

Cascade Baking Up Green Bread & Earning EarthWISE Certification

By Beth Casper
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Cascade Baking Company can bake a great loaf of bread and serve up a scrumptious lunch all the while keeping the environment in mind.

The 15-year-old bakery uses local ingredients, keeps its energy bills low and purchases used baking equipment instead of new. Its efforts earned it EarthWISE certification in 2008.

EarthWISE certification means that the business meets criteria in six areas, such as recycling, saving energy and reducing waste. The EarthWISE program is a free business environmental assistance program of Marion County.

Their freshly baked bread can be smelled blocks from the bakery doors. Besides having a good aroma, their food is made with sustainable ingredients.

All of the grain is from Shepherd's Grain, a Food Alliance-certified cooperative with 33 farmers who use sustainable agriculture practices such as no-till, direct seeding and crop rotation. Cascade Baking's owners Debra Edwards and Stephen Perkins can even track which farm each of the 50-pound bags of grain in their bakery came from. All of the farmers are located in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Additionally, the bakery purchases organic stone ground whole wheat flour from nearby Tangent.

"We know all of our farmers directly," Debra said. "I can take you to every farmer who grows us wheat."

By using Shepherd's Grain, owners Debra and Stephen ensure they are using wheat that is sustainably grown but also appropriately priced for farmers. Shepherd's Grain sets a price for the year so farmers and buyers are not subject to the wild ups-and-downs of grain prices. While Shepherd's Grain wheat is often slightly more expensive than wheat purchased on the commodities market, a wheat shortage several years ago due to bad weather meant Shepherd's Grain's set price



Cascade Baking staff with their EarthWISE plaque.

was far lower than the commodities prices.

"It was a no-brainer to choose Shepherd's Grain," Debra said. "We like their principles, we like their process and we like their wheat. We want to support local, sustainable agriculture."

All of the fruit, honey or nuts for scones and pastries are from local farms, much of it from Salem-based Minto Island Growers, Teal Creek Farms, and Fresh To You Produce.

With all of the baking—nearly 1,000 pieces of bread daily—being done at Cascade Bakery, one might assume the utility bill is super high.

But owners Debra and Stephen built a radiant-heat oven with 3-foot thick walls. It took 16 tons of bricks and mortar, but only requires two hours of natural gas heating a day—at a cost of about \$200 a month. A long natural gas pipe placed in the oven's entrance heats the oven to 700 degrees in the wee hours of the morning. That's when the sourdough bakes. As the temperature drops throughout the day, ciabattas, ryes, whole wheats and baguettes are rotated through the oven.

To further reduce their electricity use, Debra and Stephen did some major upgrades this year. They switched their electricity to the three-phase system, which helps the bakery's equipment to run more efficiently, and all of the fluorescent lights in the production area are being changed to high-efficient lighting.

For the expensive bakery equipment, Debra and Stephen turn to used or refurb-

ished tools—a less expensive and more environmentally friendly option. A few years ago, the Edwards needed to replace their 1936 Hobart mixer—a \$40,000 expense if purchased new. By scouring the Internet and restaurant equipment stores, Debra found a 1980s-model mixer for \$10,000. Since the old Hobart mixer lasted more than 70 years, they have reason to believe their new-to-them mixer has another 50 years of use!

It's not only a financial benefit for Perkins and Edwards to purchase used equipment. Some of the older designs are sturdier than the new ones, Debra says. The used transit racks are thicker and better for carrying pounds of baked bread. And the new ones cost \$2,000 each compared to \$200 for used racks.

A wooden workbench suitable for mixing and kneading dough is another used purchase. It is 2-inches of maple wood—a beautiful surface that also is adaptable to its users: the height of the legs can be adjusted.

The company also saved a bundle and protected area streams through their choice of laundry soap. In a bakery, dough- and flour-covered rags and aprons make up six loads of laundry a week, which was costing the Edwards hundreds of dollars in detergent a year. So Debra found soapnuts, grown from trees in Asia. When the small brown nuts are agitated in water, they make soap. Five soapnuts, placed in a small laundry bag, wash five loads of laundry. They now spend 5-cents per load of laundry. Plus, there are no residues left on fabrics, no fragrance, no environmental hazards in the drained wash water, and the materials are super clean.

"It makes sense to us to incorporate eco-friendly practices into our business practices—it makes sense for the environment and for our bottom line," Debra said. "We wouldn't run this business any other way."

For more information about the EarthWISE program, go to www.mcEarthWISE.net or call 503-365-3188.

Marion Water Quality Advisory Committee Meeting Notice

The Marion Water Quality Advisory Committee will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. in the North Santiam Room at Marion County Public Works located at 5155 Silverton Road NE in Salem, Oregon.

The agenda includes discussion of stormwater program updates and a stormwater fee credit system. The meeting is open to the public who are welcome to attend.

For more information, contact Matt Knudsen at 503-365-3187 or visit our website at <http://www.co.marion.or.us/PW/ES/waterquality/mwqac>.

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