

Hey Kermit, Being Green is Getting Easier (Part III)

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December 2, 2007

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Energy Efficiency: There is no polite way to say this – modern day cooking equipment is incredibly inefficient. A handful of manufacturers are focused on energy star ratings, but for now they are still in the minority. Consider that the gas used by a six burner range with an oven base may have an hourly gas rating equivalent to two residential heating units. US equipment manufacturers are some of the worst offenders, promoting quantity of BTU's over efficiency and falling significantly behind their European counterparts. In exploring energy efficiency, we need to look beyond more efficient ways to do what we are doing now. We need to explore different ways to do what we are doing now.

Energy Harvesting: Even with improved efficiency, nearly every piece of commercial foodservice equipment will still reject some energy, often in the form of heat. Consider that gas fryers, quite common in kitchens throughout the United States, typically hover around 50% efficiency. That means that roughly half of the energy these appliances require is being wasted, sent right up the exhaust hood. Now let's take it one step further and analyze the additional costs associated with this inefficiency. The hood must exhaust the heat and effluent, which increases the quantity of air that must be removed. When more air is removed, more air must be replenished, thus increasing the size of the fans and energy used. It gets worse. Often the fresh air entering the building must be conditioned (i.e. heated or cooled), which results in more energy usage. This same snowball effect exists for nearly every appliance in the kitchen, impacting an operator's costs to bring energy into the building as well as its removal after use. Here is another example – fluorescent lighting. Have you ever noticed that a solar calculator works just fine indoors, powered by fluorescent lighting? This means that we are literally raining down energy in our buildings that could potentially be used for other purposes.

Green(back) Make Sense

These are just a handful of suggestions that could be further explored, and there are numerous other comparable initiatives. But did you notice a common denominator with these proposed ideas? In one form or fashion, they all yield potential cost savings for the operator. By going green, you can actually save the environment and some money at the same time. Further, those with an entrepreneurial spirit will identify business models that capitalize on the new opportunities created. It is very simple – the greening of hotels and restaurants is happening. It has already started. So why not jump in and help develop these industry-specific initiatives? What are you waiting for?

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Cited From: Simon, Lee. "Hey Kermit, Being Green Is Getting Easier (Part 1)."

Www.foodservice.com. Foodservice.com, 2 Dec. 2007. Web.

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