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Massachusetts Restaurant Converts Fry Oil to Energy On-Site



Jan. 7, 2009 - Finz Seafood, a restaurant in Dedham, Mass., has been testing a new cogeneration system that enables it to generate electricity on-site using its own waste vegetable oil.

Since early December, the restaurant has been piloting Owl Power's Vegawatt system to convert its used oil from its fryers to power its operations.

Foodservice operators can cut greenhouse gas emissions and save up to \$800 a month on utility bills by converting fry oil to energy on-site, according to Owl Power. Vegawatt makes a restaurant's used cooking oil worth \$2.55 per gallon, compared to .10 to .25 cents restaurants sell it for, or must pay to have it hauled away, the company says.

The fully automated system integrates into a restaurant's electrical system much like a solar panel. Oil is deposited into the system the same way it might be deposited into an oil barrel or dumpster. There are no additional chemicals, and the system produces no liquid by-products, Owl Power says.

While Finz Seafood & Grill is still testing the system in actual working applications (for example, coming up with ways to keep non-trans fat oil from solidifying in the arctic New England temperatures), its owner says the Vegawatt has helped his restaurant green its operations without the budget-breaking up-front investments required for other alternative energy systems.

"As a restaurant operator I am constantly looking for more efficient methods, and especially for cost-saving measures," George Carey, the owner of Finz, explains. "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 system has really helped us drop our carbon footprint," Carey adds. "Before we would have a truck deliver cooking oil, then another truck would come to pick up the used oil and take it to be processed. Now, the oil never leaves the premises. It's delivered once to cook with and then we use it in the Vegawatt."

Four in ten restaurant operators expect to [up spending on green initiatives](#) this year, according to a recent survey by the National Restaurant Association.

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