

LIFESTYLES

Green tips

<http://www.dailysouthtown.com/lifestyles/402062,271LIF5.article>

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Why is the Environmental Law & Policy Center in Chicago pushing for restaurants to go green? Because the restaurant industry, they say, has a huge "environmental footprint" for these reasons:

Almost 30 percent of all meals in the United States were eaten away from home, accounting for 40 percent of the average food budget.

There are 500,000 food service businesses, 200,000 of which are full-service restaurants.

The restaurant industry employs one in every three retail workers and consumes one-third of all retail electricity use.

Here are just a few of the ways the center recommends restaurants conserve energy and use environmentally friendly practices:

Reduce broiler, fryer and range pre-heating and idle times.

Run exhaust system at lower fan speeds.

Keep equipment clean -- the more that accumulates in and on fryers and grill services, the harder they have to work.

Buy Energy Star rated equipment, which can reduce energy costs by as much as 40 percent.

Turn down the temperature on dishwashers, and wash only full loads.

Install low-flow valves on pre-rinse sprayers, which will reduce water use by 50 percent.

Consider using tankless water heaters, which is 80 percent efficient (as opposed to 50 percent efficiency with conventional heaters).

Install high-efficiency evaporator and condenser fans in refrigerators.

Make sure door seals are tight, and maintain clean coils so the equipment doesn't have to work harder.

Adjust the room temperature by one degree, and save 5 percent on heating and cooling bills.

Install ceiling fans and sunlight-reflecting coatings on windows to circulate air and reduce heat buildup.

Zone heat so the kitchen and the dining areas can be set at different temperatures.

Use light-sensitive dimmers that automatically dim when natural light is strong.

Use high-efficiency lights in the kitchen and storage areas and occupancy sensors that will automatically shut off lights in rest rooms and storage areas when not in use.

Don't thaw frozen food in running water.

Wash produce in sinks and install low-flow faucets.

Install hands-free faucets to reduce water use.

Ask customers if they want napkins, utensils and condiments with carry-out meals instead of providing them automatically.

Use paper sizes that fit the product that's being wrapped, and don't use rigid plastic or Styrofoam packaging when foil and paper sheets and boxes can be used.

Use plates made out of sugar cane fiber; cups, utensils and clear containers made from corn starched-derived PAL; lined, unbleached folded paperboard boxes; biodegradable trash bags.

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