

## The Hospitality Green Cleaning Challenge

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The Green Hospitality Challenge (GHC) is a project funded by the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute for the purpose of educating and training the restaurant industry on the value of using non-toxic cleaning and pest control chemicals in their operations. The project is run by the Green Hospitality Initiative (GHI), which is the “green” arm of the New York State Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. As restaurants, restaurant customers and local communities are becoming more aware of the opportunities for restaurant operations to positively impact the environment, guidance is necessary for those owners looking to actively seek alternative green ways to run their businesses. The GHC has focused on a variety of strategies to support operators in looking at alternative cleaning strategies:

a) They’ve created an educational brochure and distributed over 5000 copies to restaurant personnel and the public. The brochure highlights the specific effects of toxic cleaning chemicals and the availability and benefits of using effective alternatives. This includes the use of dishwashing soaps, degreasers and pest control chemicals.

b) They’ve conducted a series of 8 training sessions for restaurant personnel on the use of non-toxic cleaning chemicals. These sessions have been group sessions with other restaurateurs and guest speakers as well as on site trainings at the individual restaurants.

c) The GHC has established follow-up support with restaurants that want to develop a non-toxic cleaning operation in their establishment. This includes introducing operators to vetted certified green cleaning and pest control suppliers and answering any questions they may have in the process.

d) To bring the non-toxic cleaning issues to the next generation of potential restaurant operators, the GHC has conducted 11 presentations to hospitality classes on the dangers of hazardous cleaning chemicals. Presentations have taken place at the Institute of Culinary Education and The New York Institute of Technology.

e) The GHC has put together a case study highlighting how one restaurant in New York has maintained cleaning effectiveness while using non-toxic cleaning chemicals. The case study detailed the amount of hazardous chemicals that has been removed from the environment while demonstrating there was no added cost to the operator.

f) Finally, the GHC has created a PowerPoint demonstration on the effects of toxic cleaning chemicals and the adoption of alternatives. The PowerPoint is available on the NYSRAEF website ([www.nysra.org/greenhospitalityinitiative](http://www.nysra.org/greenhospitalityinitiative)).

In implementing this project, The GHI has been very pleased with the response of operators and students who have gone through the trainings and presentations. Many brochures were handed out at the annual restaurant show at the Javitz Center in NYC and a city wide Sustainability event sponsored by GHI and the New York Institute of Technology and again the response was very positive. One conclusion that the project has brought out is that when faced with clear options that seem to make environmental and economic sense, many restaurant operators have no issue with seriously considering alternatives to what they are using to clean their restaurants. One challenge is that operators are so busy just trying to survive in these tough economic times and in this highly competitive industry. There seems to be a real need for a green organization that understands the restaurant mentality and can deliver clear concise and trusted information along with resources to implement sustainable actions that more and more operators are beginning to see the value of. The New York State Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's GHI is prepared to help fill that void.