

The Two Paths to Dining Service Sustainability

Efficient facilities, equipment and operation plus a green, healthy menu

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You can do well by doing good, as they used to say of banker-philanthropists. A thoughtfully planned and well-structured sustainability program for your dining service can save money as well as help save the planet. Here's how.

Equipment, Facilities, Utilities Are Worthwhile Investments

The middle of a recession may not seem like a good time to consider discretionary spending.

But if your company or college plans to be in business when the recovery arrives, a few prudent investments now in your dining service facilities and equipment will more than justify, and pay for, themselves over a fairly short time span.

New, energy-saving, cost-reducing equipment has been coming on the market in a steady stream over the past few years. Any food service facility more than a few years old will benefit from a modest upgrade or, if it's more than 15 years old, a full or partial renovation.

Cutting Down to Size

A facility designed for a larger population than it's presently serving is an especially good target. The big kitchen and servery is eating up power, water and other expensive utilities at a rate that cannot be controlled without a significant downsizing. It also may be taking more labor than current business justifies.

Improved operating techniques that emphasize conservation work well too, and cost little or nothing to implement.

All these investments help the environment while they're making your dining service more efficient and less expensive.

Green Equipment

Nearly every manufacturer has upgraded its line to meet environmental concerns. Examples from *Foodservice Equipment Reports* that highlight this trend:

- A new kitchen exhaust hood by the Avtec division of United Brands util-

Fresh & Natural: Clarion's New Plan for Healthy Dining

Twenty years ago, college students' favorite meals included fruit and cottage cheese plates, chicken nuggets and chicken chop suey.

Today, it's locally-grown fruits and vegetables, crispy garlic-ginger chicken wings and Vietnamese Pho, according to research by national food service contractor Sodexo.

"The biggest change we've seen is in the demand for locally-grown produce and authentic international cuisine that's made to order," says Chef Rob Morasco, Sodexo's senior director of culinary support in the education market.

The idea that healthy dining, combined with their other wellness initiatives, can help employees become more productive has penetrated the corporate world as well.

In 2008, Clarion was asked by a large corporate client to develop a program that "offers menu variety and nutritional food choices that [are] fundamental components of any best-in-class wellness initiative."

That project was the genesis of our new **Fresh & Natural** approach to planning on-site dining operations.

We began with the premise that healthy food promotes healthy people and that healthy people work or study more productively, enjoy life more fully and find their connection to their campus or employer more enjoyable.

While a healthy eating program won't by itself guarantee a healthier population, science has shown that when a third or more of daily caloric intake is in poor calories, the impact on an individual is great.

Fresh & Natural incorporates elements of the Mediterranean Diet, based primarily on

izes an arch-shaped interior and high velocity exhaust to reduce the amount of exhausted air, which the company claims cuts electric and gas consumption by up to 40%.

- A convection steam cooker by Market Forge, Power-Plus, just 42-in. wide, includes a feature to reduce water consumption.
- Meiko's K-Tronic dishwashers reclaim waste heat generated by the machine to preheat incoming water.
- The eCorrect from Somat reduces the weight and volume of food scraps by 90% using dry heat and turns it into a useable, humus-rich soil additive in 12 to 24 hours. It also reduces the volume of trash you pay to haul away.

The Efficient Kitchen

A remodeled or renovated kitchen and servery will reduce costs through the use of both innovative equipment and new preparation techniques in a more compact footprint.

Clarion-designed dining facilities feature cook-to-order service stations, which permit a much smaller kitchen. Fast, efficient induction cookers and equipment that needs no exhaust hood makes this possible.

The customer benefits because his/her meal is fresh and made to order. The operator benefits because both labor cost and food waste is reduced. The owner benefits because less space is used and utility bills are lower.

Staff Contributions

The dining service staff can contribute.

- The chef can plan more carefully to ensure against overproduction and waste.
- "Just in time" cooking also works to reduce waste. It's possible to cook or finish most dishes throughout the meal period.
- Turn off equipment when it's not in use – not just the ovens, but that self-serve toaster in the servery.
- Keep refrigerator doors closed when they're not being used.

fruits, vegetables, fish and meat. We adapt each specific menu to the tastes and preferences of the group for whom we plan the program.

It includes:

- Developing and implementing imaginative, nutritious meals, prepared from "scratch" using fresh ingredients, locally sources as possible.
- Eliminating or minimizing junk food.
- Using organic and hormone-free foods to the extent practical.
- Providing nutrition information and education.
- Reinforcing your initiatives to encourage wellness and a healthy lifestyle.

\$1.65 for a Dollar

Highmark Blue Cross-Blue Shield in western Pennsylvania studied worksite healthy foods and wellness initiatives at companies with a total of 12,000 employees. They said they found a savings of \$1.65 for every \$1.00 spent on the programs, *FoodService Director* reports.

www.worthwhile websites

Places to find information about healthy foods and sustainable initiatives.

Slowfood.com - Slowfood International

fns.usda.gov - U.S. Food & Nutrition Svcs.

Eatright.org - American Dietetic Assn.

Organicfoodinfo.net

Restaurant.org/sustainability

- National Restaurant Assn.

Blog.greenpath.com

Usgbc.org - U.S. Green Building Council

You can learn more about how Clarion can help make your dining service more sustainable and healthy, while reducing costs, by contacting Tom Mac Dermott, FCSI, president, 603/642-8011 or Angela Phelan, senior vice president, 973/762-7933, or e-mail us at info@clariongp.com