



## How to Make Your Restaurant Environmentally Friendly

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Whether upgrading or starting from scratch, developing a green restaurant can be a daunting, yet highly rewarding, task. With the push for being more environmentally friendly growing it's important to know if becoming an ecologically sound business is the right move for your own establishment.

This paper's objective is to guide you in the process of evaluating the options of eco-friendly restaurants and to provide you with the inside knowledge to make the move into becoming a sustainable eatery.

### **Chapter 1: Why go green?**

Being an environmentally sound business has become a hot topic in recent years. Everyone from your next door neighbor to Al Gore has touted the importance of every person in cleaning up our planet and making it livable for future generations. If one person can do a large part of the change, just imagine the impact your eatery could make by going green.

Restaurateurs make the choice to go green not just because it's the newest trend, but because of its lasting values. Spokesperson for the National Restaurant Association, Annika Stenson [says](#), "Restaurateurs are absolutely concerned about environmental sustainability – because it's the right thing to do, because it can cut costs and save money, and because it appeals to consumers."

While this may sound like a great idea in theory, you may be thinking that things are different in the real world of running a business. Equipment can be expensive, guidelines can be hard to implement and new duties are time consuming. This may all be true at first, but in the long run going green can make a little extra go a long way and do much more for your business than meets the eye.

Chris Moyer, a sustainability expert and manager of the National Restaurant Association's [Conserve initiative](#), provides the most straightforward advice on the issue. "I think the first step is just to be honest and forthcoming and assess everything and take it step by step," Moyer commented. "Don't try and do too much too quick. Being a sustainable operation is an ongoing journey. There is no finish line, you can always improve."

## Cost Effective

One major long-term draw of improving your environmental footprint is the savings. While doling out money may not be the first method most people take in order to gain revenue, in the case of green it can be a great place to start. Doing everything from putting a new Energy Star oven in your kitchen to using an alternative energy source, such as wind, will help you to take advantage of tax incentives and rebates.

A program called the [Tax Incentives Assistance Project \(TIAP\)](#) has even been formed by groups and organizations involved in energy efficiency in order to keep businesses informed on exactly what incentives can be taken advantage of. The Energy Star program also provides several [tools and resources](#) to assist in calculating your own unique savings by comparing your building to similar facilities.

Savings will also be seen over the long term. As staff members begin to get more used to the new procedures, electronic devices will be turned off more frequently and water use will go down. By making it known that this is protocol, employees will have a heightened awareness of energy, conserving resources and saving some money on utilities. While this may sound like a very small step, once everyone is on board it could save upwards of \$1,000 (depending on your business size) each year.

## Publicity

The initial monetary investment of the environmentally aware business is also gained back over time through a larger intake in customers and a more favorable view on the restaurant overall. In today's unsteady economic climate, consumers are giving more thought to the business they give patronage to. A change has begun in which not only dietary concerns are being taken into account when making a choice but also the practices of the business. If a guest is spending their hard earned money, they now want to rest assured it is going toward ensuring their food is coming from sustainable sources and the place they are visiting is making the lowest impact possible on the world they live in.

According to a study done by the Green Restaurant Association and Technomic and written up in the [National Restaurant News](#) (of 500 consumers), when given the choice of their three favorite restaurants, 64 percent of people said they would choose the certified green eatery more often over the other two.

When a restaurant is thought of as being green, it gives off an aspect to customers that they are being cared about more. Customers get a higher perceived value from green restaurants, because it's assumed if the business is putting more time and effort into the environment, they will pay similar attention to how healthy the food is and making sure customers are being treated well. In fact, a study in the *Tourism and Hospitality Research* reported on by [ScienceDaily.com](#) found customers are even willing to pay *more* at a green restaurant. The study showed that about 65 percent of those surveyed



Photo from [blog.americasaves.org](http://blog.americasaves.org)

said they would be willing to pay up to 10 percent more to dine at green restaurants, and 20 percent would be willing to pay even more. Many are even willing to travel out of their way to a restaurant if they know it is doing good for the environment (although this in itself could pose other environmental issues). A study on GreenSeal.org found 49 percent of people are likely to visit a green store or restaurant regardless of the distance/effort required.

Studies like these show there is a market out there willing to spend money and travel to your destination if you're willing to put in the extra effort to ensure they'll be dining at an environmentally caring establishment. All of this, doesn't even take into account the opportunities for word of mouth recommendations and media publicity, especially if your business is located in an area where there are very few or even no other green restaurants.

### **Legal and Health Benefits**

While it's always wonderful to be able to save money and get more customers in the door, there is also something to be said for doing the right thing. Not only is it great to do something to improve the world around us, but it's also beneficial for both legal and health reasons.

As the green movement becomes larger and more widespread, legislation is being passed constantly on what must be done to keep businesses up to code. While 20 or 30 years ago, it was mainly just important for businesses to have the basic upkeep, keeping food areas clean and preventing buildings from being a fire hazard. Now, it is more and more common for laws to come into effect that put an emphasis on how much of certain natural resources are being used and whether or not particular food items being served are renewable. One huge advantage to becoming an environmentally conscious restaurant is by addressing these items from the beginning can prevent expensive upgrades that might be legally required further down the road.

While paying attention to legislative requirements is important for your legal health, improving your carbon footprint can also provide a healthy environment for employees and the surrounding community. By showing your business is involved in making the world better for future generations, you're also providing your workers with a higher sense of worth and therefore enhancing the level of happiness and satisfaction within the workplace. Not only that, by reducing things like waste and emissions, you're giving them and your neighbors a boost in their health.

### **Chapter 2: Green Building**

Now that you've seen the benefits of going green for your business, the next step is deciding how to move forward with the process. It's imperative you start with the proper structure for your particular needs and ability.

#### **Building a New Green Structure vs. Retrofitting an Existing Structure**

There are two options to mull over when starting a green business: Start from scratch and build from the ground up or move into an



Photo from showroom411.com

existing structure and make improvements. The determination is mostly dependent on preference as well as the amount of money you are both willing and able to invest. Below is list of some issues that should be given consideration to help you make the most educated choice.

Building New	VS.	Retrofitting
Can create your ideas from scratch	VS.	Have to do demolition or reconstruct area to have a clean start
No money can be made during the building because restaurant isn't ready to be open	VS.	Restaurant may be able to stay open during construction
All new equipment must be purchased	VS.	If equipment was already there, some may already be environmentally friendly
Building can be designed to fit products sizes and requirements	VS.	Building may not be designed to fit the sizes of upgraded products
Must find an environmentally approved construction company to ensure materials meet requirements	VS.	Must make sure that any construction materials and equipment is disposed of environmentally
Takes up previously unused land and space that could have been used for gardens, etc.	VS.	Helps prevent over-building in an area by using existing structure
Can plan to pre-specified building and green code in order to avoid unexpected costs	VS.	Can run into unexpected costs due to necessary changed and upgrade to keep up to code
Zoning and other requirements are necessary to ensure that the building is in the correct place	VS.	Building is already properly zoned and approved since the building has been previously operating

There are also several helpful sites that can guide you in knowing which selection might work best for you and tips on how to get started. The most comprehensive source is the [U.S. Green Building Council](#), which provides education on building as well as an opportunity to certify your structure when it's complete. [Realtors Field Guide to Commercial Building](#) also has plenty of links to articles all in one convenient place on everything from what green building is to case studies on trends in sustainable building.

## Chapter 3: Energy Usage

Once you've made the plunge into green building, it's important to also think about what will be going on inside the structure on a daily basis. While this might inspire dreams of a certain atmosphere or even ideas of what type of food you'll be serving, you must remember none of those things will be possible without energy of all kinds. Energy use is involved in everything from the lighting that will set the mood to the oven that will bake the food.

Pacific Gas & Electric's Food Service Technology Center (FSTC) told [USA Today](#), "Restaurants are the retail world's largest energy user. They use almost five times more energy per square foot than any other type of commercial building." That means by making even the smallest changes, your restaurant will be making big moves to help the environment and your bottom line.

### Monitoring Energy Use

The first move to make is to begin monitoring the energy use of the building on a regular basis. While you may have what you believe to be the most efficient stove to meet your output needs, it may actually also be soaking up way more energy than it should. Over time all equipment begins to perform just a bit differently. The same can be said for heaters, air conditioners, thermostats, lights and every other type of energy guzzling equipment. Energy Star has the most cost efficient way to prevent this and says, "Take the time to do a regular thermostat check on your appliances, refrigeration, dish machines, and hot water heaters and reset them to the correct operating temperature."

### Energy Star Products



Photo from  
[EnergyStar.gov](http://EnergyStar.gov)

A similar, yet more involved, step towards becoming more energy efficient is to do an assessment of your current kitchen equipment to make sure it's Energy Star approved. If it is, there will be a label indicating it. [Fishnick.com](#) shares that the, "EPA introduced the ENERGY STAR label in 1992 to recognize energy-efficient computers. Since then, the label has grown to identify efficient products across more than 40 product categories." That means while the Energy Star label may be good indication your equipment is doing a better job than most, it's still may need a check up because it could be nearing the 20 year mark.

If you find your products are nearing the end of their days or upkeep and repairs are simply more expensive than you'd like to deal with, it may be time to look into buying new Energy Star appliances. However, you will need to budget to spend just a bit more than you would on the average product. If you begin to feel this sticker shock, Energy Star's [website](#) reminds that, "High-efficiency appliances could cost more upfront, but significantly lower utility bills can make up for the price difference." You can also keep your costs down by purchasing from the over 200 Energy Star approved products [Central](#) has to offer.

One more reason to buy an Energy Star product can be seen with a realistic example of the average electric deep fat fryer, something many restaurants use on a daily basis. [Energy Star](#) says, "A typical electric deep fat fryer uses more than 11,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy per year which could cost

you more than \$1,000 in electricity.” They add the same Energy Star rated product can save up to “\$120 for electricity annually.”

## Heating & Cooling

Another unavoidable energy use is the heating and cooling of your restaurant. No matter where your building is located, the inside must be kept at a comfortable climate. Even if your food is the best around, people won't be likely to visit if it's colder inside than out and the same goes for heat. So how can you provide this optimal temperature without raising your energy use and costs? There are several ways, from passive cooling to geothermal heat pumps to as simple as monitoring the settings on your thermostat.

### EXAMPLE OF GEOTHERMAL HEATING & COOLING

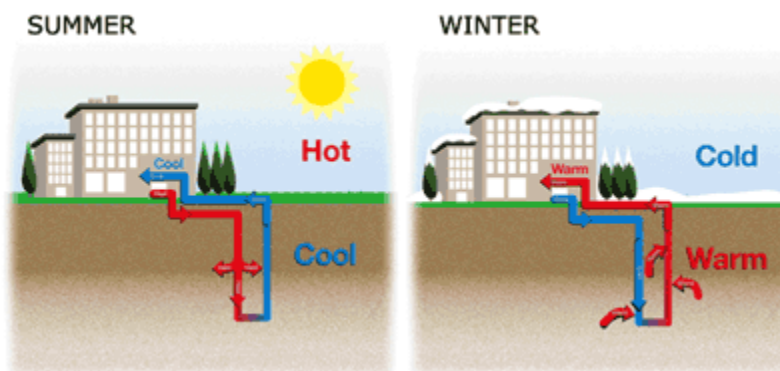


Photo from Specialtyheating.com

One of the many options to help with your building's cooling needs is passive cooling. This may sound like an effortless plan, but it does require some exertion on your part. The one drawback to this option is it does happen to work better in some climates.

According to [Mother Earth News](#), passive heating and cooling does not consume energy. Basically, this means by taking advantage of a few simple tricks, you can let the sun do its work and provide you with some free, earth friendly help. One tip to use in order to benefit is painting your roof and exterior walls a light color.

[Oikos](#)<sup>®</sup>, a site dedicated to energy efficient building and environmentally sound construction, says by doing this you will get “rid of heat that accumulates in buildings.” They also recommend making sure your building has “high insulation levels, heat blocking windows, proper solar orientation and good shading from building elements and vegetation” in order to reduce extra heat from coming in. Like [Oikos](#)<sup>®</sup>, [Energy Star](#) recommends, “Applying a clear, heat rejecting window film” in order to cut down costs and to make guests more comfortable. They also advise to, “Use only high quality window film installed by a qualified professional.”

Like passive cooling, geothermal methods also take advantage of the temperature outside. The [Partnership for the Environment](#) says, “Geothermal uses the relatively constant temperature of the earth to heat and cool homes and businesses with 40 percent to 70 percent less energy than conventional system.” This type of heating and cooling can be achieved by installing pipes, called geothermal heat pumps or ground source heat pumps, filled with liquid underground. In the summer, these pipes will bring in cool air and vice versa in the winter. The [Consumer Energy Center](#) (CEC) endorses the use of geothermal heat pumps, saying, “The earth's constant temperature is what makes geothermal heat pumps one of the most efficient, comfortable, and quiet heating and cooling technologies available today.” Like passive cooling, this method does also have its initial drawbacks mainly in the way of cost. Since the drilling must be done to install the heat pump underground and equipment has to be put in, the CEC estimates the cost at the outset to be about \$2,500 per ton of capacity for the pump and \$10,000 to \$30,000 for the drilling. While this may seem like a pretty penny, the CEC also is quick to remind that the costs can be regained in about five to 10 years in energy savings. There may also be federal and state tax breaks on some qualifying pumps. Another bonus to geothermal heating is it significantly reduces carbon dioxide emissions, which isn’t just good for the environment outside; it’s also great for customers enjoying a meal in your dining room.

The third way to save cash and the environment via heating and cooling may just be the easiest, especially with the convenient technology available today. This method, programming your thermostat, sounds like a no-brainer to many, but even something this small can save plenty. Most modern thermostats are programmable, enabling weekly, daily and even hourly programs to be set (and over-run if needed) in order to control the climate. By programming the temperatures in, you can make sure when few or no people are in the building, not as much energy is being used. However, it’s important to keep the thermostat running to some degree during this time especially in the winter when pipes could freeze. [Green Seal](#) suggests you “Use a set-back temperature when property is unoccupied cool at 85°F and heat at 62°F.”

## Lighting



Photo from [CentralRestaurant.com](#)

Like heating and cooling, lighting is another necessary element for restaurants that can often be overlooked in terms of both energy and costs. However, this one item could be the least expensive to upgrade and show the quickest turnaround on savings. By installing Energy Star light fixtures and energy efficient bulbs, hooking up vacancy sensors and reevaluating something as routine as your exit signs, you could end up saving a significant amount.

In terms of light fixtures and bulbs, Energy Star says it’s possible to reduce energy consumption and heat by 75 percent. It’s also smart to switch to more efficient fluorescent lighting, like T8 or T5 lamps with electronic ballasts which light up faster. Chris Moyer, the manager of the National Restaurant Association’s (NRA) Conserve Initiative, assures the switch will be worth it and could pay back as much as 15 to 25 percent. “You’re going to see a payback within one to three years tops [when switching to]

LED technology,” Moyer said in an NRA article. It’s also important to make sure other items using lights, like exit signs, are using the right type of illumination. That same article said while a 40-watt incandescent light for an exit sign can cost about \$30, it will last less time and cost more to run. Instead, the NRA goes on to say, “A 5-watt LED sign, however, costs \$40 and will last about 10 times as long and cost about \$7 a year to power.”

A final lighting suggestion is one that, like a programmable thermostat, will save money when no one is around. The occupancy sensor can do wonders, especially in a restaurant environment, to save energy and dollars. Sensors can be placed in areas like closets, refrigerators, restrooms and offices where lights normally only need to be on for just a few minutes at a time over the course of the day, yet due to forgetfulness and other factors are left on for hours at a time.

### **Renewable Energy Options**

If completing all of the following ideas just isn’t enough for you, you can take it a lot further by actually generating your own energy. Energy can be generated through everything from solar panels to wind turbines while providing your business with an energy source and cutting down on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Many utility companies even have programs dedicated to helping you get started and finding the money to make it possible. And if this road sounds a little too bumpy for you, it could be just as good of an investment to purchase renewable energy certificate (RECs), which help support renewable energy generation. A great source to find out more information and even purchase RECs is [green-e.org](http://green-e.org).

#### **RENEWABLE ENERGY – WIND TURBINES**



Photo from Treehugger.com

### **Chapter 4: Water Usage**

Just like energy, water is a vital element to running a restaurant. If you’d like to serve pasta or just wash your dishes you have to have it. That is exactly why it’s important to conserve your sources to ensure your restaurant, as well as other businesses and even homes, will have access to plenty of H<sub>2</sub>O for years to come.



## Replacing old equipment

The first step in conserving water is to make sure all equipment that uses it is as up-to-date as possible. Too often faucets are left on or leak long after they've been shut off. How about those toilets in your bathrooms? Those can also be waster if they are the simple standard versions. [Conserve](#), the National Restaurant Association's environmental initiative, says, "A leaky faucet dripping one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water a year. A leaky toilet can waste about 200 gallons of water a day." They also encourage the purchase of low-flush toilets by comparing the amount used per flush, 4.5 gallons for a standard toilet versus just 1.6 gallons for a low-flush version.

## High efficiency

Getting new products also provides a golden opportunity to make sure your building is as water-efficient as possible. It couldn't be simpler than looking for products with a [WaterSense](#)® label. This label, developed by the Environmental Protection Agency, and its corresponding program, "seeks to protect the future of our nation's water supply by promoting water efficiency and enhancing the market for water-efficient products, programs, and practices."



Along with [WaterSense](#)® products, there is one piece of equipment that you should consider buying above all else for your busy kitchen: the pre-rinse valve. This one item, which usually retails for around \$75, is estimated by Energy Star to save about 2.4 gallons of water per minute while giving you spraying power equal to that of an average spray valve. Chris Moyer, advises "If you use that particular piece of equipment three to four hours a day... you'll save anywhere from \$900 to \$1,200 in the first year of using that equipment." Moyer continues, "When you talk about costs operationally and figure out how much sales you have to bring in... it's the same as generating \$20,000 in new business."

With figures like both of these, it's difficult to justify *not* investing in this simple tool, like those from the [Fishers](#) brand (available at Central) which come as part of an overall pre-rinse unit.

## Chapter 6: Food & Supplies

Just like energy and water, food and supplies are obviously necessary elements in running a restaurant. Often these elements are overlooked because they are so necessary to the business and due to the common idea that if it isn't overly processed, bagged, etc. then it must be good for the Earth and customers. To show this, consider that, according to Cool Farming: Climate Impacts of Agriculture and Mitigating Potential found on the [Green Seal](#) website, "Food production contributes between 17 percent and 32 percent of all global human-induced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions." As well as this fact from the [EPA](#) that "in the US, about 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides are used annually, which accounts for nearly 23 percent of the world's use."

But that doesn't mean that you should reconsider your decision to join in on the restaurant world as a whole, more that you can improve these numbers by thinking more about the products you purchase and serve to your patrons. It's entirely possible to serve delicious dishes, whether in-house or to go, and save the world (or at least bits of it) at the same time.

### Local, organic and sustainable food



Photo from r4dblog.com

One of the most important and increasingly easy ways to become more environmentally aware is to buy food from local organic sources. By acquiring these types of items, you'll not just be helping out the Earth; you'll also show your business supports the community where it resides as well as the more humane treatment of animals. This leads to an element mentioned earlier: publicity. Consumers are always looking for how a restaurant is different than the rest and by doing something that's great for the world around you, there's also the chance to easily increase the traffic to your dining room.

While the benefits are great, you may be asking, how can I know what is local, organic and/or sustainable? The most straight-forward way to tell if an item has been grown locally is to buy at your local farmer's market. Products available at farmer's markets come from the community in which they are found and more often than not are actually being sold by the farmer.

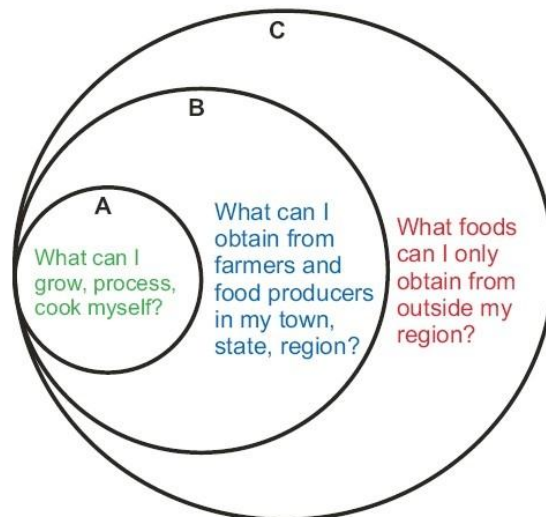
The downside to this is often, these markets are geared more towards the average consumer. The upside is, by visiting and picking up a few items, you can, not only test the quality of the products, but also cultivate a relationship with the owners. These relationships can lead to the opportunity to buy produce, meat and other necessities straight from the source and allow you to see first-hand where your ingredients are coming from.

While taking a leisurely stroll through the farmer's market may sound ideal, it may not always be possible when running your own restaurant. Another way to find out if your food products are local, organic and sustainable is to simply ask the right questions of the wholesaler you plan to do business with. While it might be tempting to pose the initial question and take the answer at face value, it's actually more important to know what to follow-up with. Remember, anyone can tell you their food qualifies under these standards, but not all can tell you just why they do. It may be helpful to ask things such as the following:

- What farm grows the food? This can allow for more research into the farms practices.
- Where is the particular location? Products grown in the same tri-state region or the same town could both be considered local. It all depends on the individual's definition.
- Can you provide the guidelines you use to determine if a product is local, organic and sustainable? This can insure that your values and those of your partner line up in a way that is satisfactory.

There are also sources that can do the leg work for you. These time saving groups are dedicated to finding the best resources and want to spread the word on eating more responsibly both for health and environmental reasons. One great option is to search through the [Local Harvest](#) website. They offer a way to find everything from wholesale options to restaurants (another publicity opportunity) all over the United States that qualify under strict standards.

## Circular Food Logic



### Guiding principles:

1. Eat/buy as locally, organically, and as seasonally as you can.
2. Over time, try to move as much of your food purchases and consumption into the inner circles.
3. Favor whole products over processed ones.
4. Insist on foods where the producers were paid and treated fairly.
5. If buying meat, eggs, and dairy products, insist on ones coming from animals who lived and died humanely.
6. Take time to prepare and enjoy good food with friends and family.

Source: [www.wegrowfood.com](http://www.wegrowfood.com)

### Green Containers and other goods

A second, fairly simple way to stay green through food and supplies is to look for environmentally safe take-out containers and other goods. Many cities (over 100), like Oakland, have recently banned common forms of take-out containers like Styrofoam. According to an article in the [San Francisco Gate](#), "Supporters note that polystyrene takes thousands of years to decompose and is already a huge problem in waterways." In the same article, it was noted that Oakland planned to fine restaurants based on complaints and "after a first warning, food vendors could face fines ranging from \$100 to \$500 for repeat offenses."

With potential money and customer loss due to something as basic as a to-go container, evaluating just what you will use becomes a necessary task. One good source for knowing what should and shouldn't be used is the article "[How Green Is Your Takeaway Container?](#)" on Chow's website. This handy list rates common materials used in takeout containers from 1 (bad) to 5 (good) giving reasoning behind each.

Another valuable (and definitely cost saving) option is to buy reusable containers. This not only gives you the opportunity to reward return customers (see below), but also allows for your guests to take

advantage of the product longer, cutting down on overall waste. [Central](#) provides several eco-friendly takeout options that make this a viable and affordable choice.

Many other eco-friendly options are also readily available that can cut down on your costs and maybe even make for a more interesting or upscale atmosphere at your business. One of these is to simply opt out of using disposable table top items. Although initially more inexpensive, plastic silverware and paper napkins can become both a time waster and money drainer over time, just consider how often you'd need to order these items on average. By switching to silverware and cloth napkins, you can give your restaurant a more polished feel while reducing your need to constantly order more items. An added bonus is that the silverware can be washed in an Energy Star/[WaterSense](#)<sup>®</sup> dishwasher, putting your new equipment to good use!

If nicer table settings are just not enough, you can also try the hottest new restaurant trend, that's also an eco-saver: electronic ordering. Allowing you to cut down on printing menus, increased customer reaction and getting more accurate orders to your tables are just a few of the benefits of this high-tech opportunity. Since it also uses no paper, electronic ordering can cut down on the amount of unneeded waste during menu updates and on the average day prevents throwing away page after page from order pads. Plus, why wouldn't you want your restaurant to be at the forefront of what the [Sacramento Bee](#) calls a "hot food trend"?

## Chapter 7: How customers can help (and benefit)

Essentially, keeping your restaurant environmentally friendly is your responsibility, but eventually your customers will also be able to play a bit of a role. If patrons are coming in due to not only your wonderful fare, but also your commitment to the environment, it most likely means they have a vested interest in that cause and want to do all they can to help. So why not encourage and reward diner efforts while reaping the benefits for the good of the restaurant and the planet?

### Reusable items



Photo from  
[freshneasybuzz.blogspot.com](http://freshneasybuzz.blogspot.com)

The size and type of your eatery can guide your decisions on the amount of reusable items you are willing and able to use on an everyday basis. For the smaller restaurant or coffee house, it can both be fun and unique to encourage guests to bring in their own reusable mugs or glasses in order to cut down on costs and waste, not to mention water usage for your dishwashers.

Reusable bags and takeout containers are items that can be implemented no matter what the size of your business. While initially these items, like many others in the green family, may cost a bit more you can eventually save in the long run. By offering items like canvas bags or washable takeout containers, you may have the opportunity to initially charge a fee on the takeout order in order to cover the cost. If the customer returns to your restaurant with their items in

tow for the next take out order, you can reward them for it with a small discount, like many grocery stores now do.

An extra bonus besides money and environmental savings of having customers use your bags again is the chance to promote your business. Not only could this program be exclusive to your restaurant, but reusable items can often be imprinted with your logo and contact information as well. That means each time a customer uses that bag, whether at your restaurant or elsewhere, people will see your information and be able to form an opinion about the good you're doing or just know where to get some tasty takeout the next time they're hungry.

A second side to the money savings of this alternative takeout is the material it's made from or rather *not* made from. By using items that are not made of the typical Styrofoam or plastic, you may actually be proactive without realizing it. Many cities are either in the process of or have already successfully passed laws banning these materials from being used. According to an article in the [Wall Street Journal](#), "San Jose's city council approved a plastic-bag ban starting in January 2012, along with a 10-cent charge for each paper bag, which would rise to 25 cents after two years." The article also states that a similar ban in San Francisco has "lowered plastic-bag waste in the city by 15 to 20 percent," according to the city's trash and recycling contractor. Just imagine the amount your restaurant could avoid having to spend by implementing this plan prior to legal mandates!

### **Electronic Ordering**

Just as takeout containers and sacks fill the landfill, so too does the material from every order and receipt. While this cannot necessarily be eliminated all together, new practices are emerging every day to help prevent the waste. The biggest trend in this area is online and electronic ordering.

The obvious upside in using such a product for an eco-minded restaurant would be there is little to no waste, besides the need to charge the electronic device, usually an i-Pad or other similar technology, each day. However, according to an article online ordering trends in the [Nation's Restaurant News](#), this type of ordering can also greatly help your bottom line as well.

Cornell professor Sheryl E. Kimes and graduate student Philip F. Laque say in the article, "Over 40 percent of U.S. adults have ordered food online, and restaurants using electronic ordering report increases in both average check and order frequency." This is not to mention faster more accurate orders. The Partnership for the Environment says that electronic order pads are also a great way to, "Eliminate double-handling, order errors and forgotten orders." Plus these electronics normally last for a few years and have many affordable versions available.



Photo from svnergconsultants.com

## Recycling

The most obvious (and affordable) way to get customers involved in the environmental process at your restaurant is to encourage them to recycle while at the same time using as many recycled products as possible. As time passes, the general public has become more and more accustomed to seeing [recycling containers](#). If properly labeled, the containers will be easy to use for the patron and/or your employees and will create no more work than a normal trash container.

In addition, recycled paper towels and napkins may also be easily obtained and put into use. This change may seem small and to your average customer it really is. With many businesses and other facilities using these items already, customers may not even realize this earth-conscious move that the [Partnership for the Environment](#) says, “Reduces the number of trees harvested to make paper Reduces landfill usage and water pollution.”

## Chapter 8: Keeping it Clean

Being environmentally responsible doesn't just stop with recycling or making sure your dishwasher is Energy Star certified, it also continues through the clean up process. In this case, cleaning can be everything from wiping up at the end of the night to figuring out how to get rid of your ancient appliances. All of these pieces combine to make one large ever moving green process that can be easily maintainable if you know what to do and just how to do it.

### Keeping Everyday Cleaning Safe

Before you can begin to clean up, it is vital you know which products are safe to use. By doing this you can make sure all of the other work you've done to make your restaurant an eco-haven hasn't been done in vein. As if this weren't enough to make you stop to take a look at what you're cleaning with, the Partnership for the Environment says, “Federal studies have shown, that one out of three janitorial cleaning products contain harmful ingredients that can cause severe skin and eye irritation, cancer or reproductive disorders.”

Not only is this something you'll likely want to avoid with patrons, but also when keeping your employees who do the cleaning safe. [GreenRestaurants.org](#) also reminds us that, “When these materials are flushed down drains, they enter the sewage system, affecting water quality downstream of the discharge pipes.” This means you could also be doing harm to people who may have never even visited your restaurant.

There are several ways you can keep your kitchen and other areas sanitary, safe and green. Here are a few recommendations:



Photo from MosleyGreen.wordpress.com

- Look for cleaners with labels like the following: [EPA Design for the Environment](#) , [TerraChoice](#) , [GreenSeal](#) and [GreenGuard](#) . The Partnership for the Environment recommends items with these certifications as environmentally friendly.
- Make your own products using items that can be mixed in-house such as vinegar, baking soda and hydrogen peroxide. [Treehugger.com](#) says these items are “non-toxic, biodegradable, and made from renewable resources (not petroleum).”
- [Greenrestaurants.org](#) also suggests working with a cleaning and sanitation consultant to help you in “designing cleaning, sanitation and pest control practices that minimize environmental and health impacts.”

### **Recycling old items**

While not as frequent as your daily cleaning, recycling your old equipment can also have an effect on the environment. It could also have an effect legally if it isn't disposed of properly. Often when buying new products, the company you're buying from may also provide a take-away service. While these services are usually environmentally conscious, remember to ask when making your purchase what the procedure for is for discarding old materials.

If you are left to recycle to appliances yourself, it's very important to remember it is usually not as easy as leaving the item out by your curb or dumpster, as the majority of the time these items end up in a landfill where they can harm the environment as they break down.

Instead, [PartSelect.com](#) suggests contacting local charities that may need your old, yet still working items. Another option is to bring them to your local scrap metal yard or recycling center. PartSelect.com mentions that at these businesses, “A process is completed that removes any harmful elements and iron from the appliance, and then the body or case can be re-used.” Participating outlets can be found by using the [Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials](#) Waste Management Program Links.

## Chapter 9: Getting Certified



Photo from greenseal.org

The final step to making sure your restaurant is as environmentally friendly as possible is to get certified. There are different standards and procedures to this process from state to state and program to program. However, it's still a central aspect of all of the hard work, money and time spent making your restaurant a healthy and safe place for your customers and the community, not to mention a certification means that your claims of being green are credible.

[Green Seal](#) suggests that a “Third-party certification is the best way to assure your customers that you are making real and effective reductions in environmental impact, as verified by an independent party.”

Similarly, [DineGreen](#) outlines six steps to becoming certified as a green restaurant, including determining the steps to certification, environmental consulting and receiving a license to use the DineGreen certification logo.

### Conclusion

No matter what route you go to become an environmentally conscious restaurant, you can be assured [Central Restaurant Products](#) will be there to help you along the way. Central Restaurant Products is dedicated to helping restaurant owners with all aspects of keeping an environmentally sound foodservice operation; from energy efficiency to daily upkeep. Central employs the industry's best and most knowledgeable professionals: buyers to keep the warehouse stocked with the best quality equipment and supplies; merchandisers to negotiate with top-rated manufacturers to offer the industry's best prices; a customer service team to connect questions with answers; and product consultants who stand on the leading edge of foodservice innovation and knowledge. Call today to request a [free 300-page color catalog](#), and find out about the Central Advantage.