

## 3 Old Mill restaurants sign on to composting program

By Kimberly Bowker / *The Bulletin*

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Carrot tops, zucchini ends, old coffee grounds and other biodegradable items from restaurants in the Old Mill District are now destined to stay out of the local landfill.

The Old Mill District is launching a new composting initiative this month, with the help of Tim Hester, program director of the Environmental Center.

Café Yumm!, Pastini Pastaria and Strictly Organic Coffee Co. will be the first restaurants in the program to set aside their biodegradable waste for composting.

If the program goes well, the Old Mill will recommend it to all the district's 10 restaurants, said Noelle Fredland, the Old Mill's marketing director.

"The idea is not only to provide a great function for the restaurants and the farmers to get good, fresh compost, but also to reduce our overall trash," Fredland said.

Jim Fields, of Fields Farm in Bend, will pick up the biodegradable waste twice a week and create organic fertilizer with the leftover produce.

Fields Farm is part of Community Supported Agriculture, where customers pay \$25 a week to pick up a bag of organic vegetables that varies in size depending upon the yield. Fields has been using organic waste from businesses as fertilizer for his produce farm for 20 years. It takes about one year for the compost to develop into fertilizer. He currently picks up waste from Deschutes Brewery, Bend Golf & Country Club and Strictly Organic Coffee.

"The ultimate goal is to be giving back to the earth and trying to use our resources responsibly," said Karli Foster, general manager of Café Yumm!

The café will begin to compost vegetable waste from meal preparation. There will be a 5-gallon bucket in the prep area where the extra food will go.

Strictly Organic Coffee has been composting with Fields Farm since the coffee shop's inception 10 years ago, according to Rhonda Ealy, co-owner with her husband, Richard Steffensen.

The business recycles and composts about half its overall waste. Every week, 1 cubic yards of waste are recycled, 1 cubic yards are composted and about 3 cubic yards are deposited in the landfill.

"It's a way for us to get rid of our bioproduct of our business, especially with all of our things being organic," Ealy said. "It's something that can be useful at Fields Farm. ... I think it's a win-win situation."



Dave Martinez / The Bulletin

Biodegradable material, such as this vegetable waste at Café Yumm!, will now become compost instead of trash as part of a new initiative at three Old Mill District restaurants.

Strictly Organic uses certified organic and fair trade coffee, delivers on bicycles and participates in Pacific Power's Blue Sky program.

Café Yumm!, based in Eugene, also has a policy of sustainability. The floor is made of flax seed, tables and countertops are constructed of recycled paper or sunflower seed shells, the retaining wall is made of sorghum, the lights are recycled glass, and the to-go utensils and cups consist of recycled potato and corn.

"I think that it helps the going-green concept and trying to set ourselves to go one step farther and how we can be giving back," the general manager of the café said about the new composting program.

Pastini Pastaria, based in Portland, expects the program to reduce about 30 percent of its waste, according to Corey Donovan, general manager of the Bend restaurant.

Currently, the restaurant uses 75 percent of its vegetables, disposing of the rest.

The Old Mill District expects most of the restaurants to participate in the program "once they see how easy it is, and it's completely free to them," said Deena Cook, operations and office manager of the Old Mill District. "The Old Mill pays to have the composting picked up, and it's to their benefit."

Next week, 55-gallon containers will be delivered to the outdoor garbage area in the Old Mill District. Starting Sept. 18, restaurants can dump their biodegradable waste in the containers, which will be picked up by Fields Farms for a \$10-per-visit charge. Other than vegetables, waste can include meat trimmings, starches, other food items and biodegradable cardboard.

The composting program is an easy way to get businesses involved with reducing the impact on the environment and just one of many sustainability initiatives the Old Mill District is pursuing, according to Fredland, the marketing director.

Go Bio, which has been in business for about a year, picks up waste vegetable oil from restaurants such as Hola!, Anthony's at the Old Mill and Pastini Pastaria. Jeffery Rola, co-owner, sells the used oil to Oregon biofuel producers.

Composting will aid renewable energy actions and help utilize products that are thrown away, according to Donovan, Pastini Pastaria's general manager.

"I think it's going to start setting a precedent for Bend and the Old Mill," he said.

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