

After making french fries, grease powers kitchen lights

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Green Right Now

Everyone knows that cooking oil can be used as a source of fuel, but most folks think of that as something only done by hardcore do-it-yourselfers willing to tinker forever in the garage. If [Owl Power Company](#) has its way, that image is going to change, starting in commercial kitchens across America.



The Massachusetts company recently announced its [Vegawatt](#), a user-friendly product with which restaurants can generate between 10 and 25% of their electricity and hot water with used oil from deep fryers.

Traditionally, restaurateurs have had to pay companies to haul away used grease; those of us who had high-school jobs in the fast food industry likely remember the stench of the dumpster-like receptacles in which that waste awaited pickup. Recently, some companies have reversed the equation, paying restaurants up to 25 cents a gallon for newly valuable grease — but the Vegawatt eliminates the middle-man entirely, delivering an energy value that its makers estimate at \$2.55 per gallon.

The self-contained unit requires no maintenance from kitchen staff, needs no additional ingredients beyond the grease itself, and produces no liquid byproducts. It's about the size of a fridge and is located outside the building, much like a central air conditioner. In a recent [announcement](#), the company touted the positive experiences of local business [Finz Seafood & Grill](#), which has been using a Vegawatt for about a month now.

Owl Power quotes Finz owner George Carey, their first customer, saying, "As a restaurant operator I am constantly looking ... for costs-saving measures. My largest line-item expense is runaway utility costs. The Vegawatt™ system enables me to significantly reduce my energy costs, generate clean energy on-site, and very importantly, reduce the heavy energy footprint of my restaurant."

The device is currently offered in a five-year lease plan costing \$435 per month, roughly half the amount the company estimates the average restaurant will save in energy costs.