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Sustainability Evaluation Report: Rouge Tomato Chelsea

“Great food without compromising people’s health and that of the planet” that is the philosophy behind Rouge Tomato Chelsea. The restaurant certainly practices what they preach. They have been certified by the Green Restaurant Association as being a 3-star Certified Green Restaurant. A 3-star certification means that a restaurant met certain certification standards in the seven following areas: water efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable goods and building materials, sustainable food, energy, reusables and disposables, and chemical and pollution reduction. Although there many restaurants in New York City with 1,2, or 3-star certifications, there are currently only three restaurants in New York City with a 4-star certification. The purpose of this evaluation report is to look at the ways Rouge Tomato Chelsea can improve to achieve a 4-star rating.

The first area I observed was water efficiency at Rouge Tomato. Rouge Tomato uses Energy Star dishwashers, ice machines, and a combination oven. They also have touchless sensor faucets. Rouge Tomato also has a water dispenser used to provide water for customers. However, compared to restaurants that are 4-star Certified Green Restaurant, Rouge Tomato can try to incorporate foot/pedal-controlled sinks to control the amount of water used. Another thing that Rouge Tomato can work on is to have high-efficiency toilets. Serving water upon customer request could also be something that Rouge Tomato considers implementing. By doing so, the restaurant can continue to send the message that they are committed to sustainable practices.



Water dispenser used at Rouge Tomato

When it comes to waste, Rouge Tomato has a strict policy regarding recycling and composting. The restaurant also does not use tablecloths. In their bathrooms, reusable hand towels are used in order to reduce waste that paper towels contribute. In the management office, the printer is capable of double sided printing. Documents are also shared electronically in order

not to waste paper. Nevertheless, Rouge Tomate can always do more with regards to reducing waste. Since Rouge Tomate has an extensive wine list, they can recycle the cork from the wines. A website called recork.org collects corks from restaurants and repurposes them. The Green Restaurant Association also gives points for proper disposal of appliances, fluorescent lamps, and batteries. With regards to management practices, Rouge Tomate can switch to paperless payroll for employees to decrease the use of paper. Instead of physical gift cards or gift certificates, Rouge Tomate could upgrade to using electronic gift cards.



The new Rouge Tomate restaurant in Chelsea uses a lot of the pieces (tables, chairs, walls, and doors) and décor from the old Rouge Tomate restaurant in midtown Manhattan. Other things that Rouge Tomate can do to improve the use of sustainable goods/building materials is to use durable cleaning products.



The whole premise of Rouge Tomate is creating healthy delicious food while practicing sustainability. The menu at Rouge Tomate offers vegetarian and vegan options. The kitchen staff makes sure to find ways to utilize food items that most restaurants discard. For instance, Rouge Tomate uses vegetable peels to make soups or juices. They also use fruit peels in their desserts. I think that Rouge Tomate should continue to be innovative in the way they develop their menu and continue this pattern of health and sustainability.

Saving energy is a large part of the Green Restaurant Association's evaluation system. Besides using energy star appliances and machines, Rouge Tomate also has programmable thermostats and light sensors. Looking at the 4-star restaurants, they all use some form of renewable energy and special lighting equipment. The three 4-star restaurants are all Green-E Certified which is a renewable energy certification. Rouge Tomate should consider switching to utilizing renewable energy in order to stay in line with their philosophy.

Rouge Tomate uses reusable hand towels and napkins. However, now that they are starting to serve breakfast and lunch, they should consider using reusable take-out containers, coffee cups, coffee lids, bowls, napkins, etc. I think that continually improving the facilities is an important aspect of sustainability.

Lastly, when it comes to the chemicals used in the facility, Rouge Tomate could make some improvements by using high-efficiency bulbs that contain no mercury. Another thing that can be improved is using Green Restaurant Association approved cleaning and handwashing products. Rouge Tomate may also consider obtaining certifications from SCS Global Services ranging from Super Antioxidant Certification to Sustainable Seafood certifications.