

'It really is possible to be zero waste': the restaurant with no bin

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- What's the best meal you've ever eaten? Why did you like it?
- How important is it for you to know where your food comes from?

2 Key words

a. Match the words (1-10) with their definitions (a-j). Then find and highlight the words in the article.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. agriculture _____ | a. picked or collected food from a farm or garden |
| 2. ancestors _____ | b. the top layer of the ground where plants grow |
| 3. bin _____ | c. people in your family who lived a long time ago |
| 4. canals _____ | d. a place where you put things you don't want, such as rubbish |
| 5. food waste _____ | e. food that people don't eat and throw away |
| 6. harvested _____ | f. the business of growing food or keeping animals for food |
| 7. impact _____ | g. when all parts of something are used and nothing is thrown away |
| 8. refrigerated _____ | h. special water channels where things are moved by boat |
| 9. soil _____ | i. the effect or result something has |
| 10. zero waste _____ | j. kept cold so that it stays fresh (for food) |

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. Some Mexican farmers use _____ to bring food from their farms to the city.
2. We _____ the vegetables in the morning and sold them at the market in the afternoon.

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3. Milk from the farm is _____, so it stays cold.
4. _____ is a problem in restaurants when people don't finish their meals.
5. My _____ came from a small village in the mountains.
6. The rain this year had a serious _____ on the fruit trees.
7. The _____ in this area is good for growing corn and potatoes.
8. We put our rubbish in a large _____ on the street.
9. Some restaurants try to be _____, which means they don't throw anything away.
10. _____ is very important in this country; many people work on farms.

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- 1 In a modern restaurant kitchen, a team of chefs are using ingredients that are usually **thrown away**. The Mexico City restaurant where they work looks like most restaurant kitchens but it doesn't have one important item: a bin.
- 2 In 2024, brothers Lucio and Pablo Usobiaga and chef Doug McMaster opened Baldío. The food, which has a Michelin green star, is creative but still very Mexican. The team also **set up** Arca Tierra, an agriculture project with 50 farmers in central Mexico and their own farm in Xochimilco, a neighbourhood in the south of Mexico City.
- 3 "Restaurants can have a big environmental impact," says Lucio Usobiaga. "We want Baldío to show that it's possible to be both zero waste and to **rely on** farmers rather than supermarkets."
- 4 Baldío's relationship with Xochimilco and the canals there is very important. Although this ecosystem is **threatened by** the growing city, many people still farm chinampas (small islands in the canals made from trees, flowers and mud).
- 5 As well as buying ingredients from five local families, Arca Tierra has 18 chinampas. They produce enough to supply 50 per cent of Baldío's food. The farmers use food waste from Baldío's kitchen and mix it with the soil. The fruit and vegetables that grow there are of very good quality and can be harvested 365 days a year. The restaurant's chefs, who visit every Monday to plan that week's menus, often **help out**.
- 6 Ingredients travel by boat to Xochimilco and then another 8 kilometres by truck to La Baldega. Because the food doesn't travel very far from the farm to the restaurant it doesn't need to be refrigerated. This means it is better for the environment.
- 7 For 74-year-old Noy Coquis Saldedo, the project means he can farm his land in the traditional way. "It's very sad that young people don't want to farm anymore," he says. "But now we are delivering food to the great city like my ancestors did."
- 8 For Lucio Usobiaga, the relationship between the *chinampas* and Baldío is a plan for the future. "I hope the project shows people that a better food system is possible."
- 9 And the food? When the Guardian tasted it, it was delicious: Mexican – yet also something completely its own.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the correct option based on the information in the article.

1. What is unusual about Baldío's kitchen?
 - a. It has very modern equipment.
 - b. It doesn't have a rubbish bin.
 - c. It has a large team of chefs.
2. How much of Baldío's food comes from their own farm?
 - a. 25 per cent
 - b. 50 per cent
 - c. 75 per cent
3. What are chinampas?
 - a. types of restaurants in Mexico City
 - b. traditional Mexican dishes
 - c. small areas of land
4. Why is Baldío's food better for the environment?
 - a. It doesn't travel very far.
 - b. It grows faster than normal food.
 - c. It is all organic.
5. What does Noy Coquis Saldedo say about young people?
 - a. They aren't so interested in farming.
 - b. They prefer working in restaurants.
 - c. They use a lot of food delivery companies

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4 Key language

a. Match the phrasal verbs in bold in the article to these definitions.

1. to start something such as a business _____
2. to do a job or support someone _____
3. put in the rubbish because it wasn't needed _____
4. in danger from something that could cause harm or damage _____
5. to depend on; to need something or someone for support _____

b. Complete the sentences with phrasal verbs from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. Jan _____ at a local community centre in the school holidays.
2. In some areas, animals are _____ hunters.
3. My parents _____ at a local food bank.
4. Children _____ their parents for love and support.
5. Don't _____ those newspapers! I need them.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Do you think it's possible to have a 'zero waste' business? Why or why not?
- Would you like to eat at a restaurant like Baldío? Why or why not?

6 In your own words

a. Work in small groups to create a list of five ideas on how to make your kitchen and cooking more sustainable. Think about the answers to these questions before you start:

- How could you include 'zero waste' ideas into your everyday cooking?
- What per cent of your ingredients could you find locally?
- What would you do with leftovers and garbage?

b. Share your list with your classmates.