



Written by
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RIP Jonathan Gold



I met Jonathan Gold, the restaurant reviewer of the *LA Times* who has sadly passed away at the all-too-young age of 57, only once.

It was about 10 years ago and we were speaking at a symposium together. He had already swapped his years as a journalist in the music industry for writing about food and restaurants and he was at that time writing for the *LA Weekly*.

What no one could question was that Gold had the physique for both music writing and for many hours in restaurants. He was a big man in all senses of the word. He had a large girth; his trousers were supported by trademark braces; he had long, grey hair and a moustache; and a big smile. All of this resonated in a huge enthusiasm for the good things of life. His was a body that was, until he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer only in early July, seemingly fit for purpose.

We chatted around various topics initially before getting down to business.

This was an era when British chefs and, in particular, London restaurants, were beginning to make a name for themselves on the international scene. Gold, displaying the innate scepticism that was to distinguish his writing – particularly in our joint disapproval of the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards – quizzed me, I remember to this day, about quite how good they were and how good British cuisine really was.

I quizzed him about a particular aspect of LA's wide range of restaurants. I recalled what I had been told 15 years earlier by the late RW Apple Jr that the most fascinating restaurants in LA, if not the whole of the US, were to be found in the city's Koreatown. Gold, a huge enthusiast for all types of ethnic cuisine, agreed with this verdict and shook his head when I told him that until then I had only been to LA Airport! He encouraged me to visit so that we could eat together but this is another opportunity I have sadly left until too late.

What Gold achieved far more than anything else was to give his readers the confidence they needed to go out and enjoy themselves in LA's restaurants. By embracing the charms of many different forms of ethnic restaurants in particular, by eschewing the formalities of many fine-dining restaurants, and by stressing that the most important items in any restaurant are quite simply what the food tastes like, how the drinks list has been chosen, and whether the restaurant's staff treat you as a fellow human being, Gold emboldened all his readers to enjoy restaurants as much as he did. And that is, an awful lot.

Possibly the saddest aspect of Gold's death is not just the speed of it but that it occurs just two months after the suicide of Anthony Bourdain. While they were two completely different individuals who made their names in different media and on the two different coasts of the US (before we all became citizens of the world), they shared a consuming interest in waking up the palates of their fellow citizens to the tastes, the flavours, the excitement, the sheer pleasure, of the cooking of the world outside the US.

In that respect especially, but in many others as well, they will both be sadly missed.