

Fuel for the Sustainability Fire

Ed Candioty

How you can help save the planet today

Most of us have heard stories about the occasional celebrity who champions environmental causes by (among other things) driving a car fueled by used French fry grease. What most may not be aware of, however, is just how much of a difference can be made if used cooking oil disposal is handled in an ecologically friendly way.

While it's unreasonable to think everyone is going to trade in their gas guzzler for a fuel-efficient car that runs on used vegetable oil overnight, it's not at all unreasonable to think that we could all be running on some form of biofuel in the next 10 to 20 years.

What many people don't realize is that rendering companies use the used cooking oil they collect from restaurants to produce products like yellow grease, which is a crucial ingredient in most types of biofuel. If you're part of a restaurant or other food service establishment that regularly needs used cooking oil disposal services, it makes sense to do business with a company that recycles used cooking oil into something vital. It's beneficial to your bottom line and to the environment.

The Facts

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that around 100 million gallons of waste cooking oil are produced per day in the United States, with about 9 pounds of waste cooking oil being generated per person per year. Given a U.S. population of 320 million, this translates into about 2.88 billion pounds of used cooking oil per year. And that's just in United States.

When recycled, not only is this oil diverted from landfills and other waste facilities, it is converted into useful products.

Being Part of the Solution

It isn't often we get to enjoy clear win-win situations in life, especially in business. Established rendering companies afford you the opportunity to be part of the solution to global climate change while taking care of an important service—used cooking oil disposal—which you need anyway.

Used cooking oil is collected from restaurants, and other food service facilities, in many different ways. Recycling companies offer a variety of used cooking oil management systems that safely and efficiently contain and transport used cooking oil for recycling. Durable collection equipment will fit just about any space and keeps kitchens and waste areas clean and safe. Indoor tanks range from small, high-density linear polyethylene storage tanks that have wheels and can be stored under counters, to large, free-standing tanks that are emptied by grease collectors on a regular basis.

Other restaurants prefer to store their used cooking oil outside, so recycling companies offer all-weather outdoor containers that lock, helping to eliminate grease theft. Some of these are used in combination with lightweight, easy-to-handle transporters that allow employees to remove grease from fryers, avoiding accidents and waste spillages.

What Does Used Cooking Oil Become?

In addition to biofuels, the products made with used cooking oil include animal feed and numerous industrial applications. Animal nutritionists use yellow grease as a highenergy feed additive in various livestock rations to increase the calories the animals ingest, which in turn allows farms to grow the animals faster and more healthy. Yellow grease is also used in the oleo chemicals industry to manufacture soap, make-up, paint, rubber and detergents.

Rendering plants allow material that would otherwise be wasted and left to pollute the environment to be recycled and used in the place of new materials, saving our precious and limited resources. They also help communities limit their carbon footprint and very often provide local restaurants with an additional stream of revenue. In addition, used cooking oil recycling also results in less used oil being disposed of in drains, which can clog sewage lines due to the build-up of fats.

Can You Save The Planet Singlehandedly?

Can your used cooking oil disposal habits save the planet or kickstart an ecological turnaround? Maybe not yours alone, but with many more businesses like yours becoming more environmentally conscious and with rendering plants providing opportunities to reuse and recycle waste material, we can all be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Ed Candioty is National Account Manager of Baker Commodities Inc., a nationally trusted name in rendering and grease management since 1937. Candioty has been actively involved in the food service industry for more than 40 years and serves on a number of trade and culinary advisory boards.