



&gt;&gt; A GREEN STORY &lt;&lt;

# SUSTAINABLE SUSTENANCE

Concessions companies source local products and reduce waste

by REBECCA NAKASHIMA



Chef Jacob Tew smiles from inside Delaware North's West Yellowstone greenhouse.

**S**ustainability and environmentally friendly food services and menu options are becoming the norm at most venues. Consumers expect it and look for it. In response to that expectation concessions companies, chefs and restaurants are starting a variety of programs and initiatives.

"Food waste is a hot topic of conversation," said Shawna McKinley, director of Sustainability, MeetGreen. "On a variety of fronts: reducing it through menu design, portion control, vegetarian content, water-wise menus, food donation, composting, and other efforts.

McKinley said the consumer expectation has shifted to take on an experiential angle when it comes to sustainable food. People now want to know how their food was raised and if it had a name.

"We've become more disconnected from where food comes from and how it is grown, harvested and made," said McKinley. "We want to reconnect with it, and what it represents. We want to experience it as a window to local culture, or something connected to a bigger story. We're overall more thoughtful about it."

Companies like Spectra are moving toward sustainability in all areas of venue man-

agement, but the area of food and concessions is seeing particularly creative alternatives.

"Spectra by Comcast Spectacor has many initiatives in place to make progress towards more sustainable living in every venue we manage," said Ike Richman, vice president of Public Relations, Comcast Spectacor. "From waste management and recycling programs to energy-efficiency programs, we are committed to a greener and more cost-effective business."

Michael Pulscak, Western regional chef, Spectra Food Services, said that part of that initiative is giving chefs the freedom to take advantage of the local products. He encourages the chefs to get out into the community and build relationships with local farmers and food producers to establish a partnership.

"It's very hard to focus on the local if you have really rigid purchasing guidelines and things of that nature," said Pulscak. "We think it's really important to allow our chefs to go out into the local market and make those relationships almost with an entrepreneurial spirit working in conjunction with the client."

With one of their clients, the Hillsboro (Ore.) Hops minor league baseball team, Pulscak said they use a combination of local products and partnerships with local sponsors for concessions at games. The Fresh Burger program sources all fresh, Northwest beef, and the recently-introduced sliders cart features a revolving menu based on what's seasonally fresh and what's at the market. A Zenners sausage cart supplies popular, local sausages at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48 →

SUSTAINABLE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

the park. The staple Long Ball Sausage combines a Zenners sausage with Bridgeport Brewery, another Hillsboro Hops sponsor, and their Long Ball ale that is brewed specifically for the games. They also serve a number of local microbrews, Bull Run Cider and Ruby Jewel Ice Cream, which already has a strong following locally.

"We're purchasing product that is well known and then selling that retail-wise, so that's part of what we're doing to stay local and sustainable," said Pulscak. "It's not always about buying raw product and making something."

Not all of their clients find local produce is easily accessible, but Pulscak said every region has some local product that can be tapped; it's just a matter of researching and working at those relationships.

"There will be something you can focus on in any area that makes that area special," said Pulscak. "It may not be fresh produce or organic beef, but maybe there's a local cheesery. You really have to look at it on a case-by-case basis. If you're out of season, how can you be creative with local products? There are ways of sourcing those things."

Delaware North particularly takes sourcing local produce to heart at one of their park loca-

tions. The West Yellowstone greenhouse is in its second year of providing The Branch restaurant with about 50 percent of its herbs. The radishes, beets, tomatoes, carrots, jalapenos and collection of herbs goes far in helping during the summer months, making up about a week's worth of dinner specials. The herbs are also used in the flavored water they put in the lobby for guests.

"It fits naturally for the mere fact that when people are coming to visit a national park or a state park, they expect protection of the resources," said Deb Friedel, director of Sustainability, Parks and Resorts, Delaware North.

Along with that expectation comes the challenge of performing in locations that are often isolated and a good distance from any major cities.

"Probably the biggest challenge for us in the sustainable food piece is the fact that we can be remote," said Friedel. "So when we say local, organic and sustainable, we have to give a definition of that per location. Sourcing or finding a close location to dispose of waste, that's where it gets to be a little bit of a challenge for us."

When Delaware North started operating at Kalaloch Lodge, Forks, Wash., they committed to diverting as much waste from the landfill as possible. They were told initially that any recycling program was going to be very difficult to impossible, since no one would drive the distance to haul their waste. The company got creative and partnered with a nearby correctional facility that was capable of converting their organic waste to compost and was less than an hour away.

Though the distance requires extra time and planning, Friedel said all their efforts pay off in the long run.

"The real value is being responsible and looking at where we can reduce our impact," said Friedel. "With population growth on the rise, as a responsible business we have to look for ways to divert our waste to reduce our overall environmental footprint, because we have to protect what we have right here in the places where we operate from a resource standpoint, but also for the visitors coming in to enjoy and experience these places like they're intended to be. It might mean that it does come at a cost and it might be a little bit of a distance, but it is the right path to be on for us. When we're looking ahead to be sustainable, it's not just looking at our operations today or to the next week, it's a much further path."

**venues**  
TODAY

CONNECT TO  
YOUR INDUSTRY

Get the latest stories, feeds, tweets, posts, headlines, charts, interviews, photographs, statistics and data reports from the VENUE INDUSTRY with ONLY ONE SUBSCRIPTION.

[www.VenuesToday.com/subscribe](http://www.VenuesToday.com/subscribe)

The advertisement features a central globe held by two hands, surrounded by various digital and print media icons including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Venues Today magazine covers. The background is a dark blue space with glowing stars and light trails.

Interviewed for this story: **Michael Pulscak**, (503) 753-1448; **Deb Friedel**, (716) 858-5763; **Shawna McKinley**, (778) 385-8776; **Ike Richman**, (215) 389-9552