



Green machines

It may be expensive to set up, but going green can save you both time and money in the long term. Kellie Morle talks to operators who have made the eco plunge.

For many restaurant and cafe owners, the desire to reduce environmental impact is strong. And conserving energy also translates into savings. As The Ugly Duck Out chef and owner Robyn Klobuslak says, it's not just the \$5 you save by switching off an appliance, it's how many coffees you have to sell to get the same margin.

A typical food service business uses an average 234MWh of electricity a year, about the same as 36 households and costing \$36,000 annually. Introducing energy-saving measures can yield a 10 to 30 per cent saving.

New lighting technology has made it easier to switch to more energy-wise products. The Ugly Duck Out uses

energy saver globes, dimmer switches and has rewired areas can be lit only when required. Lights are turned off when there is enough natural light to do the job.

Weis Restaurant in Toowoomba recently took part in the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency ecoBiz program. Ice machine feed water is now pre-cooled by piping through the cold room and energy-efficient evaporative coolers are used for air conditioning.

Weis is also replacing incandescent globes with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). Each CFL costs \$670 but delivers a \$752 annual saving in energy costs, and has a life cycle six times that of incandescents.

Weis's 50W dichroic globes will be replaced with 20W globes, saving \$145 annually.

The criteria for buying appliances is still largely the initial cost but, more and more, business owners are also looking at the long-term costs—and benefits. The whole life-cycle cost of an appliance, including purchase, maintenance, fuel and disposal, is estimated at five to 10 times higher than the purchase cost.

Jeff Leipnik and Katie Bruce run the Ballarat Steakhouse in Victoria. "A sustainable restaurant is a longer-lasting restaurant," says Leipnik; when fitting out the restaurant, he puts sustainability ahead of price. "The key point is to get the more efficient and better quality components," he ex-

plains. "I believe you do it once and you do it properly."

Where possible, lighting has been changed to CFLs, but, in the main dining area, incandescents remain to retain the ambience. At present, dimmable CFLs and fluoro tubes are very expensive. Standard CFLs will flicker on dimmers, decreasing their lifespan.

The restaurant's refrigeration system operates remotely, where motors and compressors are installed outside or away from the actual cooling units, keeping the machinery cooler and cutting energy use.

Australia's largest catering and services company, The Compass Group, has had 37 of its sites accredited by the scheme. The group is looking at installing a Sun Lizard at

one of its contractor locations. The unit uses the sun to heat a solar flat panel collector, heating air and pumping it using a fan powered by a photovoltaic panel. Summer mode stops air circulating through the solar collector and instead pumps hot air from inside to outside. The air is then replaced with cooler air. The system costs nothing to run after the initial purchase and can provide free heating for up to 20 years.

Chef Jim Larcian runs Pyrama, a new Sydney restaurant that creates simple and delicious dishes. Larcian is a strong devotee of organic, vegetarian and gluten-free products and says his kitchen is as green as he can get it. When fitting out his restaurant six months ago, he opted for a remote refrigeration system on advice from his supplier, P & R Refrigeration Services & Catering Equipment.

P & R co-owner Peter Makris recommends oversizing units to maximise energy efficiency by cooling hot air faster. This reduces electricity use. Once the optimum temperature is reached, it is retained better, keeping temperature fluctuations to a minimum. Advances in thermostatic expansion valve technology have eliminated gas leaks.

Quality refrigeration units use around half the energy of a cabinet made 10 years ago, according to leading manufacturers. Changes have been made to the insulation blowing agents, refrigerants are CFC- and HFC-free, units are better insulated and have self-sealing and self-closing doors. P & R fitted Pyrama's entire kitchen, including refrigeration, the coolroom, the stainless steel and all cooking equipment. Pyrama's commitment to spending in the medium- to top-end category allowed it to gain energy efficiency and two other

important elements: warranty and reliability.

Pyrama also purchased a cooker which operates on a sole pilot light system, allowing all burners to be switched off entirely between orders. Advances in cooker technology mean gas equipment has more efficient burners, gas lines and gas fittings, perfecting heat distribution and intensity. "They give a better flame, no air gaps and no orange flames," Makris says.

Klobuslak has more practical tips to save energy. During quiet periods, grills and fryers are switched back to pilot and at the end of service turned off. She bakes when the oven is already hot and only boils the amount of water required. She avoids using a clothes dryer when uniforms, rags and napkins can be line-dried.

Her business is seasonal and freezers, refrigerators and ice machines are consolidated during quiet times.

All of the restaurateurs see their efforts as part of a wider ethos. Klobuslak has been involved in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years and has always considered the impact restaurants have on their environment. "It makes good economic sense in an industry with small margins to watch expenditure of resources, to conserve our resources and ensure the quality of our produce," she says.

Similar sentiments come from Larcian. "We recycle, re-use, minimise power generation wherever possible and we buy as much premium Australian produce as possible."

Leipnik hopes his energy-efficient restaurant will save him money, shrink his carbon footprint and keep staff morale high. "I'm hopeful that there is going to be more awareness and it will bring more people to me because I am Green Table-accredited," he says. □

Starting with some of the best



Be inspired by Riviana's Antipasto range.

Riviana

Riviana Foods Pty Ltd

info@rivianafoodservice.com www.rivianafoodservice.com

VIC/SA/TAS Sales
Phone 1800 814 800

QLD Sales
Phone 07 3278 7555

NSW Sales
Phone 02 8786 3600

WA Sales
Phone 08 9360 3500