

Four Ways To Manage Limited Resources And Increase Your Margins

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It's no secret that the key to sustainability in restaurants is managing limited resources and keeping your operations clean and safe. It's also no secret that consumers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, are demanding it more than ever. This is a trend that has been confirmed by a 2018 report from The Hartman Group, which shows that young people are more interested than previous generations in quality cues, transparency and sustainability credentials, and information on ingredients and nutrient density. The bottom line: clarity around sustainability, food preparation and safety is essential.

As consumers demand more transparency about sustainability, turn your operations into an advantage.

While it's no easy task, the tools needed to create clean environments for preparing and serving food and making smart decisions on resource management exist. Identifying the right tools and even back-of-the-house partners can make your operations more sustainable and your bottom line stronger. The result: peace of mind.

You face a number of resource challenges in your day-to-day operations, but let's focus on one: water. By isolating water we can extract universal lessons to be applied throughout your operation. Here are four tips to keep top of mind.

Understand Your Supply

While water scarcity is a global problem, its effects differ greatly from place to place. So you should know the state of water in your locale. Where does your water come from? What are the challenges in your region? Is there enough water to go around? Is water quality an issue? Is policy likely to change, potentially leading to higher prices, fees or even usage caps? Free online tools like the [Ecolab Smart Water Navigator](#) can help you answer these questions and determine the smartest course of action for your own operations.

Use Efficient Equipment

From food prep to cleaning, there isn't a facet of running a restaurant that doesn't take water. That's why the right equipment – a highly efficient dishmachine for instance – can make a big difference.

Imagine the collective impact if the sector adopted these modern machines at scale. In notoriously dry Las Vegas, to name just one place, OpenTable.com lists more than 2,300 restaurants. Assuming the same 500 racks per day, if each of them used a water-saving dishmachine, the aggregate savings would add up to the annual drinking water needs of more than 175,000 people.

Use the Right Sanitizers and Cleaning Products

Modern dishmachines come with highly concentrated detergents that break down the toughest soils and minimize water use, in addition to digital sensors to fine-tune the process. Water savings also are hidden in more prosaic activities. No-rinse sanitizers and floor-cleaning products can help you save water while mopping and scrubbing.

Minimize Waste

By far most of the water that goes into the meals you serve is the water needed to grow the ingredients. Producing the beef for a 1/3-pound burger, for instance, takes 660 gallons of water. At the same time, according to the U.N., about a third of all the food produced in the world (approximately 1.3 billion metric tons annually) is wasted.

Wasting less food results in less wasted water. There's a lot that restaurants can do to help. You can educate your staff and appoint a food waste reduction team; inventory and store food properly and use it on a "first in, first out" basis; measure portion sizes to lower the number of plates that come back with uneaten foods; recycle unused ingredients and compost leftovers. Finally, you can donate unused food, so it benefits those in need in your community.

There is no reason smart restaurateurs can't do their part to address water scarcity, save money and build their brands – and become known as sustainable water champions in the process. Who would say no to that?

Michael Johannsen

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