



## Green at the Grind

Foodservice Equipment & Supplies

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In today's world, running a business has become more than just a way to sell something in order to make a profit. As our concerns about the health of our environment grow stronger with each year, more businesses look beyond just increasing their bottom lines. They're looking at ways of helping the environment and local communities, all the while demonstrating this to customers.

At It's A Grind, we believe that it's good business to be socially responsible and it is even written into our mission statement. If consumers look at us as a business that delivers a good product in a cost-effective way, and also one that's responsible in the way we treat the environment and supply chain, then people will think of us as a better company and be more likely to buy our products. It's as if the circle of sales, revenues and profits now includes the idea of corporate responsibility, and that's both an inevitable and important change for our society.

Many people have heard of the term "fair trade," perhaps when buying a bag of beans at the grocery store or on signs or labels at coffeehouses. But the term can be very confusing because people and companies use it in different ways. The concept, according to our definition, is that everyone in the coffee supply chain gets a fair share of the money this commodity generates. In years past, middlemen and governments from indigenous countries have been known to exploit growers, raking in profits for themselves without doing the hard labor. Farmers experiencing this do not have an incentive to continue planting and harvesting coffee crops so there is risk that our supply of good coffee will be reduced. Coffee is the No. 2 most traded commodity in the world, right behind oil, so a lot of money changes hands in this business. It is important that those monies are fairly distributed among members of the supply chain.

This attitude toward "fair trade" has begun to change among big coffee powerhouses, and even smaller ones. As a coffeehouse chain, we understand the importance of the concept and intend to be part of the movement that changes this business.

Expressing this and other philosophies of ours, and educating our customers certainly pose a challenge when many customers just want to grab a cup of coffee and go. In that case, we have mere seconds to explain what we think "fair trade" means, and the nature of our business practices. However, some customers will spend the extra minutes or cents if they know their money will travel back to someone deserving, and knowing that It's A Grind is part of a movement that's also important to them.

On the flipside, we're also committed to helping the environment as best we can. One way we strive to protect the earth is through the use of recycled materials. We've begun to seek-out recycled materials for countertops, menu boards, wallpaper, tabletops and other physical elements when building our newest stores. We think there's a good marketing story there to which people might respond. If they walk into a "green" store and say, "Hey, this is cool, you use recycled materials," we might be able to use this as a competitive advantage and through word of mouth, attract new customers — the basis of a successful



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service business. Once these new customers are in the store, they might notice our philosophy about “fair trade” and be further impressed.

All of this is for naught, however, if we don't serve a good cup of joe. While social responsibility certainly is a priority for us, our No. 1 priority is producing a quality product and providing an exceptional experience. To do that we strive to find the best, freshest beans available. We also use a sophisticated water filtration system for the cleanest, purest water because coffee is 98-percent water. So, the quality of the water greatly affects the taste of the coffee. We use a reverse osmosis system in all our stores in order to make sure the water tastes the same from one location to the next. Water quality varies greatly in pH levels, hardness, softness and taste when unfiltered so this step in quality control makes for great-tasting coffee.

Addressing and executing a sense of corporate responsibility provides a financial incentive for us from a marketing and profit standpoint, but perhaps more importantly, it helps the environment and local communities to help create both a sustainable coffee supply, a sustainable business, and a sustainable world, one practice, one company at a time.