



Fish and Greens from your Living Room

French designer Mathieu Lehanneur is renowned for his exquisite modernist designs that boast an equally important ecological purpose. His latest creation, recently displayed at the Artists Space Gallery in New York, is *Local River*, an indoor, self-contained, living ecosystem.

The unit breeds freshwater fish, that share the space with kitchen vegetables housed in floating glass pods. The plants extract nutrients from the fishes' nitrate-rich waste and also act as a natural filter, purifying and maintaining a vital balance for the environment in which the fish live.

Mathieu drew inspiration for his design from a gathering of culinary adventurers known as The Locavores. The group's aim is to only eat food grown within a 100-mile radius of their homes. In doing so, they avoid the pollution inherent to the transportation of food stuffs, while

also ensuring product traceability, safety and taste freshness.

"Our food now travels an average of 1,500 miles before finally ending up on our plates," says a Locavores member. "This globalisation of the food supply has very serious consequences for the environment but also for our health, our communities and our tastebuds."

Mathieu's *Local River* is essentially a conjoined DIY fish farm and miniature vegetable patch, based on the principle of aquaponics and focused on the exchange and interdependence of two living organisms, plants and fish. This same technique is used on large-scale, pioneer, aquaponic farms, that raise Tilapia – fish from the Far East – and grow lettuce in trays on the surface of the same ponds.

"*Local River* responds to an everyday need for fresh food that is 100 per cent

traceable," says Matthieu. "It bets on a return to farm-raised freshwater fish – trout, eel, perch, carp, etc – given the dwindling supplies of many saltwater species due to over-fishing. It also allows fish-farmers to deliver their stock alive to a private consumer, with a guarantee of optimum freshness – impossible in the case of saltwater fish that's been netted."

Mathieu hopes that his beautiful-cum-functional fish hatchery and 'veg' patch could eventually replace the decorative but useless television aquarium – and for those who do not have any outdoor space to grow their own, this may be an effective solution to the food dilemma.

Contact: www.mathieulehanneur.com and www.locavores.com

Local River for homegrown fish and greens. Photo: © Mathieu Lehanneur

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