gardeners to help improve soil quality.

Better bring your own BYO packaging has been gathering momentum steadily, and for good reason – bringing your own takeaway container is a simple way to ease your plastic consumption.

In Singapore, chain restaurant Aloha Poké actively encourages it. “As 75 per cent of our business is takeaway, we strongly promote our customers bringing their own containers,” says John Chen, one of the four founders. If you do,

you'll be rewarded with an added ingredient to your poké bowl.

Many cafés, like renowned Singaporean speciality coffee roaster Common Man Coffee Roasters, also offer discounts when you bring your own coffee cup.

For plastic-free grocery shopping at five Sydney locations, head to Naked Foods – purveyors of organic, locally sourced loose nuts and lentils, dried fruits and preserves, and kitchen staples such as flour, rice, spices and tea. Containers and jars are supplied, but you are welcome to bring your own. The Source Bulk Foods is another option, stocking unpackaged health foods in gravity bins at dozens of locations around Australia, – BYO receptacles and take

only what you need.

Food to the rescue

For food that is legally no longer fit for sale, but still deemed consumable, a last resort exists to save it ending up in the bin. Food rescue organisation OzHarvest started in Sydney with one van, but now operates nationally, collecting surplus food from commercial businesses and redistributing it to charities.

The first “rescued food” supermarket, OzHarvest Market in south-eastern Sydney suburb Kensington, opened last year. Here, you won't find a cash register at the check out but a donation box – and you can feel confident whatever you give helps the mission to reduce food waste. ✈