

Dining à la Eskom

Power outage in the neighbourhood. Again. In fact, we seem to have as many power outages as power innages these days. And even worse, these nights.

When the power goes out in Joburg, two things tend to happen. Firstly, Joburgers drive like Joburgers, just a little worse, because the robots aren't working.

Secondly, every restaurant and fast food joint that is lucky enough to have a generator does a roaring trade.

Tonight, I thought I would try a tiny fish 'n chip joint in Darrenwood, near Cresta Mall. It's called Fish Hook, and it prides itself on serving fish 'n chips in the authentic British style, which begins with having to stand in an authentically British queue.

The place was crowded. The battered-looking proprietor, battling to cope, asked if I would mind waiting 30 minutes for my order, which was Medium Fish 'n Chips, the other options being Small Fish 'n Chips and Large Fish 'n Chips.

Well, there isn't much else to do when you're out and about and the power is out, so I waited, soaking up the vinegary waft and the sh-sh-shake of the salt tin from the kitchen.

Forty minutes later, I had my fish 'n chips, which of course I dined on straight from the newsprint wrapping. (Thank goodness for fish 'n chip shops, without which the newsprint industry would be in really big trouble).

I have Mancunian roots; my grandfather on my mother's side ran a fish 'n chip shop in Roodepoort, west of Joburg – so I can safely say I know my fish 'n chips.

And these, even though I couldn't see them very well, were among the best I've had in South Africa, at least on a par with those you get from that little joint in Kalk Bay, just without the seagulls to swoop down and peck them from your hands.

The real test of good, greasy, fresh-fried, thick-cut, newsprint-wrapped fish 'n chips is whether you feel a fleeting pang of guilt straight after scoffing them, because let's face it, they're not exactly the Real Meal Revolution. And boy, do I feel fleetingly guilty.

Even better than that, amazingly, the power has just this instant come back on. Thank you! In both cases, that was well worth the wait.