

# Environmental P R O T E C T I O N

## Caterer Cooks And Saves Green

By Laura Williams Sep 21, 2011

Some businesses view incorporating environmentally friendly measures into operations as measures that put a price premium on their products. This week, for example, a [Texas power company protested environmental regulations](#) that it said were too onerous, and it threatened to close two of its power-generation plants.

But one California business has shown that considering the environment doesn't have to add red ink to a business's balance book. [Savory and Sweet Catering](#) of Sunnyvale, Calif., has actually saved tons of money because of the lengths to which its owner, Leanne Pomellitto, has gone to minimize her impact on the planet.

"Looking toward the future, there are limited resources and people have to understand that at some point," Pomellitto said. "I just want to do my part."

After 18 years at the catering business, Savory and Sweet's waste accounts for only 5 percent of the resources it uses to cater an event. The remaining portion is edible and compostable, recyclable or reusable. The kitchen facilities incorporate eco-friendly appliances as well, including low-flow toilets and dishwashers. The caterer uses only solid dishwashing detergents, which require less water than their liquid counterparts, and visual reminders to turn off lights adorn the walls. She replaced older light bulbs with CFLs, partnering with [PG&E](#), which paid half of the cost. "The next month, we saw a drop in electricity by 20 percent immediately," she said.

Reducing the amount of trash the company generates reduces the garbage bill, so she worked to cut down on waste by using as many recyclable products as possible. This goes far beyond the realm of ditching Styrofoam; the boxed lunches Savory and Sweet delivers come in clear plastic containers made from four or five recycled water bottles and instructions to recycle them. To recycle food waste, the company invested in an impressive Korean composter that reduces food waste to soil amend in just 24 hours, necessary since the company composts 100 percent of its food waste.

"We bought it about 10 years ago when it was a new technology and everyone was doing worm composting," she said. "I came across this thing and it seemed really cool, but it was way before its time. It still is."

Simple planning measures also help cut costs and carbon. Instead of defrosting meats under constantly running water, staff members plan ahead and defrost them in the refrigerator, which saves water. It's a simple change, but it's one prevents waste and saves on the bottom line.

For all its work, Savory and Sweet catering has won a number of awards, most recently the California Product Stewardship Council's Green Arrow Award for the efforts its staff makes to diminish its footprint.

“We’ve never seen any catering company go to lengths that this one has gone to help the environment,” said Heidi Sanborn, executive director of the CPSC. “When I read their application, I thought, ‘Wow, this company really gets it.’ ... They have looked at sustainability from every possible angle and have something to deal with every issue.”

Savory and Sweet was also the first “green certified” caterer in Santa Clara County in the [Bay Area Green Business](#) program. When the county solicited the catering company’s participation, said Pomellitto, her business had already met 80 percent of the requirements. “Finding compostable products that were acceptable to send out to clients was difficult six or eight years ago,” she said. “Compostable products were horrible – a fork would just melt in your food.”

She remains committed to the way her company does business, not just for the cost-savings, but also for the environmental benefits such conservation brings.

“Looking to the future, our resources aren’t going to last forever,” she said. “As a small business owner, I just thought that, if we do something and other people think its cool, then more people will get involved, because that’s what we need. We can’t look at our environment and be so wasteful.”

### About the Author

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