

- ▣ [home](#)
- ▣ [music & nightlife](#)
- ▣ [movies](#)
- ▣ [the arts](#)
- ▣ [restaurants](#)
- ▣ [classifieds](#)
- ▣ [columns](#)
 - [THE FLY](#)
 - [SILICON ALLEYS](#)
 - [CAR CULTURE](#)
 - [5 THINGS](#)
 - [LIVE FEED](#)
 - [SILICON VALLEY](#)
 - [VEGGIE](#)
 - [TECHNOLOGY NEWS](#)
- ▣ [news & features](#)
- ▣ [the papers](#)
- ▣ [blogs](#)
- ▣ [contests](#)
- ▣ [coupons](#)
- ▣ [advertise](#)
- ▣ [about us](#)
- ▣ [contact](#)

columns

03.12.08

[home](#) | [metro silicon valley index](#) | [columns](#) | [live feed](#)

Live Feed

Facing Up

By Cheryl Sternman Rule

BRITISH celebrity chef Jamie Oliver stunned diners at a gala dinner earlier this year by suffocating and slaughtering chickens onstage. Never one to shy from the spotlight, the scruffy and increasingly controversial Oliver wanted to drive home a point: Anyone who eats meat has an ethical obligation to confront the realities of the industry that gets it first to the supermarket and then to the dinner table. This includes, of course, not only how the animals live, but how they die.



Clips of the gala, available on YouTube (parts are still up, but the full broadcast has been taken down), are graphic. As unsuspecting diners look on in horror, Oliver brings healthy male chicks up onstage only to suffocate them en masse with carbon dioxide. The chicks twist and shudder, beaks futilely sucking in air until finally they succumb and lie still. He also shows chicks being crushed by a large metal machine. Such is the fate of millions of male chicks the world over and is, in many places, standard industry practice. (Because the male chicks of egg-laying hens can't lay eggs themselves, and are a different breed from those raised for meat, they're not valuable to the egg or broiler industries.) Oliver also displays the crowded battery cages in which fully grown hens live, mashed so tightly together they have no room to spread their wings, much less peck at the ground, turning to peck at one another instead.

Animal rights activists and vegetarians, of course, have spread awareness for years about such abhorrent conditions, so Oliver's efforts to bring these issues to light are, in a sense, nothing new. But let's face it: with an international platform that includes multiple television shows, several cookbooks and a background as a reputable chef, Oliver's influence in exposing unpleasant realities is far-reaching. I have a hard time seeing Rachael Ray following suit.

Anyone who has read my work in these pages knows that I eat meat, and I eat chicken too. When I order meat in restaurants, I'll eat whatever is on offer—whether it's chicken, beef or lamb I order it without giving a thought to its pedigree. But since watching the broadcast I think a lot more about what I buy at the grocery store. I've switched to free-range organic eggs and fork over the extra money (and it's not insignificant) for free-range chicken as well. And I fully recognize that not everyone can afford to do this. Why can I turn a blind eye at restaurants, sometimes several times a week, when I purchase so differently for my home? My own hypocrisy stares me straight in the face, and it's not a pretty sight. But is it morally indefensible? Or just practical?

We have now more than ever created a two-tiered food system where those who can pay the premiums for humanely raised products may start to feel smug in their purchasing decisions. Let's all keep in mind, myself included, that millions of people the world over are lucky to get enough food to fill their bellies at all.

[Send a letter](#) to the editor about this story.

Advertiser Links

[Foreclosures - Real Estate Investing](#)

Your Online Real Estate Investing Resource.

[San Jose.com Real Estate](#)

Relocating to San Jose or Silicon Valley? Let San Jose.com introduce you to some expert area real estate agents.

[restaurant guide](#) [View All](#)

- 🔍 [FIND A RESTAURANT](#)
- 🔍 [FIND A RESTAURANT REVIEW](#)
- 🔍 [SEARCH AVAILABLE RESERVATIONS & BOOK A TABLE](#)

[columns](#) [View All](#)

[Live Feed](#)

Quick restaurant hits by Metro dining editor Stett Holbrook.

[5 Things to Love](#)

Top-5 lists and hot picks.

[Silicon Valley Veggie](#)

Vegetarian eateries in the South Bay.

Ads by Google

[San Jose Food Delivery](#)

Order food online from your favorite San Jose restaurants!
[www.delivery.com/](#)

[San Jose Movies](#)

Find Local San Jose Theaters. Maps, Reviews & More!
[www.AreaGuides.Net](#)

[San Jose Restaurants](#)

San Jose, CA Restaurant Reviews. Find unbiased ratings & reviews.
[SanJose.Restaurantica.co](#)

[The Sound of a Jazz Trio](#)

Easy Listening and Light Jazz Music
Lee Allen - Pianist - Sunnyvale CA
[www.gigmasters.com/swin](#)

 [SAVE THIS](#)  [EMAIL THIS](#)  [PRINT THIS](#)  [MOST POPULAR](#)  [RSS FEEDS](#)