

THREE FLAVORS OF GREEN

BY ANDREA DEAN

Small business owners are notoriously spread thin and trying to green a business can open up a whole new can of worms. In the case of Kona Brewing Company, the worms have been invited in, literally, and used to turn a problem into a resource. Many businesses on Hawaii Island have found ways to be socially and environmentally conscious while keeping the green (*yes, that green*) flowing. Following are quick profiles of three local companies and some of the triple bottom line strategies they have successfully implemented.

Volcano Island Honey Company www.volcanoislandhoney.com 775-1000

Owner Richard Spiegel brought his 1960's "back to nature" values with him into the honey business. Since its' inception, Volcano Island Honey Company has nurtured people and the planet while growing a successful business.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

- Harvesting of only surplus honey stored by the bees, leaving enough honey for their needs. No feeding of sugar to the bees.
- Bees removed from hives before harvesting with innovative escape boards, not poison.
- No toxic materials at any point in the husbandry, harvest or production process.
- Honeybees have the lowest negative environmental impact of any agricultural endeavor. Their footprint is small, less than an acre for 100 or more colonies, while their positive effect is large - pollination of flowers growing within 2-4 miles in every direction from the colonies.

- Products, processes, and facilities third party certified organic by Quality Assurance International (QAI).
- Sourcing of organic and local ingredients whenever possible. The ginger in ginger honey is organic and comes from Kauai. The lilikoi (passion fruit) in lilikoi honey is wild harvested on the Big Island.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Commitment to managing business activities with integrity.
- Employment procedures that encourage continuous personal growth and open, honest communication.
- Four day work week for employees.
- Gourmet honey at greatly reduced prices for Big Island residents.
- Donation of 1/2% of gross sales to socially and environmentally responsible non-profit organizations.

PACKAGING

- Sourcing of glass jars from manufacturers that use 35-50% recycled glass, the highest percentage of recycled glass content available.
- Cardboard boxes for packing contain 59% recycled material, of which 44% is post-consumer. Card-

board cases are reused to store and ship honey. The "Eco-Pack" is used to pack glass jars without additional packing material.

- Gift Boxes are made by a company that uses recycled wood products wherever possible and purchases raw lumber from sustainable sources. Decorative fill in gift boxes is made from 70% post-industrial and 30% post-consumer waste.

RECYCLING

- Brochures printed on 100% recycled paper, 50% post-consumer waste, processed chlorine free. Manufactured with electricity that is offset with Green-e® certified renewable energy certificates and is ancient forest friendly. Soy based inks.
- Office Paper is 100% post-consumer waste, processed chlorine free.
- Comprehensive company-wide recycling of all recyclable materials.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

- Carbon Offset of transportation and electricity usage with Evolution Sage (evolutionsage.com).
- Customer Carbon Offset Program (a partnership with TREE Center Hawaii: treehawaii.org) gives customers a chance to donate \$25 to plant a koa tree in a native forest on the Big Island when they place an order.
- Biodiesel mix in large farm truck-cleaner emissions and reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

Lotus Café

329-5807

Lotus Café's mission is to serve healthy, nutritious, quality food that tastes good. They can't help being green (and red, and yellow, and orange) as they source organic, fresh, and local ingredients for the restaurant.

FOOD SOURCING AND PREPARATION

- Organic whenever organic is commercially available. Local and organic whenever possible.
- Fish is wild, not farmed.
- GMO Free
- Non-dairy
- Other ingredients: cold pressed oils, whole grains, no MSG or MSG ingredients.
- The healthy food is also healthfully prepared. Lotus Café grinds and blends their own spices. Foods are grilled, steamed or lightly sautéed—nothing is deep fried.

CONSERVATION

- All non-meat food scraps are composted.
- When initially outfitting the restaurant, quality equipment was chosen to save money, water and energy.
- The water filtration system is the highest quality filter and, unlike reverse osmosis filters, it minimizes the waste of water.
- The dishwasher and ice maker conserve energy and water.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Even with federal and state tax credits, figuring out how to pay for a solar system can be challenging for a small business. Lotus Café took advantage of a solar leasing program from First Hawaiian Bank Leasing. The bank bought the solar system and leased it back to Lotus Café. The bank then took the tax credits and the accelerated depreciation. Lotus Café got into a solar system for under \$5,000 in upfront costs and will end up owning the

system at the end of seven years for 1/3 of the system's original price. Their net utility bill savings is \$3,000 per month after paying the solar lease. Unfortunately, the bank leasing programs only take on a few of these projects each year. system's original price. Their net utility bill savings is \$3,000 per month after paying the solar lease. Unfortunately, the bank leasing programs only take on a few of these projects each year.

Kona Brewing Company

www.konabrewingco.com

334-2739

Kona Brewing Company was literally built with an eco-ethic. When designing the Kona Brewery & Pub they set out to use recycled materials whenever possible. The roof is, appropriately, from an old distillery, and the tables are old cable spools.

PURCHASING

- Buying bulk grain and storing it in silos prevents collecting grain bags—saving 13,000 bags every year.
- Local and organic food whenever possible.
- Logo coasters and postcards made from post-consumer recycled content.

CONSERVATION, EFFICIENCY AND REUSE

- Spent grains from the brewing process are used to make bread, pizza and feed local beef which is served in the restaurant.
- Beer is available in returnable and reusable glass containers at the Growler Shack.
- Energy Efficiency: turning computers off when not in use, controlling oven temperatures and usage, lights are on only when they need to be.
- Employees are trained in energy, water, and other resource conservation techniques.

- Auto flush toilets and hands free faucets save water.
- Searching for most feasible renewable energy system.
- Water from the air conditioning unit runs into the landscaping—over 90 gallons reclaimed per day.

RECYCLING

- A comprehensive recycling program and a contract with a recycling hauler reduced the waste bill by half. Kona Brewing Company recycles everything possible: pallet wrap, glass, cardboard, office paper, and mixed recycling.
- On-site composting and mulching of green waste into the landscaping and experimental use of vermicompost (worms) to compost food scraps.
- Bags, to go containers and napkins are biodegradable and compostable.

Written by Andrea Dean from interviews with Howie Simon, Owner of the Lotus Café and Tracy Solomon, Sustainability Coordinator of the Kona Brewing Company. Andrea was not a coach or consultant to Lotus Café or Kona Brewing Company. Andrea Dean is the Business & Sustainability Manager at Volcano Island Honey Company and is an independent coach and consultant.

GO GREEN WITH ANDREA DEAN



www.AndreaDean.com

andrea@andreadean.com

(808)889-5806