



Jeremy Clark

Platter Matter

Jeremy Clark bemoans the good old fashioned days when fish'n'chips were served in newspaper rather than on a heavy slab of slate!



The other day I was in a restaurant in a posh English market town with my mother, and ordered fish and chips.

Naturally it wasn't called 'Fish'n'Chips' but something along the lines of 'Line Caught North Sea Cod avec les Batons de King Edward Frites et les Mushy Peas'.

It was brought to me, not wrapped in a newspaper, but on a slab of Welsh slate with the chips placed in a miniature wire grocery cart and the peas in some sort of ramekin.

Subsequently, when in a Middle Eastern hotel, I ordered steak with mashed potato. This was brought on a 7kg lump of driftwood with the mash in a tiny 'Le Creuset-type' pot with gravy in an Aladdin's lamp from the tourist kiosk.

In both cases I asked the server to kindly bring me a warm, round white plate and, before they could escape, scrape my dinner from the articles of

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modern art onto a proper eating receptacle.

Chefs these days, not content with re-naming simple menu items in some sort of flowery chef-speak, are now increasingly enhancing this pretentious nonsense by replacing a sensible plate with an upturned dustbin lid or a ceramic roof tile. These are impossible for anyone but a builder to actually pick up.

I fear this level of craziness will soon make its way on board aircraft as the catering teams look for ever more bizarre ways of standing out. Thankfully, the fact that galley design and dimensions have not changed since the 1940's, the restrictions and regulations are such that whatever they come up with still has to fit into a standard tray and cart.

That doesn't stop some classic examples of ridiculous design versus practicality.

Coffee cups designed by Yves St Laurent or Gucci work brilliantly as long as the aircraft doesn't move but are useless as soon as you have slight turbulence. Equally, cheap plastic glasses buckle when full of liquid and empty themselves over your neighbour's arm. I am wary of this idea of 're-purposing' materials.

'Repurposing' is a new term that actually means 'using rubbish for something for which it was not designed'. This comes with such a raft of safety regulations that we are unlikely to see an old 707 wingtip used as a canapé tray or the wheel bearing from a deHaviland Comet as a napkin ring any time soon.

So the battle, for the time being at least, is restricted to the pretentious over-priced restaurants who feel the only way to enhance their mediocre food is by serving it on a hub-cap or reconditioned TV screen. That reminds me, I have a box of assorted bric-a-brac in the garage . . . perhaps I should put an ad in *The Caterer?*

