

'Going Green' Is Big at This Year's National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show

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Restaurant operators will find products, information, contacts and solutions on how to implement practices that are both eco-friendly and business-smart

"Going green" is not a trend, it's a smart new way of doing business. In addition to being the right thing to do to conserve the planet for future generations, incorporating environmentally friendly practices can benefit restaurant operators -- it can save on utility costs, satisfy consumer demand and increase operational productivity. The 2008 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show(R) (May 17-20 at McCormick Place in Chicago) will provide restaurateurs with the resources and tools they need to explore and increase environmental efforts, including products and services from many of the 2,000+ exhibiting companies and a specialized track of education sessions presented by leading experts.

"There is often a perception that 'going green' is expensive and not realistic for everyone, but many of these practices can actually boost business," said William C. Anton, FMP, convention chairman for the 2008 Show, and chairman and founder of Anton Airfood, Inc. "By taking even small steps and reaching for low-hanging fruit, restaurant operators can increase their efforts and in turn, their bottom lines. The 2008 NRA Show offers opportunities to learn how to implement environmentally responsible practices that also help conserve financial resources. In addition, these efforts can help drive customer traffic, as consumers increasingly make purchasing decisions based on eco-consciousness."

Among the thousands of products and services throughout the exhibit floor, there are many "green" options at this year's NRA Show. Several of the 25 Kitchen Innovations Award recipients have eco-conscious features, and the Organics & Natural Pavilion will feature sustainable food and beverage options. Other environmentally conscious products include energy management system technologies, packaging, tableware and cups made of recycled and renewable materials, eco-friendly uniforms, bio-degradable drinking straws, energy-efficient ambient lighting, sustainable seafood products, eco-conscious signage, and much more.

The Association created a special series of education sessions at NRA Show 2008 for attendees looking for information and tips on how to make their operations "greener" and integrate the products and services they find on the exhibit floor. The sessions will address a range of issues, including marketing environmental efforts, implementing energy-saving equipment and practices, making menus more sustainable, and more. "Green" education sessions include:

Steve Ells on Food With Integrity: Creating a Sustainable Food Supply - Monday, May 19, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.: Steve Ells, founder/chairman/CEO of Chipotle Mexican Grill, will address how he is driving the company toward sustainable practices with food, buildings and staff.

5 Things Operators Must Know About Energy Efficiency - Saturday, May 17, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.: Energy efficiency is a crucial part of operating a green restaurant. Learn from PG&E's Food Service Technology Center and EPA's ENERGY STAR.

Marketing to Conserving Customers: A Guide to Operating Green with a Triple Bottom Line - Monday, May 19, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.: Understanding how to market to savvy customers who care about the food they eat and their impact on the world around them.

For full session descriptions and a complete schedule of the 2008 Show's 65+ free education sessions on a variety of topics, visit the Show Web site at www.restaurant.org/show.

Association research shows that 62 percent of consumers say they are likely to choose a restaurant based on its environmental friendliness, and nearly one-third of restaurant operators plan to allocate a larger part of their budget to such efforts this year. In addition, the Association's survey of more than 1,200 chefs shows organics, local produce and sustainable seafood are among the hottest menu trends right now. And, kitchen equipment that saves water and energy is the second hottest equipment trend, after multi-purpose equipment.

The Association will also help restaurateurs throughout the year with their environmental-related efforts. A new Web site, part of the Association's Conserve environmental initiative, will be launched on May 19 during the NRA Show. It will include educational resources, success stories and tips on environmental measures that relate to energy, water and construction. Additional information on other topics will be added over the next several months.

Now in its 89th year, the annual National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show is the largest single gathering of restaurant, foodservice and lodging professionals in the Western Hemisphere. The 2008 Show will be held May 17-20, at McCormick Place in Chicago, Ill. The Show attracts 2,000+ exhibiting companies and 74,000 attendees and visitors from all 50 states and 115 countries.

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