

# MISSION SUSTAINABLE

Five steps that can be taken now towards more sustainable and energy-efficient kitchens

The future of foodservice will see increased attention paid to sustainability, and operators around the world are working diligently to improve theirs.

## 1. Make the commitment

“The very first step in the path to achieving a sustainable kitchen,” says Arlene Spiegel FCSI, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York City, “is the leadership’s commitment to create the culture, the awareness, the tools and the inspiration for the culinary staff and the entire company. Sustainability is a mindset that creates behavior, that leads to doing the right things.”

## 2. Review operations and equipment

Don’t turn on cooking appliances until they’re needed, and turn them off when the task is completed. The same goes for lights in areas then they’re not being used. Another important step is to check the condition of energy-consuming equipment.

## 3. Focus on food

What Spiegel calls “sustainability consciousness” and commitment also require an understanding of how food is purchased, distributed and received. “Local is a key ‘halo’ word on many menus because diners not only respect the support of local growers, but also appreciate the positive lower carbon footprint on the environment.”

Keeping waste charts and making staffers aware of the cost of throwing away food is “a simple tool everyone can understand,” Spiegel adds. “Another opportunity is, of course, food wastage, which is typically caused by poor forecasting, over-preparation, lack of rotation and over-ordering.”

## 4. Take another look at gas

Outlawing dangerous gases and chemicals “makes sense, refrigerants for example,” Spiegel suggest. “However, heating sources have a good deal to do with creating menus and recipes, and for small- and large-



scale production. In some cases gas isn’t even available for cooking, so electric, induction and old-fashioned open flame are the only ways to go.”

## 5. Train for sustainability

Spiegel makes the case that is not expensive to make simple behavioral changes. “In fact, kitchen staff feel good about making a positive difference,” she says, “From a public relations standpoint, it’s great for the restaurant to be able to share all the good things it is doing in this endeavor with their customers. Sell the virtuousness.”

When designing a new kitchen, energy and sustainability should be top of mind in selecting equipment and drawing the schematics.

Spiegel concludes: “While the kitchen may not achieve Net Zero or Platinum LEED status, it should be a goal.” ■