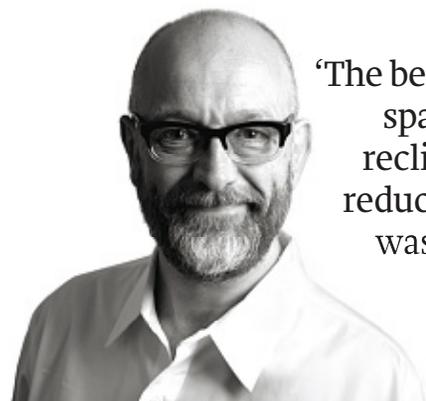


# Tim Hayward



‘The bed on which the spare ribs teriyaki reclined, a jam-like reduction of tomato, was awe-inspiring’

## Meat market forces

### Kul, Copenhagen

It's becoming one of the functional rules of the itinerant restaurant-goer's life that, on arriving in a new town, one should immediately check out the old meat market.

The Copenhagen market is called Kødbyen (it translates, pleasingly, as Meatsville) and is a small architectural jewel. Though it's become a hip “quarter” for bars, restaurants and an excellent craft beer scene, the governing authority has ensured that nothing can be insensitively modernised and that some of the traditional trades still take place. Tonight, a grazing herd of hipsters sips saison beer where, by chucking out time, a phalanx of iron-hard bummares (porters) will be slinging hogs on to hooks. If you, too, are a fan of seared meat, niche ales and interwar Danish modernism, Meatsville might just be your personal nirvana.

Kul (which means coal or charcoal and sums up neatly the predominant cooking method) is built into an old wholesale butcher. The walls are lined with the original tiles, eroded by hard years and now seamlessly integrated into a rigorously modern interior design scheme. They've somehow managed a broad palette of matt blacks and the sort of light fittings that cost as much as a small Greek island. In spite of the interior's visual rigour, the staff are relaxed, humane and cheerily heterodox. They also speak far better English than the staff of any London restaurant. The soundtrack – an incongruous yet brilliant playlist of disco hits – was too omnipresent to ignore.

Raw Norwegian lobster meat (“Let Your Feelings Show”, Earth Wind & Fire, 1979) was served on a fennel purée with a jug full of hot jus created from the other parts of the beast. To say that this was an unexpected combination would be an understatement, yet this was true of just about everything at Kul.



Kul's rigorously modern interior; below, spare ribs teriyaki

#### KUL

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Trout in insensitive hands can be a hopeless fish. The flavour is so delicate that a kind of muddiness often overpowers. The local trout served at Kul doesn't avoid this at all but bizarrely enhances it with a combination of a dashi-based liquid and lightly preserved cherries. The boosted earthiness becomes, as they say in tech circles, “not a bug but a feature” and one that displays an astonishing skill in delivery and understanding of ingredients (“Be of My Love”, The Emotions, 1977).

The nearest experience you're likely to have had to choosing from a Danish wine list is being pinned down and comprehensively beaten in the kidneys while having your bank account syphoned by Chinese government-funded hackers. Wine in Denmark is, I'll not lie to you, punishingly expensive.

As our waitress had been so competent in her recommendations thus far, I thought I'd let her loose on the loose screes at the bottom of the

Himalayan list. This turned out to be a wise decision. Given the frank surrealism of some of the combinations served, I might have expected an Andorran fruit beer or a Welsh slivovitz but, instead, received a moderately priced and astonishingly apt Spanish Riesling.

The spare ribs teriyaki (“Never Can Say Goodbye”, possibly Barry White, lots of jazz flute, year unknown) had been worked on long and hard. Intercostal muscle is full of flavour but tough, so there's a temptation to braise or otherwise slow cook, to strip, shape and press the results and then to clobber everything with a jus or glaze. If a cheap cut needs that much artifice to make it good, one has to wonder at the point of it all. In this case the meat wasn't astonishing... though the bed on which it reclined, a glass-clear, jam-like reduction of tomato, was awe-inspiring.

The cheese, Brillat-Savarin and aged Gruyère (“All Night Long”, The Mary Jane Girls, 1983) came with chilli honey and superb, freshly made crispbread. We rose to a triumphant finish of peanut butter ice cream with part-dried strawberries – a delightful effect not unlike covert Haribos – accompanied by a sublime “Car Wash”, Rose Royce, 1976.

It would be criminally weak punnage to suggest that Kul is cool, but it actually is. Not cool in the calculated icy sense of so many places where nobody dares stray from accepted hipster doctrine. This is a different kind of cool. If you were at school with Kul, it would be the kid who could do odd, quirky things, who danced unlike anyone else, liked music that everyone else thought weird, could dress just how he wanted and yet, irritatingly, looked a whole lot better than anyone else while doing it. **FT**

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