



Gabriel and Jessica Schuenemann, owners of Alder Wood Bistro, stand by their business' recycling area where they seek to significantly reduce their landfill contribution. The business only has one 96-gallon trash can and all food waste is composted. Sequim Gazette photos by Matthew Nash

All about waste reduction at Alder Wood Bistro

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*Alder Wood Bistro 139 W. Alder St., Sequim
360-683-4321 for reservations.
Alderwoodbistro.com*

As the holidays approach and garbage cans begin to overflow in the kitchen from festive meals, one Sequim business has been ahead of the curve with cutting back on its food waste year round.

Gabriel and Jessica Schuenemann, owners of Alder Wood Bistro, 139 W. Alder St., said they've been proactive in managing their business' waste for 11-plus years.

"We've wanted to be able to live our values with the business and leave as little of an impact on the environment and minimize our footprint," Jessica said.

The couple said they've taken little steps that have made a big difference since opening their seasonal, local foods restaurant in August 2006.

Gabriel said the kitchen features 5-gallon buckets so that scraps from plates can go into compost bins behind the business.

There, Alder Wood Bistro's employees sort food waste into multiple 20-gallon buckets with all organic food waste sent to Nash's Organic Produce, Gabriel said.

The Schuenemanns also sort cardboard, plastics and various recyclables for pickup too.

With the reduction in food waste and recyclables going to the landfill, Alder Wood Bistro uses only a 96-gallon garbage can.

By doing so, the Schuenemanns said they are saving at least \$1,000 a year in garbage bills and diverting dozens of yards of waste per year.

"It can be cheaper," Gabriel said. "You just have to create the system."

The couple said they aren't aware of any other local restaurants going to this length to reduce waste, but Gabriel said he spoke about his methods at a recent conference and heard some restaurateurs were interested.

Jessica hopes her business' efforts can inspire others.

"It behooves the world to eliminate food waste going into the garbage because it's a large contributor to greenhouse gases," she said.

Separating food scraps from other waste has become more common in recent years across the globe and in the U.S. including the City of Seattle that requires businesses compost organic waste on site, take it away themselves, or pay for a service for pick-up.

The Schuenemanns said separating their scraps has become "second nature and easy to do."

Although, when cooking fish in the hot summer it can be a struggle in the kitchen with the smells of the scraps, Gabriel said.

"We just make sure the lids are on tight," he said.

More about Alder Wood

One of the central goals of Alder Wood Bistro, the Schuenemanns said, is partnering with local farms.

The couple said they spend hours on the phone each week looking for ways to purchase goods such as mushrooms, pears, quinces, and huckleberries from Clallam and Jefferson County farmers.

By their estimation, they've spent about \$1 million in the local economy over 11 years in business.

Gabriel said about 80 percent of the food they serve is organic with their cooking oils not including any GMOs, their beef all grass-fed and local, their hogs from Nash's, which they butcher themselves, and their fish is all local coho or cod.

Another centerpiece of many of their popular dishes such as pizza is that it's baked in a wood fired oven, which Gabriel said is purposeful because wood is a renewable resource.

Alder Wood Bistro is open 4:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesdays for a special wood-fired dinner night, and 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 4:30-8:30 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays for lunch and dinner.

The business closes annually for one month in January for vacation and repairs/painting. The business will close on Nov. 22 and 23 for Thanksgiving and reopen Nov. 24 and 25.

For more information about Alder Wood Bistro, call 360-683-4321 for reservations or visit Alderwoodbistro.com.

Reach Matthew Nash at mnash@sequimgazette.com.



Gabriel Schuenemann, co-owner of Alder Wood Bistro, pushes food cuttings into a compost bin. He and his wife Jessica compost all food scraps and all organic food waste is sent to Nash's Organic Produce.