

Responsible restaurants & circular systems

What is a truly sustainable restaurant?

The project to transform Enoteca Saint VinSaint into a responsible, zero waste restaurant, based on a circular system of production and consumption began in 2008. But what does it mean to be a responsible restaurant?

If we think of a traditional restaurant model, as there are thousands around the world, at the centre of it all you will find the owner or the chef, who create dishes from their art, culture and experience, and who then go “hunting” for the best ingredients to execute them. It is not uncommon for menus to remain the same for many months without any changes, and often only parts of the ingredients are used to better shape the chef's creativity and technique: only the most beautiful part of the carrot, only the most tender part of the pig, only the buds or flowers of a certain plant to decorate. Let's not forget that these dishes will also be served to many people. Similar dishes using similar ingredients for several people every day.

Thinking further, these “food products” need to reach the great restaurants, the large chains and touristic establishments, as well as industrial restaurants, catering services, hospitals and companies, always with a certain standard, at a specific price, constancy and usually at pre-determined times. So the producer, who should deliver his products or sell them at the market, often yields to distributors. Whether in Michelin-starred restaurants or in large industrial food chains, or because of the chef's treasured

techniques, mass production practices, in the last few decades food waste is all too common. Peels or skins, branches, leaves, ugly vegetables, or just parts of vegetables that do not “fit” into that dish, most often end up in the garbage. And let's not forget that a great deal of these ingredients come from industrial producers or from conventional agriculture. There are also other factors that, whether in a Michelin restaurant or a fast food chain, add to the equation: washing towels, cutlery, cleaning products, paper towels, disposable packaging, suppliers that transport products over long distances, leaving a heavy carbon footprint, in addition to the obvious use of industrialized and/or imported products which abuse preservatives and air transport and come at a high price.

At the end of the day, unless we refer to small local and family restaurants (and even these should be taken with reservations), renowned restaurants are just as guilty as large chains. Whatever method is preferred, one thing is for sure today's “common” restaurant model is by no means a sustainable establishment. The very idea of a set menu is already against sustainability.

But let's come back to our first question. What is a sustainable, reasonable establishment? This was the question we asked ourselves twelve years ago.

Sustainability is much more than simply recycling the garbage or working with seasonal and organic products - although it

is of course all these practices as well, but this is just scratching the surface: we must go much deeper if we sincerely want to transform people's way of thinking and have a positive impact on the planet. A truly sustainable establishment is much more about taking a political, social and cultural position than just a business, although sustainability also clearly includes financial viability.

Let's take a look at some key points of a genuinely sustainable food establishment:

1. Garbage and waste: garbage sorting & recycling, recycling of oils, water treatment of cleaning materials, organic waste compost, full use of products (whole vegetables, animals nose to tail, parts usually not used). In some cases, taking the opportunity to use waste for other purposes: eggshell flour, biogas, bio fertilizer, flowerpot made from wine bottles or plastic bottles .
2. Water and energy: rainwater collection - in the cities, construction of wells or cisterns - in the countryside, use of solar energy, energy efficient light bulbs, replacement of electrical appliances by mechanical devices, minimization of the use of plastics, papers or fabrics that demand daily washing, substitution of conventional cleaning products for natural products or organic and biodegradable alternatives, administration of cooking alternating solar energy, gas, firewood and coal.
3. The menu: alternating and seasonal menus. Organic ingredients from small farmers and local producers who can sell directly to the establishment, without intermediaries. Decrease of dishes from animal origin coming from the meat, milk and dairy

industries, which today are the main cause of degradation of the environment, especially the cattle industry for livestock. Use of free-range animals fed naturally, without drugs, hormones or antibiotics. Use of techniques to take advantage of the whole animal or vegetable, such as fermentation, curing, preserves - which automatically bring back ancient and traditional techniques of preparation. Cultural salvage of ingredients and recipes is essential to restore pride to the small agricultural farmer and to the food artisans, especially in a country like Brazil, which forgets its history through the constant colonization of more "developed" countries.

4. Ingredients: we cannot talk about sustainability without talking about agriculture. Local and organic production is the only answer to all the imbalances of modern life. Diseases, agrarian crisis, overpopulation of cities, food industrialization, people's disconnection to food, food waste, animal cruelty, pollution of the planet, depletion of natural resources. The only path is to return to the consumption and stimulation of local, organic and family-run farming, stimulating local consumption and the resurgence of more fairs and grocery stores, to the detriment of distributors and supermarkets. Although this discourse is more obvious in a European context, as Brazil is a country in which misery and extreme industrialization coexist, so much so that the majority of rural producers do not consume their own products, but instead consume a classic, North-American, industrialized diet based on sugar, processed and refined products, salt, fat, flour, derivatives of transgenic corn, animal protein from large

industrial farms. We have more obese and diabetic people in our country than people who starve to death.

5. Employees and service: labour welfare, fair wages, off hours, presence of the owner in the establishment, personal approach to service and HR, conscious food for employees, constant training and sharing of sustainability information for the brigade's improvement of knowledge, service oriented to the client's education beyond the simple explanation of the dish, information about the ingredients and about nourishment. A sustainable food establishment should value human relations, information, education and the social and financial health of employees, partners and owners. A sustainable establishment is also one that can maintain itself, independent of banks or financial institutions.

One of the basic premises, if we summarize the concept of a sustainable restaurant, is the inversion of values. Agricultural production and nature must command the chef and the menu, not the other way around. Once again, sustainability is a political act, and even more so, a social and agrarian one.

The industrial food chain

Brazil is not a country that encourages agriculture, but rather encourages agribusiness.

As the "agri" was dropped from the culture and replaced solely by "business", we are faced with the considerable issue of social, cultural, nourishment, environmental and financial health. We are already a country with an inferiority syndrome, and culturally, although we have an incredibly rich history and traditions, we do not value them. Which is a great opportunity for the massive

industrialization of the nation. Lack of culture, misery and lack of a sense of belonging to and unity as a nation, coupled with chaotic policies and a history based on corruption, bureaucracy and a lack of ethics, have made us a target for the industrial machine to infiltrate our daily lives easily. The Brazilian political and industrial system insist on keeping the majority of the population uneducated, since ignorance is still the best way to control a people, especially a people with low self-esteem such as Brazilians. So when a persuasive pesticide salesman comes to your door saying he has the solution for your crop, you simply believe him.

Agribusiness, especially large cattle farms and transgenic corn, soybean monocultures, are responsible for the deforestation of the Amazon, the killings of militants and resistant communities, the rural exodus, the lack of work in the countryside, the influx to large cities, the lack of jobs in the cities and the progressive increase of homeless people, as well as being the driving force behind the entire poison industry. Other problems, for example, slave labour - which still exists although nobody speaks about it - is mainly found in agribusiness (75% of slave labour comes from the agribusiness). It also gradually erases the whole history and culture of a people who are not proud of their roots, as well as exterminating the biodiversity of animals and plants that are falling into oblivion. Soy, Brazil's largest export, occupies an area of 33 thousand hectares (about four times the size of Scotland) and uses more than 50% of all agrochemicals consumed in the country. 96% of corn production in the country is transgenic. 89% for soybeans. 70% of which goes to animal, cattle, chicken and fish feed industries.

Brazil holds the title of largest consumer of pesticides in the world, in addition to being known as a country of "toxic waste leakage". Some agrochemicals banned for

decades in Europe, Africa, the USA and Asia are sent to Brazil at extremely low prices, and political lobbies approve their use. Of the 504 active ingredients present in agrochemicals in the country, 149 are banned in the EU. Among the top 10 in the country, 2 are banned in the EU. Brazilian law allows 5,000 times more glycoside residues in water than European legislation. Added to the official cases (since the majority are not registered), we have more than 25 thousand cases of pesticide intoxication. And while we have one of the stricter, bureaucratic, and almost impossible to enforce sanitary laws, which is also the result of a system that obliges people to bribe inspectors, we deal with the fact that there is no real inspection over the use of chemical products. There are controls over the minimum used, but not the maximum. Most of the time the instructions of use of agrochemicals, for small producers, is in the hands of companies that sell the products. Thus, we often see a usage of 3 to 5 times more pesticides than allowed and indicated, besides the misinformation and unprotected application. Most small farmers in the countryside are illiterate and have not studied - and in a country that does not boast or preserve its agricultural traditions, we are still brainwashed by the green revolution of the 60s, a mentality that remains to this day.

The typical diet of rice and beans, praised in literature for years, is no longer a Brazilian reality. The indigenous food culture and traditional medicine have been relegated to very specific communities or to folklore. Even our tapioca, a genuinely Brazilian product, already comes mostly in sachets with preservatives and chemical additives. Few Brazilians know how to make a tapioca from cassava, an incredibly interesting process that most identifies our food culture.

The average Brazilian has adopted a typically industrialized western diet over the

last decades, which has increased the cases of "modern" lifestyle and food diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, degenerative diseases, cancer, depression, etc. Looking at consumption, in the last decades the big distributors, the big supermarkets and the big food industries have taken over and replaced the street market, the local producer, and the grocery store. In the area of health, and I won't spend any time on this matter, Brazil is like any system that works directly with the food and pharmaceutical industry who work hand in hand. And to make things worse, without the support of a decent public health system.

The distribution issue in the country is the same as in any developing country, which relies on industrial food. Tons of food is wasted in the distribution chain. There is a surplus of coffee harvested in the 1990s in government stocks, which is now subject to fungus and disease, and which is incinerated, ground, and sold to large, cheap coffee companies. A more specific example is that 20 tons of organic grapes went to waste only in the city of São Paulo in March of this year, due to the lack of demand towards this type of product in the market, as there is no differentiation made between organic and non-organic.

The neglect in some regions is so great that even the responsible public institutions or agencies do not have on record how many or whether there are any organic producers in their region.

Selling sustainable food & wine: Brazil's (lack of) policies that support small farmers and organic production:

Agricultural and food production laws in Brazil are still rooted in the 1970s, and are aimed at mass industrial production. Although we have a few bills, such as ART and the Colonial Wine Law, we do not yet

have a framework for small artisanal producer of non pasteurized products, such as the garage natural wine maker, small basement dairies, the traditional confectioners who make their jams at home. And even if some are able to regularize their sanitary norms situation, they are then crushed by the tax system. And vice versa. Corruption, delinquency and clandestinity represent more than half of the reality of every Brazilian entrepreneur, farmer or artisan. To put it simply, for you to be able to market your product, you need the sanitary and tax structure of a small industry. A worldwide known case was about the tons of cheese that went to waste during a music event in Rio de Janeiro, because the products did not have the seal that allows crossing the state's border. Another case was the destruction of more than 4000 bottles of a small wine maker in Rio Grande do Sul, who was charged with the "crime" of illegal production and trade in beverages not suitable for consumption. The volatile acidity was seen as harmful to health, according to prosecutors.

The project of Enoteca Saint VinSaint:

Today I consider that we have reached 80% of our expectation in the design of this "model" of restaurant.

The Enoteca has a family structure: myself and a reduced salon and kitchen team, with defined but not static functions, so that the sharing of information and functions is constant.

We work only with organic and artisanal products, eliminating any and all industrialized products. We produce 60% of our vegetables and work with small farmers around the city of São Paulo, stimulating the small organic farmer.

We collect rainwater, use solar energy, recycle garbage, only work with organic or

free range meats, from small producers. We use only non unrefined oils, and we recycle oil, use only low-impact biological cleaners. We do not have tablecloths, we use whole vegetables, legumes & fruits and we reuse everything we can: coffee grounds, skin & peels, branches, leaves. We produce our own eggs and milk.

We rescue old techniques of processing; fermentation and preserves to better enjoy the food. We made a roof garden; we only serve organic, natural or biodynamic wines, with emphasis on small Brazilian production. We do not have a fixed menu, and we make the dishes and recipes daily to be able to optimize the garden, the producers and the seasonality. All the processes are made from the beginning: our condensed milk is made from raw milk, the tomato sauce from the fresh tomatoes of the garden, we make our own butter, ricotta, sour cream, preserves, jams, etc. The list could be endless.

On top of that, we work in partnership with organic markets to collect their leftovers, with producers who end up with a surplus due to a super-harvest and with large supermarket chains whose organic products' sell-by date is approaching, managing to "buy" this surplus, avoiding food waste and loss for the organic producer. With what we cannot reuse in the restaurant, we make food for homeless people and also natural food for our animals.

We ourselves work with products that, legally, simply do not exist. And this is the reality of Brazil. If you want to work only with organic, artisanal, local and pure products, you have to leave the business sphere to fight a guerrilla. And invariably fall into some sort of clandestinity. That is why, besides the sustainable work we do in the restaurant and with small producers, we actively work on the political scope to encourage changes in the country's laws regarding beverages, non pasteurized

products and artisanal food products. If we are what we eat, we have to start changing our eating habits to become the people we want to be, and build the world we want to live in. That is why today there is no way to think of entrepreneurship in the food sector without thinking about sustainability. This is the future, and also, I believe, the only way.

Principles:

Not having a set menu. Only determining the dishes after having received the ingredients from our garden and our organic suppliers. Respecting seasons and dietary traditions. Not wasting. Extracting as much as possible from all ingredients. Repurposing. Getting to know the producers. Allowing nature and farmers to tell us what to use and cook each season. For us, the true value of food is in the people who cultivate it in this small scale that is also mindful, local, and sustainable.

All the herbs, vegetables, eggs, and goat milk come straight from our organic farm.

However, we believe in circular consumption and production systems, and being self-sufficient doesn't necessarily mean being sustainable.

We want people who are in the fields to remain in the fields, caring for the land; that's the reason we have spent over a decade building a network of hundreds of artisanal, organic farmers who work the land cleanly and respectfully and provide their products directly to us. We also buy products from the main institutes that promote direct contact between consumers and farmers. Our list of suppliers is open and available to anyone who wishes to use them.

Menu & Vegetable Gardens:

Our menu is 100% organic and seasonal, with ingredients grown in our gardens or

those of small artisanal producers. Some ingredients also come from different parts of the country, such as the cornmeal from Rio Grande do Sul, the tapioca from Rio Grande do Norte, and the raw cheeses from Minas Gerais. We believe the crops, the seasons, and the producers should determine what we cook, not the other way around. That's the reason we don't have a set menu. We create seasonal menus according to the ingredients' daily or monthly availability. In addition to the dishes listed on the blackboard, we have designed menus in 4 or 6 courses for a more complete experience of our concept.

More than 60% of our menu is plant-based. We have been growing all the herbs and vegetables we offer in our menu in our organic gardens since 2015. Our vegetable garden is also the source of our eggs, laid by free-range chickens fed with natural food and fresh goat milk. Everything we don't grow or produce ourselves, we buy directly from producers or institutes who promote direct contact between consumers and farmers. Our list of suppliers is comprised of hundreds of organic and artisanal producers we found in the last decade, and it is available for those who wish to receive it by e-mail.

We use the entirety of our materials, whether they are animals or plants. From milk, we extract all derivatives: butter, cream, serum. We look for new ways to use raw materials and also try to find and use unconventional food plants, such as medicinal herbs and edible flowers that grow spontaneously in our orchard. We solely work with artisanal, sustainable, and seasonal fishing, and prefer small fish to big fish.

We use only fresh milk, from our goats or friends' cows, which we know how are fed and treated. We make our plant milks using coconut, seeds, grains, or nuts. The pulp left after the milk is strained is made into flour

and used in cakes, cookies, and bread's recipes. The whey that remains from making curd, yogurt, butter, and cream returns as an ingredient to recipes like those for rice, doce de leite (a milk-based caramel cream), fermented foods, sauces, as well as being used as fertilizer for our garden.

Our bread uses natural long fermentation, and for the base, only ancient grains, as well as manioc flour, heirloom cornmeal, and a series of repurposed ingredients such as peels, legumes, vegetable milk, and coffee grounds. Every week we receive fresh cow milk and use it to make fermented butter, curd, and heavy cream. Whenever possible, we also use milk from our goats.

Responsible circular system

We spend a large portion of our time using and repurposing elements in and outside of our kitchen.

We use the entirety of our materials, whether they are animals or plants. We look for new ways to use raw materials and also try to find and use unconventional food plants, such as medicinal herbs and edible flowers that grow spontaneously in our gardens.

All the herbs, vegetables, eggs, and goat milk come straight from our organic farm, however, we believe in circular consumption and production systems, and being self-sufficient doesn't necessarily mean being sustainable. We want people who are in the fields to remain in the fields, caring for the land; that's the reason we have spent over a decade building a network of hundreds of artisanal, organic farmers who work the land cleanly and respectfully and provide their products directly to us. We also buy products from the main institutes that promote direct contact between consumers and farmers. Our list of suppliers is open and available to anyone who wishes to use them.

We sort everything that is recyclable and take it to recycling stations in our neighborhood. We make our own artisanal paper for the grocery store with used paper that would end up in the trash. The corks, we use inside cardboard boxes to transport wine bottles.

Besides our network of organic producers, we work with friends who collect leftovers from street markets, ugly-looking vegetables, and returned produce from large retailers.

We have replaced our electrical circuit with a more cost-effective setup and installed solar energy panels to heat our water – our plan is to start using only solar energy for the restaurant in the next few years. We are gradually installing water collectors and building a green roof, which will be our orchard for sprouts and a school.

Composting, repurposing & recycling:

We have an organic garden that supplies our restaurant. Since we opt for keeping a circular system, nothing goes to waste. We use, repurpose, and as a last resort, we compost. This composting is done by us, and the compost is returned to the garden as fertilizer for new crops. We have composters and a worm farm. The fertilizers are made with leftovers from the kitchen that would otherwise end up in the trash, as well as pruning wastes, leaves, straw from the animal's beddings, and manure from our chickens and goats.

Eggshells, used coffee grounds and cooking oil, fruit and vegetable peels, leftover wine inside the bottles – everything is put to use and gets transformed. Whatever we don't use in our dishes will feed our team or be repurposed and turned into new products such as pestos, flours, compotes, extracts, and pickles. A portion of that we use as natural feed for our animals, and we prepare meals for all of them: goats,

chickens, dogs, cats. The goats give us fresh milk and the chickens, the eggs we use in our kitchen. As a last resort, the leftovers go to composters.

Vegetable peels become biomass or return to dishes as decorations and side portions. Stems are used to make lacto-fermented pickles. Leaves become green extract for stocks and sauces, or green juices for brunch. Toasted pumpkin seeds garnish dishes, and papaya seeds become seasoning. With branches and herbs, we make oils and pestos. Medicinal herbs are used in infusions and *garrafadas*. Unconventional food plants become ingredients.

The vinegar is made with the wine that is left from what we serve the tables. We save the used coffee grounds to make cakes, bread, flours, and even cold brews with cocoa beans' shells and lime peel. The citric peels we save and dry for infusions or jams and compotes, or even for cleaning products we make ourselves. The used cooking oil is turned into soap with added papaya leaves from our gardens. The used coffee grounds are also used as fertilizer, and the vinegar is used for pickling and cleaning.

The flour remnants from coconut and nut milks are put back into bread and cake recipes. With onion peels, we make a medicinal infusion. We save all the eggshells, then dry and grind them to make an eggshell powder that we use to supplement our garden, our food, or our animals' feed.

We sort everything that is recyclable and take it to recycling stations in our neighborhood. We make artisanal paper for the grocery store with used paper that would end up in the trash. The corks, we use inside cardboard boxes to transport wine bottles. The empty wine bottles we use as water or vinegar bottles.

Natural wines:

We are pioneers in working with natural wines in Brazil. Our wine list is 100% natural, organic and biodynamic since 2010 and has about 200 labels in rotation monthly, served in their bottles or by the glass.

We prioritize Brazilian wines and work alongside all the natural producers in the country. In addition to wines, our menu offers other beverages such as ciders, beers, infusions, teas, coffees, kombuchas, and distilled beverages, all of which are organic or biodynamic.

The seasonal infusions are made with herbs we cultivate, and they change throughout the year. The cold brews are made with reused products, such as used coffee grounds, fruit peels, and kombuchas, made with ingredients from our gardens. The teas – from China, India, and Brazil – are organic and selected each season. The *garrafada* (a Brazilian alcoholic infusion) uses medicinal plants from our gardens and organic cachaça. We make our pour-over coffee with freshly ground beans from the best roasters in Brazil. The options change every week.

N1 & N2: these are our wines. "N" is the initial letter of Natureba, natural, and nitrogen – and our way of fertilizing the land and the Brazilian wine market. Made of organic grapes and with natural vinification, these wines were born to broaden the organic production in our country. When the farmers have excess crops, we make our wines. When they don't, we don't. Each year we pick a different farmer and partner with them to make wine according to "our ways" and with a more affordable price point.