

NATURE

Humus x hortense transforms raw natural ingredients into something delicious, well-composed and beautiful.

Rawness meets aesthetics:

Initially the transformation happens linear:

From field to table, from farmer (Dries Delanote) to chef (Nicolas Decloedt),

From belgian oak to tailor-made tables (Artwood) and chairs (Alain Berteau by Wildspirit)

From belgian clay (quarry Hins near Brussels) to ceramic tableware (Caroline Baerten)

The process is value and eco-driven and not ego-focused.

The mindful selection of natural ingredients is informed by quality, craftsmanship, ethics and sustainability.

Ecology meets gastronomy, sustainability through deliciousness:

Already in 2008, the term 'botanical gastronomy' is for the first time coined by Caroline Baerten and Nicolas Decloedt to describe their sustainable approach to haute cuisine.

Humus x Hortense is the first fine dining restaurant in Belgium which has a 100% zero-waste and sustainable policy as their benchmark and with daily processes in place

Sustainability is expressed in every domain of the fine dining restaurant:

1. Food and drinks

- Botanical gastronomy with plant-based ingredients (no meat or fish) to decarbonize the tasting menu
- 100% organic, bird and bee-friendly farming (vegetables, herbs, grains, pulses, eggs, butter, oil, cheese, ...)
- local (<100 km radius from restaurant)
- The tasting menu follows 24 microseasons instead of 4 seasons
- Fair coffee, chocolate and sugar of small-scale, non-industrial farmers
- Biodynamic, natural and organic Belgian and European wines from small-scale winemakers
- Actively promoting artisanal spirits and beers from Belgian and Brussels microbreweries
- Belgian cheese and butter selection are always "fromage/beurre-fermier"

2. Zero-waste

- Food waste is kept to a minimum through initiatives that can be delightfully delicious and cultivated through the art of drying, pickling and fermenting such as the lacto-fermentation of vegetable peels.
- Food waste is kept to a minimum thanks to the roots-to-leave approach to vegetables. Different parts of the same ingredient are used in the menu or infused, dried or fermented for zero-waste botanical cocktails and mocktails. Such as with leeks where the roots are fried, the white part is laquered with home-made miso and the green tops are infused in vodka or non-alcoholic verjus to create a drink pairing along with the dish.
- Any part of the food that can't be reused and all kitchen scraps will go to a separate container and finally become compost, in collaboration with the environmental department of the city of Brussels

3. Waste reduction

Every employee is trained to recycle glass, paper, cans, plastic and corks of wine bottles with a detailed system in place

4. Bottled water

Since the beginning of humus x hortense, no longer bottled water is used thanks to an ingenious microfilter system to create purified still and sparkling water

5. Reusable incentive program

- Reusable containers for kitchen storage and post-consumer recycled plastic containers
- Reusable napkins and bathroom towels of eco-cotton
- No coffee filters thanks to the use of French press coffee brew

6. Chemical and air pollution reduction

- To encourage sustainable mobility, all transport by the employees and owners of humus x hortense is done by public transport, alternative electric vehicles and bicycles. Once a week a car is rented during 2 hours by a car sharing company for grocery shopping. Deliveries of the farm are made by a cooperative pick-up system to serve several restaurants in Brussels at the same time
- With a detailed communication strategy about train, metro and bus lines, the restaurant nudges the guests towards more eco-friendly transportation options.
- In order to reduce chemical pollution, all cleaning products for kitchen and front of the house are screened on green certification. The workwear of staff, napkins and towels are cleaned by a qualified environmental-friendly cleaning company

7. Water efficiency policy

- The vegetable, fruit and wine farmers, which are selected by the restaurant, are following a conscious water policy where water is reduced to the minimal in order to reduce water waste and to invite the roots to grow deeper in the soil. This sustainable policy leads to more concentrated foods in terms of enhanced flavors and nutrients.
- Every employee is instructed to save water in the preparation process
- During service, the water is served upon request of the guests and any non-used water after service is used for tea and coffee.

8. Sustainable design and objects

- Hand-made tables from Brussels woodmaker (Artwood), made of Belgian PEFC oak
- Hand-made chairs from Brussels designer (Alain Berteau by Wildspirit), made of Belgian PEFC oak
- Hand-made reusable towels and napkins of eco-cotton, made by migrant women (of Molenbeek)
- Tailor-made ceramic tableware of Belgian clay, made by co-owner Caroline Baerten
- Workwear of staff of Belgian eco-denim, made by Brussels-Paris based slow fashion label Façon Jacmin

9. Energy efficiency policy

- The restaurant runs on a green energy provider (Mega, Belgium)
- All energy consuming lights are replaced by LED lighting
- Energy saving equipment for dishwasher, fridge, steamer and oven
- Occupancy sensors in restrooms

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Humus x hortense is a haute cuisine restaurant with a mere 10 tables.

Fine dining hospitality meets human connection.

The exchange is not linear, it is circular and caring.

The chef (Nicolas Decloedt) inspires the farmer (Dries Delanote) to produce unknown and tasteful ingredients by showing the culinary possibilities. There is not only a farm-to-table dynamic but also a table-to-farm relationship. This active engagement to support sustainable farmers is expressed by the 'Green Plates' project; a charity project on voluntary basis and founded by the owners Caroline Baerten and Nicolas Decloedt in 2016 to support eco-friendly agricultural practices in Belgium (local spelt variety of Epautre d'Ardenne, food forest of Le Monde de Mille Couleurs).

In this systemic approach, the restaurant rewinds to the origins of foods and objects.

It is about going full circle, giving back from cradle to grave.

By personally connecting with Belgian craftsmen and craftswomen, the local economy benefits directly from this exchange and a century-old tradition of craftsmanship in wood making, ceramics or willow baskets can be kept alive till today.

Through their final objects, our guests reconnect with the artisans behind a craft, the natural materials (wood, clay, willow) and ultimately with nature.

The process is we-driven and not I-focused.

A chef can't run a restaurant on its own, a healthy functioning network is essential.

There are four focal points of wellbeing in this system:

1. Well being of employees

There is a progressive and conscious personnel policy:

- With weekly checking in and attention for psychological and physical health (nutritious staff food, homeopathic medicine, essential oils and medicinal herbs available if needed)
- Creating a safe, respectful and equal workplace for women, colored people and LGBTQ

2. Well being of producers, and the employees working for producers

Honest wages for farmers North and South, safe and healthy work environment for their employees (ethical fashion, foods and products)

Cheap food always comes at the cost of people and environment

3. Well being of guests

Expressed through enlightened hospitality and gracious service

Serving and eating food is the most intimate connection between chef and guest. The guest is taken on a culinary journey in the hands of the chef, his team and facilitated by the host as the first contact.

A guest can only be truly nourished if he or she feel acknowledged in his/her needs.

- Through adapting to dietary needs and by offering nutritious food (screened by qualified nutritionist Caroline Baerten)
- Through adapting to their ethical needs
- Through adapting to their human needs to be seen and to be heard

4. Well being of all living beings

The most radical act of kindness for the planet is serving a botanical menu, based on ethical and planetary-healthy considerations from the origins of foods till their final destination.

This document is created after extensive research by Caroline Baerten.

Based on the criteria of GoodFood.Brussels, the Green Restaurant Association and EIT Lancet Report