

Spanish practices

Ben Rogers espies another newcomer to the scene on the Green



Peter Mandelson would say that Gaudi's chef, Nacho Martinez, needs to work on his brand image

Photographs by Dominic Dibbs



I have only ever met one real Freudian. By that, I don't mean someone who just subscribed to Freud's teachings, but someone who was old enough to have become a psychoanalyst in Vienna before the War, had met the first generation of Freudians, and had fled the Nazis to set up a practice in Hampstead. I can't remember much of what this venerable man said, with one exception. We were talking about restaurants near where he lived (it was a bad habit even then) and someone mentioned a new place that Peter Langan had helped establish. His reply, in fluent but heavily accented English, seemed almost too good to be true: "They sent me a postcard with a nearly nude woman on it. I have learned not to trust restaurants that attempt to sell food with sex."

I don't know whether this principle was based on a wide experience of eating-out, or whether it is a little-known postulate of Freudian theory, but I am sure it is right: food and sex really only belong together behind closed doors – along with a Barry White album. It occurs to me now, however, that the "sex and restaurants" principle is merely an instance of a more general rule: restaurants are best

left as restaurants and not combined with anything else – cabarets, nightclubs, theatres. A couple of years ago, I went to the revamped Café de Paris off London's Leicester Square: the marriage of Seventies cooking and Eighties disco was not a happy one.

Another venue that used to run music and food together was Turnmill's, on trendy Clerkenwell Green – a bar-restaurant upstairs, with

a disco very volubly below, a combination that, in this instance, felt as if it had come together by chance. Now, however, all that has changed. The restaurant was taken over last summer by a young (and, as my companion pointed out, very good-looking) Spaniard, Nacho Martinez, and by the time you read this, it should have been entirely sealed off from the club below. Martinez and his backers

also have plans to open an *arroceria* next door, specialising in paella and other rice dishes.

For a 26-year-old, Martinez has had a lot of experience cooking at some of Spain's very best restaurants. Indeed, he has moved from kitchen to kitchen at about six-monthly intervals for the past seven years, suggesting that he either gets the sack or he is very ambitious; having met him, I am pretty

