



The Green Page

Host of FCFE's environmental forum, Peter Fraser of the Harbour Lights Fish and Chip restaurants in Falmouth and Truro, Cornwall was the first winner of the Npower E3 (Energy Efficiency and Environment) award at the National Fish and Chip Shop of the Year awards in

January 2009. Feel free to contact us - or Peter direct - if you would like to contribute on any of the issues raised in these pages...

What's all the fuss about green packaging?

A quick question first:

What does your packaging tell your customers about you? That you care about the environment or is it you are just in the takeaway food business to make a quick buck and you couldn't give a monkeys for the planet? Hopefully not the latter!

Right, with this question out of the way, let's look at some packaging options:

Plastic Polystyrene	Paper Cardboard	Biodegradable and compostable disposables
THE BADDIES! Made from petroleum, which has finite supply. Very lengthy time to decompose: Polystyrene > 50 years Plastic > 500 years Bad enough in landfills but causes total havoc in the sea, being toxic to marine life	Biodegradable but takes longer than you would think. If not made from re-cycled paper or cardboard then virgin trees must be felled. Wax lined packaging takes significantly longer to decompose	Fantastic, readily renewable sources such as sugarcane fibre or potato starch. Take less energy to manufacture than the previous two

Sadly, the baddies tend to be the cheapest, but from my experience by moving away from them you are adding perceived quality to your business and with that added quality comes the opportunity to charge a small premium plus there is a good news

story. Glad to report that more and more biodegradable disposables are becoming available. Have a browse at www.london-biopackaging.com or www.talon-direct.com. Please badger your existing packaging supplier to quote for greener alternatives. If they say they can't supply them, then suggest to them they are living in the dark ages. I don't think that there is any packaging requirement in the takeaway foodservice business that there is not a green alternative available in the market.

Think about the PR opportunities of being able to tell the world that all your packaging is bio-degradable. My favourite film of all time "Local Hero" was on the TV last week. You could be your own town's local hero. Check out the excellent story on the net of Ian and Janet Price, owners of Westmoreland Fisheries, Skipton introducing Henry Colbecks' Bio-boxes and linking up with the local branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Next question:

In a year, if you added up all the packaging that your food & drink supplies arrive in at your shop, how many 1100 litre bins would it fill?



Guess your answer would be a large number. Times that number by the cost of each bin pick up (£10 - £12 ?) and you have an even bigger number.

The price of refuse collection is only going one way because land fill tax is increasing by £8 per tonne each year at least until 2013. One solution we have fully embraced is to separate out our cardboard and potato sacks and feed them into our own cardboard baler, which we lease from a national company Miltek, nice guys.

This was us:



Until now:



I rang for the figures for my Fish & Chip Shop in Falmouth and the cost of leasing was more than covered by the savings caused by the reduction in bin pick ups. Oh and guess what, another good news story popped out. If you are a smaller shop, then I am sure the figures will work for you too but why not make friends with a business neighbour and share the cost. Our bales are picked up each week by a re-cycling business at no charge.

Who would have thought that packaging could be so much fun! My next article is entitled: "What's all this fuss about having an environmental policy" As ever, I would love to hear your thoughts on any green issues for inclusion in these articles.

Best fishes, Pete