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learn how to stop wasting energy and start saving money with energy efficient strategies for restaurants

BABY STEPS, BIG IMPACT

examples of small shifts in practices and/or minor investments can have a big impact on sustainability and the bottom line

GREEN TO GO

ways to lower the environmental impact of takeout packaging

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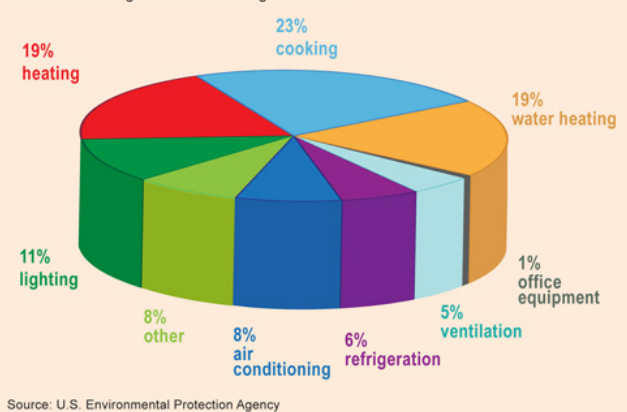
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baby steps, big impact**typical energy use in restaurants:**

Restaurants are intense users of energy but the EPA's EnergyStar Guide for Restaurants points out that it's not just the cooking equipment – heating, air conditioning, lighting, and sanitation each account for a large portion of the average restaurant's electricity and natural gas consumption. The EPA underscores that this provides numerous opportunities in many areas of a restaurant's operations where even small changes can make a big difference.



Many steps towards operating a more sustainable business may seem challenging in this economy, however even small improvements at no or low cost can produce significant results. "You may be able to do only a few small things like change out a \$20 light switch or a \$50 spray hose, or join a recycling program," says Dan McGowan, president, [Big Bowl](#), headquartered in Chicago, IL. "But all of these things have a positive impact on the environment and your bottom line." Andrea Dulle, owner, [Epic Casual Dining and Tiburon Fine Dining](#), Midvale, UT, agrees. "I started this year with three easily attainable goals – eliminating one garbage pickup a week and cutting both electricity and water consumption by 10%. The installation of motion light switches, combined with training staff on energy saving techniques, resulted in immediate savings." Some low-cost, eco-friendly ideas:

Recycling. "Recycling is a must," says Holly Ellmore, director of [Atlanta's Green Foodservice Alliance](#). "It makes the biggest environmental impact, and there's no incremental cost. If you recycle your glass, plastics, metals, paper, and cardboard – which are your bulkiest items – you can reduce your garbage by 50-70%." For example, Ray's Boathouse, Seattle, WA, now recycles approximately 75% of the 350,000 pounds of waste the company produces each year, saving \$25,000 annually in disposal costs. Holly warns there are economies of scale – large operations typically save the most, with smaller restaurants being more cost-neutral. Some are also recycling cooking oil. [Cliff House](#), San Francisco, CA, used to pay to have used oil taken away, but now their oil supplier picks it up and gives them credit for it. [Finz Seafood & Grill](#), Dedham, MA, re-purposes its cooking oil with a specially-designed 5 kw biodiesel generator (Vegawatt) that uses 80-100 gallons of cooking oil/week, resulting in \$1,000 per month savings in electricity. George Carey, owner, says the generator (6 x 5 x 2 feet) sits outside his back door, is filled twice a day, and runs 24/7. "There's no by-product, 100% of the oil is recycled." (Ben Prentice, v.p. sales, [Vegawatt](#), says that the generator is viable for a restaurant using a minimum of 50 gallons of oil a week and can be leased for about \$450/month.)

Composting. According to Holly, while it is typically cost-neutral for a small operation to compost and recycle (both the organic matter and the recyclables still need to be hauled away), composting has the most positive impact on the environment after recycling. Not all cities have permitted composting facilities, but she says that because the diversion of food waste from the landfill is a top priority of the EPA, she envisions more commercial composting programs around the country. [Ecco](#), Atlanta, GA, has gotten rid of its garbage dumpsters altogether by recycling and composting. "We literally have no more garbage," says Lindsey Battle, sous-chef. "We've got compost bins in the prep areas, and small containers at all hand sinks for things like coffee grounds."

Converting lighting. "Our energy provider - Nstar - gives an incentive to convert to compact fluorescent bulbs, which we discovered working with the [Green Restaurant Association](#)," says Jim Solomon, owner, [The Fireplace](#), Brookline, MA. "The GRA helped us crunch the numbers, plus they recommended an electrician, and even set up the appointment to

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change out a few fixtures." Research is key. When [Ted's Montana Grill](#), headquartered in Atlanta, GA, wanted to convert to low-wattage compact fluorescent bulbs that could be dimmed, George McKerrow, ceo, was told they needed to buy new fixtures, which was cost prohibitive. "We contacted [bulbs.com](#), and they created a ballast for the bottom of the bulbs, allowing them to fit into our existing fixtures," says George. "The cost was \$111,000 to replace approximately 100 light bulbs at each of our 50 restaurants. We reduced our utility bill by \$185,000 and in the first year had a net gain of \$74,000." Some are moving to LED lighting, especially for new restaurants and renovations, as they use less energy and last considerably longer. Brett Andersen, senior designer, [Focus Lighting](#), uses LED fixtures when designing new restaurants but cautions, "Although there are many LED solutions available, you have to be careful. LED's can carry a significant upfront investment, and you need to ensure they will work for your specific application. Take the time to test the LED – check the LED's brightness, color of light, ability to dim, and of course cost." If LED's are retro-fitted into older light fixtures, Brett recommends getting a guarantee from the LED manufacturer. He says, "The concern is overheating – which could significantly reduce the LED's usable life."

Saving paper. Among the many initiatives that Jose Duarte, chef/owner, [Taranta](#), Boston, MA, has implemented is replacing paper towels with energy efficient hand-dryers (\$400-450 each) in its bathrooms, saving \$1,300 per year.

Reducing water consumption. George advises walking around your restaurant with a wrench and fixing loose connections and replacing worn washers. "Make sure you are running a tight ship to begin with," he says. [The Crow's Nest](#), Santa Cruz, CA, added low-flow pre-rinse nozzles in their dishwashing area, cutting water usage by 50% and saving the restaurant about \$2,200 per year. (Some cities like Salt Lake City and Dallas offer restaurants free low-flow pre-rinse spray nozzles. To find out more, check with your local public utilities department.) "Water is a particularly prized commodity in the Santa Cruz area," says Mike McClellan, facilities manager. He adds that they have installed five water-free urinals (\$400 each), saving 300,000+ gallons of water and \$1,500 per year. Next, they plan to replace toilets with dual-flush toilets (\$300-500 each) that will also result in reducing water usage and savings.

Cutting electricity usage. Phil Gagne, HVAC specialist, [Ninety-Nine Restaurants](#), headquartered in Woburn, MA, says managers use a checklist to remind them when to turn equipment, lights, etc. on and off. "The checklist reminds managers of their responsibilities and ensures that they turn things on and off properly, which results in lower electricity bills." It also shows them how to program thermostats. "I've found that programmable thermostats can result in unnecessary service calls, partially because they're complicated and challenging to program," says Phil. Andrea put together a checklist for Epic Casual Dining and Tiburon Fine Dining employees, reminding them what to turn off or on, and installed motion-sensor light switches for \$25 in places where staff tended to leave lights on – those two things resulted in an immediate savings of \$200 per month. . . .The Fireplace restaurant installed a film on the restaurant's windows that blocks out UVA and UVB rays, trapping heat inside during the winter and keeping it out in the summer. Jim says the cost of the tinting was \$5,000 and his electric bills have decreased 12%. "I'm often so busy treading water that I don't have time to do the cost analysis and quantify savings," adds Jim, "But I know this is better for the environment, and I'm either saving money or am going to be very soon."

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