

CASE STUDY

MC Golden Tower

About the restaurant

MC Golden Tower provides Chinese and Vietnamese food in Market City, a shopping centre in Sydney's Chinatown. The restaurant opens 7 days a week, 11 hours a day, serving about 3000 customers per week. Eleven staff including 3 chefs and 4 kitchen staff are employed. MC Golden Tower was established in 1985 and is owned and managed by Mr David Chea and Ms Kelly Ngo. The kitchen has 2 wok stoves each with 2 burners. Being part of a shopping centre, their water bill is part of their monthly rent, so while the restaurant pays for water it does not pay the equivalent of its water usage.

What are the environmental gains?

- 💧 53% reduction in water used by stoves
- 💧 7,000 litres of water per day were saved by the restaurant
- 💧 2,530,000 litres of water will be saved per year
- 💧 Staff's awareness of water saving has greatly increased
- 💧 Staff have adopted new water saving practices

What did they do?

The restaurant owners found out about the project through stories in the Chinese media. They contacted the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW (ECC) to find out more about the project and arranged a visit from a bilingual environmental educator. They received an information package including brochures on the waterless wok stove and water conservation, a list of certified waterless wok stove suppliers and a DVD showing the features of the waterless wok stove.



After studying all the information, the owners obtained a quote from a supplier, Andrew Li, one of B & S Commercial Kitchen Appliances' agents in Sydney. They decided to install the new technology in their kitchen and Mr Chea signed an agreement with the ECC. In the agreement, the restaurant agreed to replace their traditional wok stoves with waterless wok stoves and send the old stove to a metal recycler so that they would receive a \$2000 subsidy for each stove.

Two weeks before the woks were replaced, water meters and data loggers were installed to measure the water usage of the traditional stoves. The water meter remained in the same position for one week after installing the new waterless wok stoves to measure the change in water use. The restaurant was open as usual during this data collection period and during the stoves' replacement.



Initially, the chefs were frustrated by the difference in the operation of the new stoves, preferring the traditional way of cooking where water is constantly running and they can get water without any effort. Over time, the chefs have adapted to the new technology and realise the importance of saving water. The owners encourage all staff to find other ways to save water. For instance, frozen food is now thawed in a refrigerator overnight or defrosted in a microwave, rather than being thawed with running water.

Why did they do it?

A long running business, the owners decided to renovate the kitchen and replace the stoves in 2007. When they submitted their renovation plans to shopping centre management, they were advised to explore options for saving water in their kitchen.

Once they researched their options, the owners realised that the waterless wok stove would be appropriate technology for them. Even though the waterless wok stove was more expensive than other traditional wok stoves, the owners believed it was important to look ahead when running their business. Mr Chea said “I didn’t want to spend money on equipment that would be outdated soon. I feel the waterless wok stove is the solution to the water shortage that will be a future problem of the planet.”

Although they encountered some resistance from their chefs, Mr Chea was committed to using the water saving technology. “I told my chefs that they have to get used to the new technology. It is everyone’s responsibility to save our water. In the Chinese community, four out of ten people are running or working in restaurants. If everyone can save some water in their workplace, we can save a lot.”

The shopping centre management is happy with their approach to saving water and are urging other food outlets to adopt similar measures.



What were the costs and saving?

The restaurant reduced the shopping centre water bill by \$6,000 per year. These savings may be returned to the shop through rent reduction or in other ways.

Replacing 2 two-burner stoves cost the restaurant \$13,000. They received a \$4,000 project subsidy. Restaurant management estimate that with the project subsidy and reduced water use reflected in the rent, they will be able to pay off the costs of replacing wok stoves in about two years.

This is one of a series of case studies featuring businesses that participated in the Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW ‘Saving Water in Asian Restaurants Project’ which was funded by the NSW Government’s Climate Change Fund. By taking part in this project, Asian restaurants receive education to enhance water conservation in their businesses and a subsidy to replace conventional wok stoves with more sustainable technology, the new waterless wok stove. In Stage 1 of the project, 23 participating restaurants saved 66,000,000 litres of water per annum.

More information

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