

# NEW YEAR, NEW ‘GREEN’ TEAM

by Olivia Imeson  
January 2021



Back in December 2020, we released our first introductory piece on sustainability in commercial kitchens. Now we are all well into the first month of 2021, with optimistic New Year’s resolutions established, January is generally the month we take to think about the goals we want to set ourselves for the year ahead. With trends such as ‘Dry-January’, ‘Veganuary’ becoming increasingly popular, why not try to make some changes to the wellbeing of our planet too? Now is a perfect time to look at drawing up a ‘green’ development strategy for the health of our businesses, our people and our environment.

## WHY DO WE NEED TO BECOME SUSTAINABLE AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Apart from the obvious benefits to the environment, the act of converting your kitchen to a more sustainable one will save you money. It’s simple – by cutting down on waste, you have more of your budget to spend on good, locally sourced food, innovative design and better equipment. By upgrading to more energy-efficient equipment, you will be investing in good quality products that will reduce bills and help the environment.

Water wastage is a huge contributing factor to high bills and a huge threat to water supplies and water cleanliness. Just by fixing that dripping tap and monitoring excessive usage, the positive effects will be reflected in your utility bills.

\*FACT: A dripping tap can waste 0.2 gallons per minute. That’s 12 gallons per hour.

The wastage of food and the accumulation of large volumes of rubbish cause wasted space, higher risks of contamination and pests and have become two of the largest contributing factors to the climate crisis. Around ninety percent of all waste generated by commercial kitchens can be recycled, composted or, in some cases, donated. By establishing sustainable methods of waste management, your kitchens will become more efficient and tidier, and staff productivity will improve.

Sustainable commercial kitchens are still not as common as they should be, meaning you will stand out against competitors, (provided your ‘greenness’ is known about). By updating your kitchens with ‘greener’ equipment, you will gain the respect of your customers and staff, which will boost your reputation and their morale. If your customers see your kitchens as sustainable, they may feel that by choosing your services, they are helping the planet too. It is important to keep your sustainability agenda public so others can follow your example. Do this by utilising social media platforms, focus on your menus and re-evaluate your marketing strategy.



## YOUR ‘GREEN’ TEAM

Food is the reason you are in business. There is a passion for it and a need for it, with endless possibilities in terms of the form and style it can take. The people who have dedicated their lives, time, funds and energy to food-centred business, all share their passion for food. There are multiple strands of various decision-makers in commercial kitchens, each of whom have their own key interests and desired outcomes in terms of running the business:

Investors & Owners:	Operators:	Chefs & Kitchen Staff:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Return on investment</li><li>PR &amp; Marketing</li><li>Branding</li><li>Image &amp; Identity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ergonomics</li><li>Cost</li><li>Labour</li><li>Health &amp; Safety</li><li>Food Quality</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The craft/skill</li><li>Food Quality</li><li>Trends and differentiating values of their practice</li></ul>



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HOW CAN SUSTAINABLE KITCHEN DESIGN EQUALLY BENEFIT THESE GROUPS?

When coming up with a new sustainable kitchen plan, information needs to be collected. Communication is vital in order to achieve a well-balanced, ‘green’ solution. Questionnaires tailored to your target market can help the analysis of the broad network of those involved and the parts they play. Conversations with suppliers, staff, investors and guests can provide valuable insight into problem areas of inefficiency, as well as providing a platform for new ideas. If as many people as possible are onboard with your sustainable kitchen strategy, the transformation will go more smoothly.

While some factors (such as utilities) are a direct cost, there are other indirect costs that can cause problems in a commercial kitchen. For example, if a kitchen is not designed properly, this can reduce staff productivity and pose an increased threat to health (both mental and physical). Below is a list of factors that can be detrimental to staff:

- Poor air quality caused by poor ventilation.
- Harsh light.
- Overheated workspaces.
- Inefficient design layout.
- Poor communication.
- Lack of attention to Health & Safety.
- Lack of acknowledgment of their good work from managers.

By listening to your staff properly, you will avoid the following outcomes:

- Poor productivity – motivation is key for this to be avoided. Communicate with staff, be generous, and listen to their ideas.
- Staff absence – if staff enjoy where they work and are kept safe, there will be fewer absences.
- Staff turnover – similar to the above; if staff are unsatisfied, they will pursue a new role elsewhere and you will have to pick up the pieces.

The contributions made by the people involved determine whether your business will thrive rather than just function. By providing your team with the appropriate care and attention, you will reap the benefits all around. Again, your team are the core of your business and the steps listed above should be taken into account when designing any kitchen, not just a sustainable one.

Look out for our next posts on sustainability where I will look further into the design of sustainable commercial kitchens, MYA Consulting’s own mission to becoming carbon neutral and more on what the future has to offer!

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AUTHOR BIO

In Olivia’s final year at university, she wrote her dissertation on ‘Ecotopias’ (speculative futures concerning the environment and the way artists and designers have depicted these futures). While digging deep into the way humans perceive art and design of this nature, she became more and more interested in eco-design and sustainability. Olivia brings her knowledge and expertise to MYA and seeks to explore the ways by which the hospitality industry can become more ‘green’. She also has the key task of guiding MYA to be carbon neutral in the near future.

The collage includes a photograph of a woman with blonde hair in a black coat holding a calendar titled 'NEW YEAR JANUARY'. The calendar shows the first week of January with red 'X' marks on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th. Below the photo is a stylized illustration of a kitchen with a green stove, pots, and a lightbulb icon. The MYA logo is at the bottom left, and the text 'INTERNATIONAL HOTEL & CATERING CONSULTANTS' is at the bottom right.

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