

The FSTC Foodservice Forecast for 2011

The FSTC's Richard Young, with the help of guest speaker Robin Ashton, Publisher of Foodservice Equipment Reports (FER) Magazine, provided a look into the future of foodservice. During the recent California Joint Utility Foodservice Forecast for 2011 seminar, industry veterans Young and Ashton painted a picture of what they expect to see in 2011.

1. Climate Change is a fact

First and foremost is the changing nature of the energy market and the increasing influence of climate change. Utilities nationwide are stating that climate change is real and they are accepting the fact and embracing solutions, but there is still uncertainty in the industry. According to Young, "The only one thing that seems to be sure... energy prices will continue to rise."

2. Foodservice and sustainability go hand in hand.

Food is a hot media item in 2011 and many young, next-gen operators are bringing a new mindset to food service which is bringing food and foodservice front and center in terms of sustainability.

According to the National Restaurant Association's (NRA) 2011 Forecast and the results of their Chef Survey (www.restaurant.org/research/forecast/) 17 of the top 20 trends for 2011 are either related to sustainability or healthy eating.

3. The Water and Efficiency Side of foodservice

According to Young, with challenges ahead such as higher energy and food costs, energy and water efficiency is a tool that can help the foodservice industry deal with the challenges.

The NRA 2011 forecast reported that in 2011 about half of full-service operators plan to do an efficiency lighting upgrade, 40% plan to purchase efficient equipment and a 1/3 plan to purchase water saving equipment or fixtures.

Of all adults surveyed by NRA, almost 60%, even in the midst of recession, still say they are, "more likely to visit a restaurant that offers food that was grown or raised in an organic or environmentally-friendly way." Source: NRA, November 2010 Household survey.

In an effort to provide the foodservice industry with a tool to help combat the higher energy and food costs, the FSTC is working with the NRA to pilot an online sustainability education and recognition program slated for launch spring 2011.

4. The World of Green Buildings and Codes

LEED for Retail New Construction and Commercial Interiors is official as of November 2010; LEED for Retail is the fastest growing segment in the LEED standards portfolio. LEED for Existing Retail Buildings is currently being created. In the foodservice world about 15 chains have one or more LEED Stores.

On the lighting front, T12 lamps are scheduled to be banned by federal standards starting January 2012. The FSTC urges you to do lighting upgrades now and to take advantage of any utility rebates.

5. Rebates as your Design Guide

The FSTC lab is as busy as ever testing new appliances and adding new energy efficient appliances to the existing rebate lists. The California Utilities will continue to add new foodservice incentives in the near future as more types of appliances are tested and new technologies develop. To get the most out of rebates, use them as your design guide.

Engineers at the FSTC expect to see more high efficiency appliances and adoption of high efficiency hot water systems along with a greater acceptance of emerging technologies such as heat recovery for dish machines and LED lighting.

6. Onward and Upward

In 2011 the FSTC continues to reinforce its message to the commercial foodservice industry...*"Reduce Energy, Save Money and Go Green!"*

Robin Ashton of FER noted that 2009 was worst year for commercial service in memory. However, it started to shift for better in 2010 and he is optimistic that 2011 will continue to trend upwards. The industry may never recover to the level that it was pre-crash, but it is a resilient market with a strong consumer pull and the road ahead is much brighter!