

Star grazing

As Michelin publishes its latest guide to UK restaurants, a museum in Paris casts light on the famous rating system

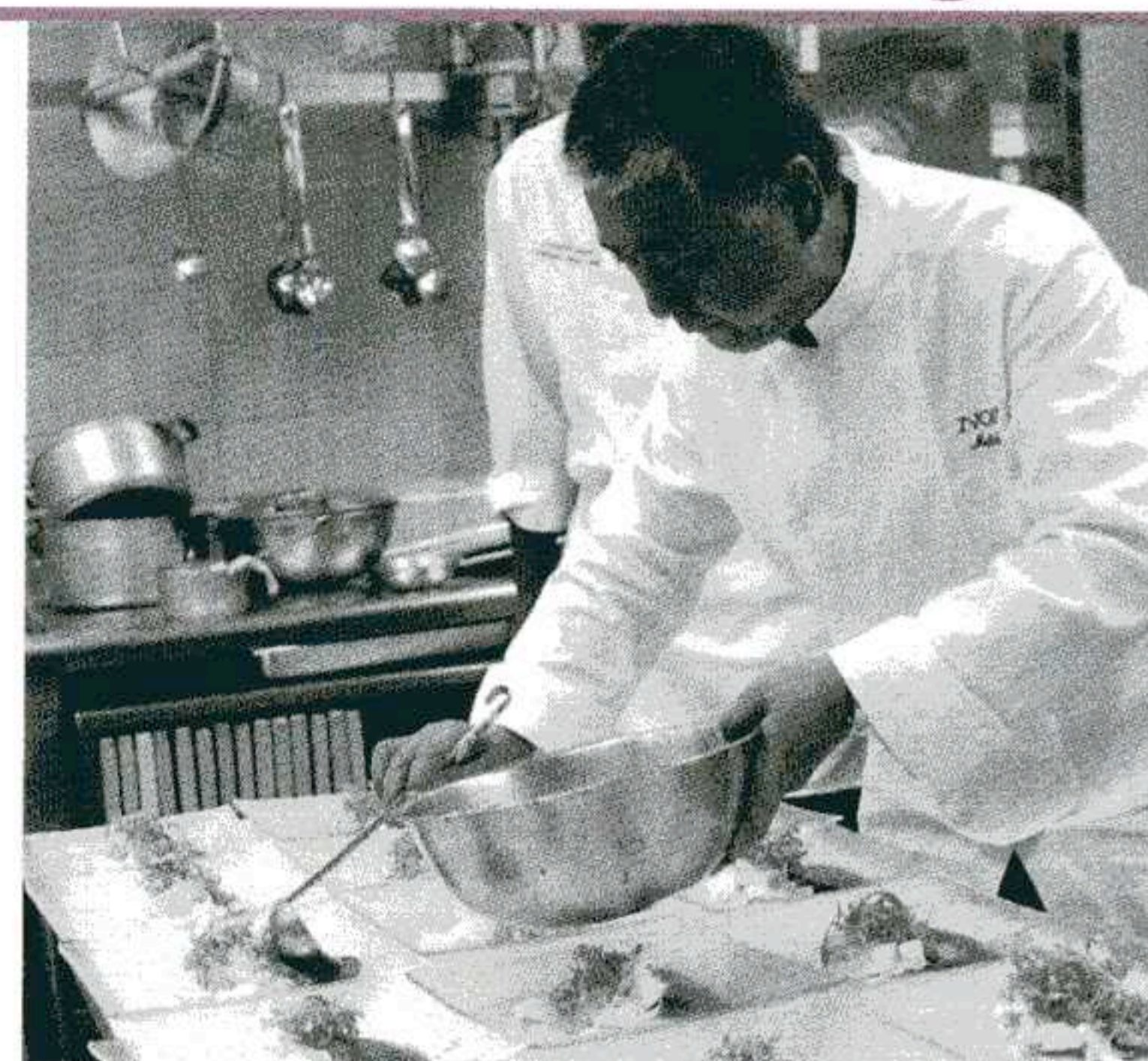
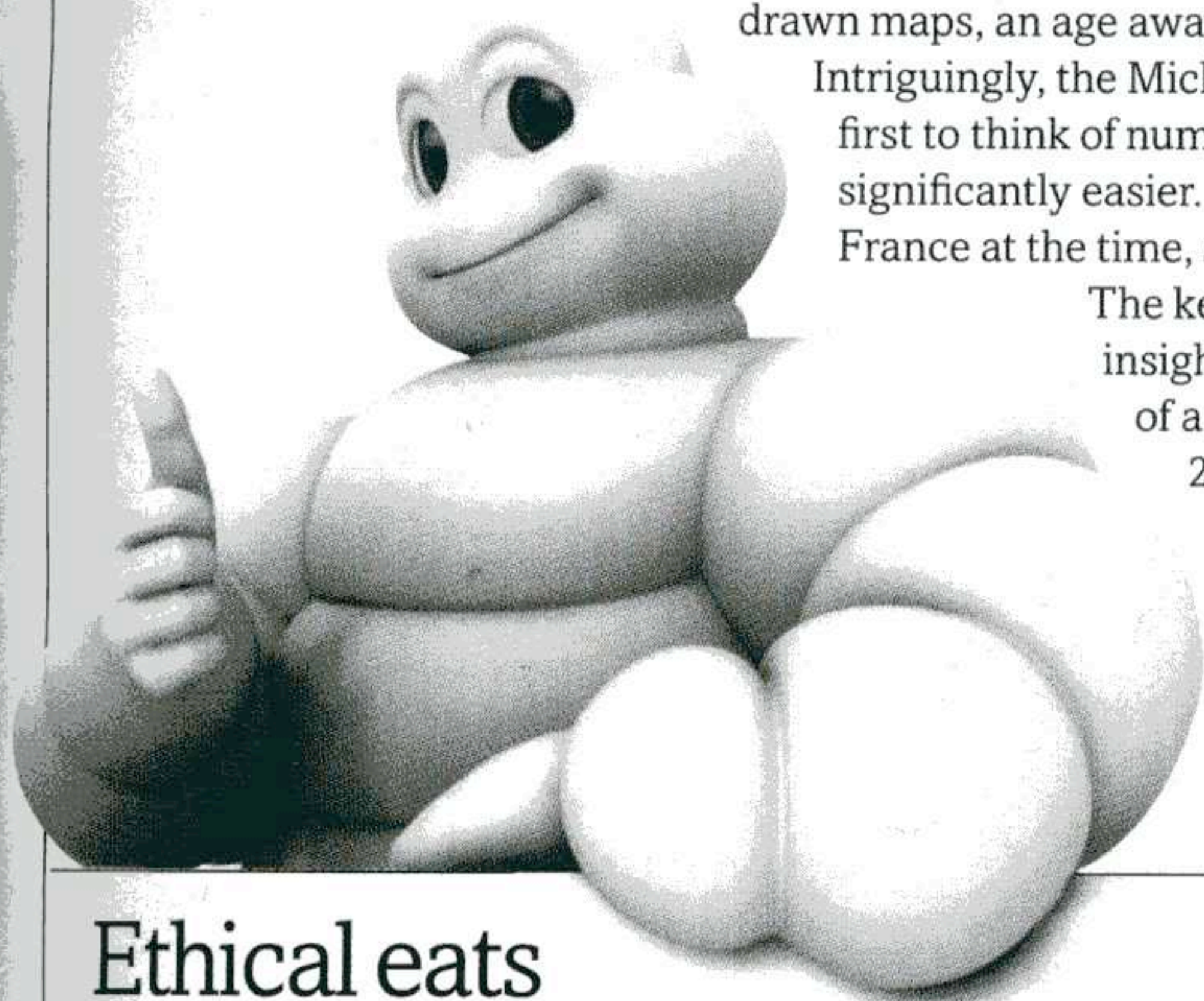
Michelin is on a run at the moment: as well as announcing the latest starred restaurants in the UK on 24 January with the publication of the 2007 edition of the *Michelin Guide to Great Britain and Ireland*, it recently launched its third *Eating Out in Pubs* guide and opened a delightful, idiosyncratic museum in Paris.

It's a little-known fact that Michelin brothers André and Edouard devised the guide in 1900 to encourage more motorists to take to the road and explore the French countryside, thereby using more tyres. Early guides included more entries on where to purchase petrol (including, bizarrely, at bakeries) than they did hotels, restaurants and views. The restaurant stars – now the most desired badges in the culinary world – were only introduced in 1926.

The new museum is tucked away in Paris's seventh arrondissement and visits are by appointment only (www.michelin.com). It's full of treasures, including a big, red-wall installation of every guide published since 1900, and a selection of intricate, hand-drawn maps, an age away from satellite navigation.

Intriguingly, the Michelin brothers were also the first to think of numbering roads, making travel significantly easier. There were only 3,500 cars in France at the time, so gridlock was unimaginable.

The keen foodie will get a fascinating insight into the punishing schedule of a Michelin inspector in the early 20th century. They dined out constantly, on the road nine months of the year. But, disappointingly, there is no Michelin-rated café for some post-museum indulgence. **Sudi Pigott**



FOOD THOUGHTS BY NOBU MATSUHISA

"Living in a big city like Los Angeles and travelling constantly between Nobu restaurants worldwide, I crave serenity. I'll never forget my first visit to the Masai Mara in Kenya. I stayed in a friend's house with uninterrupted views of Mount Kilimanjaro. The sunsets were stupendous – a deep red of extraordinary intensity. We took a tiny, four-propeller plane over the lakes and the pilot pointed out the amazing pink flowers. Then suddenly they started to fly and we were encircled by flamingoes.

I love to swim and the most incredible, clear, peaceful ocean I've experienced was at the Wakaya Club (www.wakaya.com) on a privately owned Fijian island. The fishing was fantastic, too: I showed the chefs how to prepare new-style sashimi with my catch.

Tsukiji market in Tokyo is incomparable for ultra-fresh fish. I always go to Daiwa, a tiny sushi bar in the inner market place for the *omakase* (chef's choice). The *toro* and red snapper *nigiri* are out of this world.

I adore white truffles, too, especially in the sublime *risotto parmigiano* at Da Giacomo in Milan (+39 02 7602 3313). I was there recently with Giorgio Armani, and the charming 85-year-old proprietor grates truffle very generously at your table.

But mostly I like simple, good food beautifully served. Robert De Niro insisted I try L'Ami Louis in Paris (+33 1 48 87 77 48). The foie gras and steak were superb, but the portions were unbelievably large, and everyone laughed when I ordered only half a bottle of wine!" **Interview by Sudi Pigott**

Nobu celebrates his 10th anniversary at London's Metropolitan hotel this month. Visit www.nobu-restaurants.com

True Brit: Konstam at The Prince Albert, which serves London-sourced food with English wines

Ethical eats

The days of jetting in exotic produce to please British palates may soon be over. Across Britain, restaurants are responding to demands for local produce

As more customers demand to know the provenance of what's on their plate, many British restaurants are turning over a new leaf and sourcing their produce carefully.

Starting in the capital, Konstam at The Prince Albert (+44 (0)20 7833 5040; www.konstam.co.uk) is a trendy pub conversion by designer Thomas Heatherwick, where head chef Oliver Rowe has opted to only serve food from within the M25. The result is

an inventive menu and a wine list that includes some surprisingly good English options.

A similar philosophy has been adopted at Edinburgh's Iglu (+44 (0)131 476 5333; www.theiglu.com). Dubbed an 'ethical eatery', it offers 'wild' dishes such as Scottish boar or Shetland mussels, served in a cosy dining room.

In Yorkshire, the award-winning restaurant at Swinton Park (+44 (0)1765 680900; www.swintonpark.com) has installed

a woodchip boiler that supplies the attached hotel with hot water and heating. The all-local menu, featuring produce grown in the four-acre walled garden, is creative but traditional, an ethos also evident at Bristol's Bordeaux

Quay (+44 (0)117 943 1200; www.bordeaux-quay.co.uk). At this new restaurant-deli-cookery school, a raft of eco-driven policies, plus stylish sustainable architecture, make it a real champion of the cause.

Emily Mathieson

