

for almost five years, which has, according to Person, "Improved our business because we're being so efficient in our resource usage. We're using less money because our energy costs are lowered and we shop locally."

When asked if there were any downsides to their commitment to sustainability, Person conceded there are some challenges.

"It can be time consuming, to research all these products and verify items," she said. "We're a busy restaurant. GRA helps with that by giving directions with information we need on alternatives because they will ask their network of vendors."

Cory Schisler, Bamboo Sushi's creative director, points to GRA in helping it to create the world's first sustainable-certified sushi restaurant. "Overall, we'll ask their opinion on different products," he said, referring to GRA. "For example, when sourcing a compostable to-go container or paper product, we'd ask which has more point value in their standards to determine the level of 'greenness.'"

Bamboo Sushi makes many of its decisions about products and practices with the goal of sustainability in mind, a trend that creates environmental ambassadors from its staff members. "It's not the easiest job. We put them through a rigorous training program. They have to learn a lot about sustainability and our relationship with the GRA. Our talent pool is smaller, but we hire people based on passion, who have the same values as we do," said Schisler.

Bamboo Sushi sees its staff as an essential ingredient in advancing its sustainability model. "If I look at the people coming into Bamboo, I'd say 15 percent are coming in because of our sustainability equipment," Schisler said. "I'm happy with that ratio because it exposes those other 85 percent to our dedication to the environment. A few more talking points from our servers makes them more educated consumers and makes them ask those questions in other places."

Schisler points to a specific element that can earn ample green points and is beginning to revolutionize the restaurant world: vegetables. "One thing we've been doing in our menu is to add three more veggie dishes. So we are increasing the amount of things on the menu that are plant-based. People's tastes change and you can do a lot with veggies. There are some innovative chefs doing just that."

Widmer's next big move, with guidance from GRA, is partnering with an organization called the Surfrider Foundation. Surfrider works almost exclusively through activist volunteers to protect the world's oceans, waves and

beaches. Their model works on activating campaigns that will make the oceans cleaner and more sustainable for marine life and for the humans who both want to preserve the beauty of our seas and participate in activities like surfing. The Portland Chapter of Surfrider, which played an integral part in the bans on both polystyrene foam (Styrofoam) containers and plastic bags, is now focusing its efforts on phasing out single-use plastic straws.

On Aug. 1, Widmer Pub will no longer include straws in any of its beverages, including soda and water, however paper straws will still be available upon request. This "Ditch the Straws" campaign is a pilot program, the first of its kind in Portland, and will take place over the month of August and possibly longer, depending on how well it is received by the public.

Nancy Nordman, a student at Portland State's Leadership to Sustainability Education program, is a long-time volunteer for Surfrider and a member of the Portland chapter. She said the straw campaign was born out of a planning meeting.

"Over 500 million plastic straws are thrown away every day in the United States," said Nordman. "These straws end up polluting our oceans and hurting marine life."

In addition, according to Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup data, plastic straws consistently make the top ten list of items found on the world's beaches, and in the last three years, they have reached the number five spot. It is for these reasons that Surfrider is pioneering this campaign, and has found the perfect vehicle with Widmer, which is working to become an Ocean Friendly Restaurant, a designation bestowed by Surfriders.

"We hope this Ditch the Straw campaign continues to grow in momentum and other restaurants follow suit in implementing a straw-upon-request policy to reduce marine plastic pollution," she said.

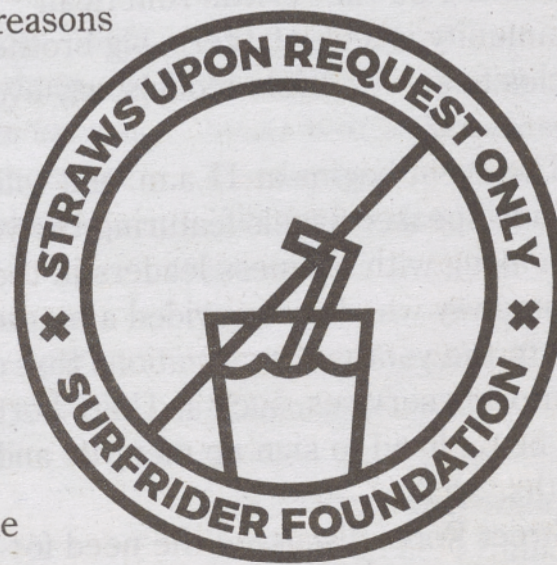
In the end, restaurant business comes down to the consumer, and consumers vote with their wallets.

"The biggest thing a person can do is to let a restaurant manager know that this is something they care about," said Oshman. "Consumers care, and restaurants need to



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH BUELOW

Above, a 3-star certification for Widmer Brewing co. by the Green Restaurant Association. The GRA rates restaurants nationwide on a range of practices to determine 1- to 5-star ratings, with its highest rating known as Sustainabuild. Below, the campaign from the Surfrider Foundation to discourage plastic straw use.



Rain Storm

by Peaches Youngerman

I was born to be in a rainstorm
to send your voice throughout
the night to sing your song with
following raindrops on my
head. To break the darkness with
your light, you were born
to show raw beauty. To wash
the dirt out from their eyes
but the whole world ran for
cover. When you opened up the
skies I began to cry.

So you made thunder to warn us.
And learnt to bite your rainy
tongue. You gave me life with
endless sun. You gave me what
I wanted. But as I watch
the leaves turn brown and dry
I wished I didn't take it
for granted! Your booming
presence is in the sky. I
was born to be a rain storm
to be chaotic and to be bold
to show there's beauty in
the knowledge, that you cannot
be controlled. Because you
might think you're not needed
life without you is the same
but nothing beautiful would
ever grow to glow in
the night. If it wasn't
washed away with the rain.

Everyone Needs Love

by P.K. Paulette Bade

My love
My life
She's there for me
And I'm there for her
When I'm sad or happy
She's here,
I'm here for her
She's my love, and she loves me,
My P.K. Bade
She's my kitten.