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Be EB

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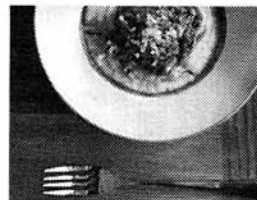
GATHER

By the time the “waste-not-want-not” sensibility of the Great Depression reached the Sixties, it had morphed into something more like “grow your own” (multiple implications intended). Now East Bay culinary wunderkind **Ari Derfel** and **Eric Fenster** have seized the essence of both mantras in **Gather**, their newly launched, all-organic, über-green restaurant. Situated on the ground floor of the new **David Brower Center** at 2200 Oxford St. in downtown Berkeley, Gather demonstrates the same fierce dedication to local organic farmers and energy and resource conservation that defined the duo's groundbreaking 2001 venture, Back to Earth Organic Catering, one of the first such services in the United States.

Surveying a dinner menu that spans everything from vegan charcuterie (\$14) and kale salad (\$9), to braised pork with fresh-milled polenta and greens (\$17) and burgers with fries (\$12.50), a naive diner might be forgiven for wondering about the method behind Gather's all-inclusive madness. Five words explain it all: “We emphasize purity of ingredients,” says Derfel of the disparate menu offerings, 50 percent of which are vegan or vegetarian. And, he adds, “We research distribution systems and sources to ensure that farmers and their workers are fairly compensated.”

Aside from serving up Gourmet Ghetto-level fare, Derfel and Fenster see their mission as educational. Blackboards above the open kitchen list the sources for the week's produce and meats, define arcane ingredients (can you say “cardoan”?), and offer pithy quotes from the likes of local foodie hero Michael Pollan.

Executive chef **Sean Baker**, who spent six years at San Francisco's swanky vegetarian eatery Millennium, practices what he calls “root-to-shoot cooking”: “We use the whole vegetable—or animal—in an intelligent way.” And in keeping with the garbage-sparing theme, all of designer **Nicole Sillapere's** interiors, from tables and chairs to the kitchen's backsplash, are constructed from recycled or reclaimed materials (Sonoma High grads might recognize their bleachers). Another first: Gather's fully stocked bar consists of sustainable, organic, or bio-dynamically grown wine and spirits. From “stems and seeds” to “root to shoot”—*plus* organic cucumber mojitos? Now that's what you call evolutionary.



Evolutionary eats.

—Andrea Pflaumer