

green future

Healing the Environment,
One Drink at a Time

By Jenny Adams
Photos by Colin Carroll

All across America, 2008 has been a year of environmental action. The time has come when proprietors, designers, marketing firms, spirits producers, beer distillers and the rest of the industry members from large to small are going to great lengths — and sometimes great costs — to clean up and produce with the planet in mind.

Nightclub & Bar magazine sought out a few of the more active in the industry — from venue owners to distillers — to highlight their aims towards going green. We have been surprised by the outpouring we received in the research stages of this article. So, as it stands, the people and places discussed in this below are just the tip of the iceberg — no global-warming pun intended.

Elixir's Example

H. Joseph Ehrmann (pictured opposite page) opened his venue Elixir in San Francisco five years ago. The establishment has a great deal of history — designated the city's second oldest saloon — but, today, Ehrmann is working to be an example for the industry and future generations. He began to overhaul his venue and daily operations in 2004 to make his bar more environmentally friendly. Elixir became the first certified green bar in the city, and since that day, Ehrmann has been setting a pace.

When asked what being "certified green" in San Francisco meant, Ehrmann explains that it all began with checklists. "The city government sends out a number of check-

lists and processes that they go through to look at every operating environment we work with," he says. "Whether it's electricity, gas, toxics, the outside environment, recycling, etc. They would send a PGE (Pacific Gas & Electric) guy in to talk to me about electric, and I have to hit a certain number off the checklist. Then, they come back out annually."

Ehrmann admits that his city is more cooperative in regard to green practices than are some others, but he also feels that every operator in America can strive to help the environment while reducing their own costs.

"Electricity is a good example," Ehrmann says. "Electric usage in a bar is basically lighting and refrigeration. With refrigeration, the key is to get energy-efficient products. For established bars, get rid of your old fridge. It's kind of like having an old car. You can continue to kick around and fix things, but you only think you are saving money. If you upgrade, you save money, and it saves you time not tending to it.

"I rent my refrigeration — as a lot of people do. Talk to the guy you rent from and say, 'This is what I want.' If they won't give it to you, find another company."

Lighting is an aspect which Ehrmann finds taxing in terms of going green.

"The ESL's (Energy Saving Lights) don't work on dimmers," he says. "You need dimmers to set and change the mood and the technology doesn't exist yet. I hope someone is looking into that. At the end of the day," he says, "you have to make good business decisions, remain profitable



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— H. Joseph Ehrmann,
Owner, Elixir Saloon, San Francisco



Clockwise from left: Eddie Bustos, Ben Cavara and Johanna Straudinger, bartenders at Elixir; berries used to make VeeV.

and provide your customers what they want. I have regular lights on dimmers in the saloon and ESLs in the office and in the bathrooms."

Recycling is an established practice in almost every city, and the city of San Francisco collects compost as well. Ehrmann placed recycling and compost containers at one end of the bar and trash cans at both ends. Bartenders are required to recycle every bottle that comes back and to separate out fruit waste off cocktail glasses.

Being conscious of green policies is something Ehrmann requires of his staff.



6 Easy Tips For Getting Green

1. Replace your old appliances with new energy-saving models.
2. Replace lights with ESLs.
3. Clean vents and replace air filters regularly.
4. Send press materials over e-mail and urge recipients not to print them when possible.
5. Recycle and compost on-premise.
6. Buy local and organic garnishes, food products and spirits when possible.

"You have to train your staff," he says. "If you put policies like recycling in place, and a staff member doesn't abide by them, then you treat that person the same way you would if he or she were late to work or stole from you."

The Need for In-Depth Awareness

Allen Katz, director of mixology for Southern Wine & Spirits of New York, also holds the title of chairman of the board for Slow Food USA. The organization's main objective of is, through education and advocacy, to bring awareness to change the food system to one that is more sustainable.

"It's not enough to say, 'we seek change,' but we need to have a comprehensive understanding of how our food system works today," Katz says.

This applies to the beverage segment as well, and Katz says that both the businessman and the consumer have yet to see the rise in prices in the spirits, but eventually, everyone will — unless those in the industry do something.

"In the news, you hear about the rise of commodity prices, which have immediately been passed on to bars and restaurants," he says. "Those prices have not affected wine and spirits, because the products are in warehouses already. We work with a product in-stock as opposed to fresh food. Sugar, grain, corn, barley — these are all ma-

"We want people to drink VeeV, but not at the expense of the planet. I wouldn't feel good about it if there wasn't some component of giving back."

— Courtney Reum,
Co-owner, VeeV Açai

For components of our food system, but also raw ingredients for spirits. So eventually, it will apply to us.

"In the last decade and more so the last five years, there has been a big interest growth in cocktails, spirits, history and production," Katz says. "That has all been a tremendous bolster to the cultural side of spirits, and it is a really fascinating time for mixology. But we also have to have an understanding and in-depth awareness of how these products are produced and what the consequences are. I see a lot of great examples out there. Maker's Mark is one, and 4 Copas Tequila is another."

Maker's Mark has in place programs to recycle glass, plastic, cardboard, label paper, used pallets, aluminum cans, scrap metal, used oils and lubricants, light bulbs, batteries, and newspapers. The company's goal is to work towards becoming a zero discharge facility in regards to solid waste; it also refuses genetically modified corn and is in the process of developing a comprehensive energy audit system, which will allow it to seek out and eliminate sources of energy waste.



Eco-Friendly Events

1. The Green Seasonal Bar Seminar at Tales of the Cocktail

Saturday, July 19, 2008
New Orleans
The Hotel Monteleone
www.talesofthecocktail.com

2. Slow Food Nation

Friday, August 29 - Monday, September 1
San Francisco
Fort Mason and Civic Center
www.slowfoodnation.org

4 Copas lays claim to being the world's first certified organic tequila, earning rave reviews for the beautiful taste and the company's intense dedication to the land. The agave plant takes eight to 10 years to mature. For 4 Copas, this means a decade without herbicides, pesticides, growth hormones or cloning. The leftover mulch from the fermentation process is composted and reused, and the company even prints its business cards on recycled agave leaves.

Acting Locally and Globally

A great number of spirits companies are acting globally on a literal scale. Along with 4 Copas' action in purchasing rotting fields in Jalisco, Mexico, to be salvaged as organic agave farms, Courtney Reum is doing more than his part abroad in Brazil on behalf of his relatively new company, VeeV Açai Spirit.

Reum became interested in the açai berry on a surfing trip in South America, and eventually he and his brother moved out of investment banking and into spirits.

"We are the only spirit company in the world to be certified carbon neutral, which means any CO₂ we produce is offset," Reum says.

The antioxidant-rich açai berry is only found in Brazil, and Reum and his team make sure that the workers are paid full salaries and that sustainable harvest practices are employed. In addition, \$1 from every bottle of VeeV sold is donated back to saving the rainforest of the region. The VeeV distillery in Idaho is run from renewable wind energy, and almost all of Reum's employees drive hybrid cars.

"We want people to drink VeeV, but not at the expense of the planet," Reum says. "I wouldn't feel good about it if there wasn't some component of giving back."

Another global go-getter this year is Absolut. The company is in a partnership with Live Earth to leverage the power of film in an effort to solve the climate crisis. Marking the first-ever national sales and marketing platform in the spirit brand's history, the program, called Absolut Global Cooling, encourages consumers to employ simple steps every day to reduce the effects of global warming. The company has begun a multi-year, multi-million dollar commitment with this program, and the 60 educational films already are debuting in nightclubs and at private parties and film festivals.

When Bigger Equals Better

Brown-Forman, including its Fetzer wine family, also is focusing on tomorrow. The company's environmental aims required a title change for employee Ann Thrupp.

"I started off with the company as a manager for organic development," she says. "Now it has evolved, and my title is manager of sustainability and organic development. The wine industry always prides itself on being connected to the land. Brown-Forman is taking it very seriously, and in terms of a broader effort, we are a member of the California Sustainable Wine Growing Alliance." The Fetzer wine family is now the largest producer of organic grapes, and a second solar panel harnessing 899

kilowatts now rests atop its entirely green building made from recycled materials.

The company has reduced its landfill waste output by 96 percent since 1990 and was given the "Best of the Best" award for ozone protection by the EPA in 2006.

Diageo has committed to zero-carbon or low-carbon sources for its facilities in Ireland and Scotland, and the company also has joined the SmartWay Transport Partnership, a voluntary collaboration between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the freight industry, designed to increase energy efficiency while reducing significantly greenhouse gasses and air pollution.

"In February, SmartWay participated in our Annual Carrier Conference and helped educate Diageo and all our carriers on options that exist to reduce our carbon footprint in the transportation area," Erik Snyder, VP, logistics, at Diageo NA says. "In the past year, we have reduced transportation emissions by 12-percent. As part of our awards to our carrier base we will be adding an environmental award in 2009."

Operating for the Future

The places, people, companies and promotions mentioned here are just a small sampling of new and continuous efforts occurring to make our planet a healthier place. However, the food and beverage industry still has a long way to go and a lot more that could be done.

"People need to think about how they operate," Ehrmann says. "It doesn't matter what your politics are. I'm not political. I do this because it is a good business decision. In most cases, when you operate green, you are saving cost, preserving energy and reducing waste. Some places, where there is a monetary investment involved like wind energy or carbon offset, you have to just take it on because you believe in it.

"In those cases it is about the benefit to society, but the majority of the stuff is a good business decision." **NCB**

