

Greening Your Restaurant
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Environmental awareness has long been a catch phrase for those concerned with protecting the air and water, other natural resources and Mother Earth. Today, major industries and businesses of all types and sizes are becoming better corporate citizens by implementing environmentally friendly or what are popularly known as Green Processes and Purchasing Programs. The restaurant and food service industry is no exception.

Michael Oshman, President of the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) told me that the GRA has over 130 certified member establishments in 20 states and expects to have 250 members by the end of 2005. Membership includes mostly small mom and pop operations, but also some larger restaurants and chains, coffee houses, pizzerias, and franchisees. The association has been assisting restaurant owners in "going green" for over 15 years and claims to have the largest database of information in the world on green and sustainable restaurant operations.

The Benefits of Going Green

The benefits of becoming certified by the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) include cost savings, publicity and active environmental stewardship. The association works to connect environmentally conscious customers with its member restaurants.

The GRA publishes a "Certified Green Restaurant Guide" in print and web formats to make it easy for consumers to find certified restaurants in their local area. The GRA hosts events to gain media exposure for its members. In the past this has included having members featured on CNN, ABC and other networks as well as in local and national print media.

The Green Restaurant Association has consultants available throughout the country to assist restaurant owners in going green in the areas of energy, water, food purchase, recycling, cleaning, paper, pest control, waste stream reduction and disposal.

"It's an exciting time for us," said Oshman. "We have been growing slowly over the years, but now people and companies are starting to take notice of the need to create an ecologically sustainability environment in the food service industry. Its taken time, but the GRA is now in a position to be of tremendous help to our members and the industry."

Certification costs begin at \$700.00 and are based on annual income and other factors. To obtain certification an establishment must commit to implementing eleven guidelines (out of over 100), make at least one change with their application and agree to make at least four changes per year there after.

The Realities of Going Green

It all starts with getting a commitment from upper management or the owner to make "Going Green" a priority and goal for the organization. Without

this buy in at the top, you'll be doomed from the start. The owner and or manager must have an understanding of what's involved in the process and be committed and willing to provide the leadership and support needed to make changes over time in the way the business operates.

Becoming certified is not an especially difficult, time consuming or costly process, but it does take the full support of upper management and normally 3 to 5 years to fully implement in most organization.

Once management has committed to the "Going Green" process, an environmental site assessment is done to identify changes that are easy to make and determine where and when to best begin the process of education and obtaining staff support for going green.

"Restaurant owners are busy people," said Oshman. "We help them find all the information they need about ecological sustainability in one place and work closely with each member to walk them through the certification process. We provide the research, support, and education needed to make getting certified as a Green Restaurant as easy and painless as possible."

Eleven Basic Guidelines and What You Can Do

1. Energy efficiency and conservation
 - a. When making new and replacement purchases specify equipment that are rated as energy efficient. This includes such things as: lighting, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, food service appliances, office equipment and transportation.
2. Water efficiency and conservation
 - a. Specify water efficient appliances and practice conservation in heating, irrigation and prompt repair of leaks.
3. Recycling and composting
 - a. Recycle instead of dispose. Find local sources to recycle glass, plastic, metal, cardboard, mixed paper, and grease, oil, ink and toner cartridges. Participate in local reuse projects for unused items and materials instead of disposal.
 - b. Food waste can be diverted from landfills and made into nutrient rich soil through the use of composting services or on site systems.
4. Sustainable food
 - a. Where possible use locally grown produce and food products. Plant based foods use fewer resources and create less pollution. Sustainable food products support long-term maintenance of ecosystems and agriculture for future generations. Organic agriculture prohibits the use of toxic synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, irradiation, sewage sludge and genetic engineering.
5. Pollution prevention
 - a. Utilize source reduction, reuse and improved and efficient operational practices in all aspects of your business.

- b. Replace all polystyrene foam products with items made from biodegradable and less toxic alternatives such as plant based plastics and recycled and unbleached paper.
 - c. Use reusable non-disposable washable items where possible.
- 6. Recycled, tree free, biodegradable and organic products
 - a. Use products made from or that contain a high percentage of materials collected from post-consumer or post-industrial waste sources.
 - b. Use tree free products made from alternative plant sources such as hemp, bamboo, coir and kenaf.
 - c. Use biodegradable materials capable of being decomposed by biological agents, especially bacteria. Use organic products that are grown without the use of toxic materials or processes.
- 7. Chlorine free paper products
 - a. Use chlorine free paper products in the office, restroom and kitchen.
 - b. Use launderable clothes where possible and practical.
- 8. Non-toxic cleaning and chemical products
 - a. Use cleaning products that are Green Seal and or GRA certified.
 - b. Use products that are not tested on animals.
 - c. Use processes that capture and contain, but do not redistribute soils.
 - d. Use products that are biodegradable, free of hazardous materials and safe for people, animals and the environment.
 - e. Reduce the use and concentration of cleaning product where possible
 - f. Use plant based cleaning products where possible.
 - g. Focus on prevention and maintenance instead of cleaning, restoration and replacement.
 - h. Use equipment and processes that use heat, time and agitation in place of chemicals for cleaning.
 - i. Establish preventive maintenance schedules that reduce the need for aggressive cleaning procedures or the use of harsh chemicals.
- 9. Green power
 - a. Where possible develop and use power that is available from renewable resources such as wind, solar, geothermal, small hydro and biomass generation sources.
- 10. Green building and construction
 - a. Use green building and construction practices and materials that will reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of buildings on the environment, occupants and the local community.
- 11. Employee education

- a. Provide on going training and support to staff, which explains the environmental impact of the restaurant industry and a path towards ecological sustainability.

Greening of Restaurants Catches On

Over thirty-five restaurants in the San Diego, CA area are certified members of the GRA. George Hauer, owner of George's at the Cove in La Jolla, CA has been a member for over 5 years and has implemented over 24 GRA recommended practices, more than any other restaurant in the country.

The association has a \$10.00 book "Dining Green" that outlines the certification process. It can be purchased on line at: www.dinegreen.com or by calling 858-452-7378.

A Good Place to Start

When it comes to greening a restaurant, one fairly easy change to make is with the cleaning chemicals used in the facility. Finding environmentally preferable or green products used to be a tough call, but not today. Most of the major cleaning chemical manufacturers (Rochester Midland, Johnson Diversey, Eco-Lab and Spartan Chemical) as well as a number of regional suppliers (Coast Wide Labs) and several start up companies (www.safegreenclean.com) offer a complete line of effective and economically competitive green cleaning products. To assist its members in finding acceptable sources for green products, the GRA offers booklet titled "Guide to Endorsed Products".

An interesting product that I recently came across is an EPA approved 100% natural botanical disinfectant fungicide that is based on Thymol. The product is marketed under the trade name Benefect and is manufactured by Sensible Life Products in Ontario, Canada. (www.benefect.com)

Green Seal, Inc. in Washington, DC is a recognized leader in defining what green means when it comes to cleaning products. In 2000 Green Seal established minimum standards (GS-37) for restroom chemicals, glass and general-purpose cleaners. Since that time Green Seal has amended its carpet and institutional products standard and issued a technical report on green floor care.

Arthur Weismann, Ph.D, President and CEO of Green Seal told me that his organization has looked into developing a green restaurant standard but needs funding in the range of \$25,000 to move forward with the project. In the mean time Green Seal is busy testing cleaning products and has recently announced that it will begin work on an Environmental Standard for the certification of Green Cleaning Services. For more information on Green Seal standards and certifications visit: www.greenseal.org or call: 202-872-6400.

Microbials for Cleaning

One of the newer chemical product categories on the market today incorporates the use of bacteria and enzymes into the cleaning process. Specialized formulations are available for use as drain and grease trap cleaners, odor counteractants, carpet spotters and floor cleaning products. In drains and

grease traps pre-measured packets can be used or automated injection systems are available to periodically feed the bacteria into drain system. When cleaning hard surfaces the solution can be sprayed on to floors and walls and then scrubbed with a machine or brush, with the slurry being removed with a water hose, squeegee, wet vacuum or auto scrubber.

Such products are safe, environmentally preferable, cost effective and provide long-term solutions to common and difficult cleaning problems found in restaurants, kitchens and food service establishments.

According to Lois Davis, Global Business Manager for Novozymes Biologicals Inc. in Salem VA, "modern day bacteria based cleaning products are septic friendly intelligent systems that recognize specific types of organic matter and produce enzymes that degrade the organics so the bacteria can use it as a food source. Common odor control uses in restaurants include cleaning and deodorizing garbage rooms, dumpsters, bathrooms and loading docks.

"Unlike other detergent cleaners," said Davis, "Bacteria based cleaners keep on cleaning whenever moisture is present. Spores remain in the cracks and crevices of floors and in the grout and where fixtures are attached and keep on degrading soils. Each time you clean, the surface gets cleaner because more grease is removed which increases traction and eliminates odors."

For more information on bacteria and enzyme cleaning products visit: www.novozymes.com/microorganisms or call 540-302-1123

Green Cleaning Equipment

Another fairly easy starting place for the transition to a green restaurant is with the equipment used for cleaning. Many facilities are finding that a backpack vacuum with a four-stage filtration system is much faster than an upright vacuum. In addition the backpack vacuum does a more thorough job of removing soil from carpets, walls, floors and overhead surfaces which reduces costs because it takes less time to clean the facility. Another benefit of the backpack vacuum is low maintenance costs. The backpack only has 2 moving parts, compared to over 20 parts for an upright vacuum. For more information on backpack vacuums, visit: www.proteamvacs.com or call 800-541-1456

Small portable vapor cleaning equipment has recently been introduced on the market that is extremely effective in cleaning surfaces and fabrics found in kitchens, dining areas and restrooms. These compact units heat the water to over 260 degrees and use dry vapor at 60 pounds of pressure (PSI) to blast away soil, spot, stains and bacteria from basically any surface, leaving it clean, soil free and sanitized all in one step. For information on vapor cleaners visit: www.totalvap.com or call: 1-800-867-6870.

Another great innovation for nearly all cleaning applications is the micro fiber flat mops and wiping cloths. In many instances these soil holding cloths reduce or in some cases eliminate the need for cleaning chemicals. Micro fiber cloths are especially effective on glass, metal, fabrics, fixtures, tabletops and other hard surfaces. For information on micro fiber mops and cloths contact your local janitorial supplier.

Now it's Your Turn

Going Green starts with one person's attitude and willingness to commit to making changes in the way business is done in an organization. Somebody has to be the cheerleader. Every organization needs a champion who will push the cause of environmental awareness and stewardship against all those who will complain about having to change the way things have always been done in the past.

One person can and does make a difference. You can be that one person in your organization. With time, education, and persistence as well as patience you can be the person who will bring about change for the better in the way an entire business, department or organization operates.

The greening of restaurant and food service operation is a new concept that will continue to find wider acceptance in the future. Here's your chance to bring cutting edge concepts and processes to your organization. Start by educating yourself with the resources that are available. Continue the process by educating others about the benefits of environmental awareness and stewardship and how the common sense principals can be applied in your organization and the food service industry. You'll be pleased and surprised where your efforts will take you.

Side Bar # 1.

Resources for Greening Your Restaurant

- www.dinegreen.com
 - o Information on the Green Restaurant Association's certification program, services and publications.
- www.greenhotels.com
 - o Information on applying green processes to the hospitality industry.
- www.greenseal.org
 - o Information on it's Green Seal Approved Cleaning Chemicals Standard (GS-37) and a report on Green Floor Care.
- www.usgbc.org
 - o Information on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program
- www.carpet-rug.org
 - o Information on Green carpeting, and its Green Label testing program for vacuum cleaners and carpet spotters.
- www.Benefect.com
 - o Information on companies environmentally preferred disinfectant.
- www.orkin.com/commercial
 - o Information on the companies Green Pest Control Gold Metal Protection Program
- www.novozymes.com/microorganisms
 - o Information on the company's bacteria based cleaners and odor counteractant products.

- www.proteamvac.com
 - o Information on the company's high filtration backpack vacuums.
- www.hcwh.org
 - o Information on green in the health care field
- www.epa.gov
 - o Information on Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) and green issues.
- www.rochestermidland.com
 - o Information on green cleaning chemicals by a company that pioneered the concept.
- www.westp2net.org
 - o An informational resource on pollution prevention and green cleaning issues.

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