

SUSTAINABILITY:

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT

Introduction to Sustainability and Environmental Issues that Every Culinarian Needs to Know

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Introduction

Knowing how to cook, knowing how to be a professional culinarian, involves far more than how to dice an onion, debone a chicken or fix a sauce if it breaks.

In today's world, it is critical for all people in the culinary industry to understand the business, social and environmental world in which they live and work.



Introduction

The Covid pandemic showed us that it is impossible for owners, chefs and cooks to live separate from the world.

Everyone, from owners to dishwashers, had to adjust—and adjust quickly—to a new way of doing business.

Introduction

If they did not adjust, they were probably wiped out of business or at least sustained economic losses far greater than those who did adapt.

Introduction

The same is true for environmental and sustainability issues.

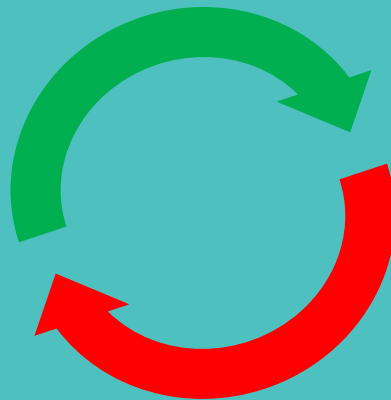
In a word, the old way of running food services operations is not sustainable.



What Does “To Be Sustainable” Mean?

“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

In other words, we must use resources at a slower rate than they can be produced.



What Does “To Be Sustainable” Mean?

Example:

You use 1,200 napkins a week.

But you only order one case of 1,000.

You will run out before the end of the week.

→ Your use of napkins at 1,200 per week is **NOT SUSTAINABLE** if only 1,000 are delivered each week.

Does It Really Matter?

What matters is that all culinary professionals live in the new reality that they must be informed, trained, mentored and practice environmentally and sustainable practices because:

- Profit margins will be affected.
- Your guests are becoming more conscious of these issues.
- Chefs have frequently led the way in social change.
- Government regulations at all levels will be coming on these issues.

Profit Margins

Anything that costs more will decrease that profit margin.
Anything wasted will further decrease the profit margin.



Profit Margins

It's now time to think about other items as a cost center. For example:

- How much water is wasted in your kitchen?
- How often are faucets left running?
- Dishwashers started with less than full racks?
- Items defrosted under blasting water because no one planned and put them in the walk-ins a few days ago?

Profit Margins

Conserving water is not only a positive influence on the environment but the cost of wasting goes right to the bottom line.



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Profit Margins

Turn ovens and burners on when needed

Use low flames



Profit Margins

Only provide straws on request



Photo by [Brian Yurasits](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Guest Awareness

More and more of your customers are paying attention to issues that affect how they, and the business they patronize, affect the environment.

If you and your business can't stay ahead of the customer's demands on these issues, the business will lose customers and probably fail.

Guest Awareness

Many guests will be willing to walk away from food service business that can't show environmental friendliness

And many will be willing to pay a premium at food service businesses that have sustainable and environmentally positive practices.



Leaders For Change

Chefs for many years– but particularly recently–have led movements for social change in the way people eat.

- Dan Barber, The Third Plate
- Ann Cooper, Renegade Lunch Lady
- Jamie Oliver, Food Revolution
- Alice Waters, Farm to Table Movement



Chef Ann Cooper, C.I.C., known as the "Renegade Lunch Lady" and founder of the Chef Ann Foundation, is a long time champion of nutritious, sustainable meals for school children.

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Government Regulations

To avoid costly remodeling, or worse, temporary or permanent shutdowns, it is important to understand the basics of the environmental issues the food service industry has on the community, the state, the country and the world so that you can stay ahead of these regulations.



What's Next?

The next series of articles will get into more specific issues and answer questions like:

- How can I be a more sustainable person?
- What are specific sustainable ways to make my kitchen more money?
- What does carbon footprint have to do with food service?
- What's up with all the talk about monocropping?