

# From Food to Fuel: Jumping on the Green Bandwagon

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What does it mean for a restaurant to be sustainable? Consumers visit dining venues and seldom think about the implications on the environment. With the thousands of pounds of food production each year, it seems unimaginable to reduce energy and limit waste from glass, cans, boxes, paper products and more. They all are essential to the restaurant operation. How can the restaurant industry even fathom the idea of going green? It sounds hard, time-consuming and costly. Rest assured that it doesn't have to be.

Products and services that are relatively new and are becoming more cost competitive, such as recycled and biodegradable products, commercial composting, energy efficient appliances, as well as the availability of local products, are making these efforts more feasible. The number of individuals across the world concerned with their environmental impact is encouraging restaurants to become more environmentally responsible.

Restaurants nationally are making efforts to reduce waste. The request and demand of credible green products increasingly is making it more attractive for restaurants to look to sustainable practices. What about locally? Are restaurants in the Yampa Valley able to jump on the green bandwagon?

The answer is without a doubt. Local restaurants and businesses are taking environmental sustainability into account and are incorporating sustainability into the workplace. Education, consultation and credibility also are important.

The Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association

## Steamboat Sustainable Business Program

The Steamboat Sustainable Business Program offers restaurants a wide variety of tools, products and practices to help them go green. By participating in the program, some of the things you will learn about include:

■ **Manage cooking equipment effectively.** Equipment is essential to food preparation and vital to restaurant production. They also are some of the biggest energy consumers and can drain profits if not managed properly. Cutting energy here will show a considerable improvement to the bottom line.

■ **Buy post-consumer products whenever possible.** No more Styrofoam. This means the item was made entirely from recycled materials. Cups, glasses, plates, silverware, napkins, towels and take-out dishes can be post-consumer products made from recycled or biodegradable products.

■ **Recycle.** Set up a recycling program with the local recycling/waste establishments. Glass, plastic, cardboard, wood boxes, newspapers and even kitchen oil can be recycled. Customers who see a strong recycling program in a restaurant feel good about the establishment, and that can mean a lot more than the cost of recycling.

■ **Buy locally.** When possible, try to buy local products from surrounding community members or businesses. Local beef, chicken, eggs and produce can be bought here in the Yampa Valley.

■ **Manage hot water efficiently.** Hot water heaters drain energy. Restaurants go through a lot of hot water, and anything to improve the efficiency of heating water also helps save money.

■ **Support organic bar products.** All-natural and organic beers, wines and mixers are growing in popularity and availability.

■ **Check the seals on your entrances.** If seals are not kept clean and tight, cold air can seep in, causing the heating system to work harder. Costs and energy use increases.

■ **Use compact fluorescent or LED bulbs.** They use about 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs — and CFLs last 10 times longer, giving them the environmental and economic advantage.

■ **Join a co-op.** If you're a smaller restaurant or café, without the needs or ability for storage space, look into joining (or forming) a local co-op for purchasing green items. Cleaning supplies, paper products, etc. all are cheaper in bulk.

■ **Educate your staff and community.** They need to know why you're doing what you're doing, so that they can spread the word to the patrons and beyond.

For more information about participating in the Steamboat Sustainable Business Program, visit [www.steamboatchamber.com/sustainable](http://www.steamboatchamber.com/sustainable).

and Environmental Solutions Unlimited started the Sustainable Business Program in 2007 to encompass all realms of business operation to be educated and more sustainable. From lodging properties, real estate offices, construction companies, to restaurants; any business can enroll and be successful.

Five restaurants in the Yampa Valley have received certification from the Sustainable Business Program as a result of the owners and employees being committed to the cause. Bistro c.v. was the first restaurant in our area to achieve Gold Certification, and the Ore House at Pine Grove has fol-

lowed suit. The Rio Grande Mexican Restaurant recently joined the program.

Rex Brice, owner of Mazzola's, Rex's American Grill & Bar, and Big House Burgers also saw a need for his restaurants to be more sustainable, and all three participate in the Steamboat Sustainable Business Program.

"I started to notice the impact of the restaurants on the community and saw a need to act in a sustainable manner," Brice said. The employees started to take simple measures such as recycling, using more recycled products to lower waste, and buying local beef, chicken, eggs



KYLEIGH DEMICCO, CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION/COURTESY

**Big House Burgers kitchen staff** members Zach Holladay, left, and Dave Murray stand in the kitchen while preparing the restaurant's famous shoestring fries and hamburgers made with Routt County beef. The "green" approach of Big House Burgers, including their stance on kitchen equipment and use of reusable goods, has earned this local business a Gold Certification in the Sustainable Business Program.

and produce when possible. "It made sense to enroll all three restaurants in the Sustainable Business Program to learn more and become more conscious of our impacts on the community," Brice said.

One might not know that leftover grease from Rex's famous shoestring fries and the oil from Mazzola's chicken parmesan is actually made into "grease" — otherwise known as biodiesel. Some locals are driving cars powered by the leftover cooking oil. All three of Rex's restaurants have collection receptacles where individuals in the community have arranged "grease" pickup.

Brian Vaughn and Kevin Caparelli, owners of bistro c.v., joined the Sustainable Business Program because operating and serving sustainable products is a key element to their business. The owners have made an effort to find family owned and operated farms supporting sustainable agriculture as well

as sustainable aquaculture. "It is important to take the extra time to find these small farms because you end up with a better product that makes a difference in the taste and quality of the food," Vaughn said.

"Moving in the sustainable direction does take effort, education and more money up front, but in the end, it saves money and you realize the positive environmental and community impact," Brice said.

This is the great thing about going green in restaurants or any business — it cuts costs and saves considerable amounts of money while improving customer loyalty and visibility at the same time. Studies show that consumers still want green products and services, even if they have to pay more for them. In a time when cutting costs might seem like the sink-or-swim approach, going green might contribute to helping a business afloat. From food to fuel, grease has gone green.



### Upcoming Events

**July 23**

#### Young Professionals Network Event

Have you or your staff joined the new Young Professionals Network? Monthly members-only events feature inspiring speakers, networking opportunities, and professional development. Free for YPN members and \$10 for guests. Contact Marion to join YPN and to register for this event at 875-7008 or [HYPERLINK](mailto:HYPERLINK) "mailto:marion@steamboatchamber.com" marion@steamboatchamber.com

**5:30-7:30pm at Saddles Deck at the Sheraton. Suzanne Schlicht will be the speaker.**

**August 4**

#### Speed Networking

For many businesses, word of mouth is an excellent marketing tool. Try this fast-paced, fun networking event that is like speed dating for your business. Limited space available, please RSVP to [HYPERLINK](mailto:HYPERLINK) "mailto:Alli@steamboatchamber.com" Alli@steamboatchamber.com or 875-7000

**3:30-4:30 at The Boathouse Pub, \$10 for members, \$25 for guests**

### Support your community, sponsor an event!

The 1st Annual Steamboat All Arts Festival is the newest and most collaborative event in town. The Steamboat All Arts Festival is a four-day event that highlights the amazing arts and culture in the Yampa Valley while featuring nationally-renowned artists. The Steamboat All Arts Festival incorporates all aspects of the arts into one cohesive event including dance, vocal, musical, visual, literary and culinary arts. Sponsorships are available at all levels. Please consider supporting this new event which is planned to be a mainstay on the summer events calendar. For sponsorship details please contact Kara at 970-875-7002.



### New Members

#### Steamboat Photos

**Peter Arnold**

**(970) 846-7006**

[www.steamboatphotos.com](http://www.steamboatphotos.com)

#### The Inn at Steamboat

**Scott Campbell**

**3070 Columbine Dr.**

**(970) 879-2600**

[www.steamboatresorts.com](http://www.steamboatresorts.com)

Newly remodeled in 2007, The Inn at Steamboat offers deluxe king hotel rooms, deluxe 2 queen hotel rooms and deluxe king suites. On site front desk, housekeeping, exercise room, hot tub and outdoor pool. Rooms feature flat panel tv's, mini-refrigerator, coffeemaker and complimentary high speed Internet. Private shuttle service available during ski season

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