Green Hotels Association®

GREENING NEWSLETTER

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WOOD IN YOUR FOOD!

Some of you may remember this cellulose (wood fiber) story GHA printed in a 1999 newsletter. It's definitely one of our all-time most startling stories. See today's cellulose news following. Patty Griffin, GHA President

How Much Wood Cellulose Slime Are You Eating?

60 years ago Dow Chemical gave birth to a laboratory mistake. That product, now marketed under the name Methocel, is currently the No. 1 product of their specialty chemicals and plastics group. In the beginning, Dow chemists were experimenting with wood in an attempt to develop a longer-lasting product. They ground wood into pulp, washed it with chemicals to break it down, and thus created ethyl cellulose (used to make early plastic wrap). Someone in the lab screwed up and added one too many carbon atoms to the molecule, resulting in a goo called methyl cellulose. Having a unique sticky layer whose molecules bond together when heated, Methocel becomes something like cooked egg whites. When cooled, it once again becomes oozing slime.

The product has bounced from pillar to post in an attempt to find a strong market—was even killed twice by Dow over the years because its market was too weak. At first it was used in tile putty and drywall mud as a thickener. And, it continues to be used in many construction-related products today.

Dow says that even though chemicals are used in the manufacturing process, the result is all-natural wood cellulose which is tasteless, odorless and calorie-free. The product's benefactor, Dr. Don Coffee, realized that the slime, already used in some foods, could also be added to soups, sauces, puddings and gravies as a thickener. Frozen pepperoni pizza snacks may be coated with Methocel to reduce tiny puddles of grease from forming. Food companies have been using corn or potato starches for 100 years as thickeners and fillers, but are finding the low cost of Methocel too attractive to pass up.

In 1993, three PhDs were hired to help expand Dow's market further into the food world. 300 employees, including 14 food scientists, now work for the Methocel division which produces 200+ products. The ooey-gooey product has starred in movies such as Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, Jurassic Park and The Blob. It is also used by museums to clean artwork.

On a food ingredients label, it will be listed as Methocel or Methylcellulose or perhaps veiled as vegetable gums. Products that you can bite into today that use Methocel 's ooze include: Twinkies' filling, Lean Pockets, Citrucel laxative, Burger King onion rings, Hidden Valley Ranch salad dressings, Marie Callender pot pies, Progresso soups, coated medicine tablets and capsules, veggie burgers, imitation meat and breaded frozen vegetables.

Corporate customers rightfully worry about the reaction of consumers to having a chemical component in their food products. Some even want to keep the ingredient secret. A frozen-food manufacturer, who chose to remain nameless, says Methocel makes cheese cheesier, gravy creamier and fillings fruitier. Without it, he adds, the product is too soft, too hard or too mushy. Perhaps the only consumers who will have a real appreciation for the product will be vegetarians and vegans since they shun all animal products.

Though there may be nothing wrong healthwise with eating wood cellulose, knowing that it is in a food product will definitely not make the food product more appetizing or appealing.

Warren, Susan, "Why Dow Chemical Finds Slime Sublime," The Wall Street Journal, November 15, 1999, p. B1, B4

Cellulose in cheese leads to lawsuits

Kraft Heinz is among companies under legal fire for using cellulose, a filler made from wood chips, in its "100% Grated Parmesan Cheese" product. Lawsuits were filed last week against Kraft Heinz in federal courts in Illinois, New York, Missouri and California. Kraft Heinz couldn't be reached for comment. Wal-Mart was also sued last week over cellulose, an anti-clumping agent derived from wood chips, in Parmesan cheese.

Cellulose in cheese leads to lawsuits, Houston Chronicle attributed to Chicago Tribune, March 1, 2016

Hotels, hospitality sites embrace eco-friendly ways

Clean rooms? Check. Fresh linens? Check. Sustainable practices? Check.

Not only does The Inn at Pine Plains offer an inviting and welcoming respite to its guests, but the hospitality venue also incorporates eco-friendly practices, such as the use of green cleaning products, recycling routines, energy-efficient mechanical systems, and a mix of new, used and collectable furniture.

"A lot of younger people from New York City—30- and 40-year-olds—everyone sort of expects that," said John Vernon, one of the site's two innkeepers. "(They're) conscious of recycling, making sure everything is as eco-conscious as possible."

Eco-friendly hotels have gone from a niche segment of the industry to what's viewed by many properties as economical and necessary, according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association's 2013 Sustainability Report.

In all, the US lodging industry consisted of more than 52,000 properties in 2012, all of which spent a collective $8.2 billion on energy, generated 7 million tons of waste, consumed 64 trillion gallons of water and produced 23 million tons of carbon dioxide. To help combat industry waste, the AH&LA with the Turner Foundation has instituted an environmental program, including green guidelines and ratings.

Mary Kay Vrba, president and CEO of Dutchess Tourism, said many of today's hospitality venues are embracing environmental practices.

Continental breakfast at The Inn at Pine Plains includes local fruits when they're in season along with dairy products from area farms. Memorabilia, collectables and photos from the area's past accent this space as well as the rest of the property.

"More and more hotels are looking at what they can do to be more green and sufficient," she said, including careful considerations of the structure's building materials and incorporation of energy efficient practices.

Some hotels, Vrba said, are taking steps to ensure on-site conservation, such as requiring their guests to insert their room key into slots in their room to allow the lights to come on. Once the key is removed when the guests leave their room, the lights automatically go out. It's also becoming more common for hotels to use green cleaning products.

Other strategies put environmentalism in the guests' hands. For instance, some hotels, Vrba said, put notices in their overnight rooms that allow guests to choose not to have their bedsheets changed during their stay. Another option offered by some lodging facilities is for guests to indicate that they don't want their towels changed daily by hanging them up after they're used.

"In some of the younger travelers, it's higher on their list of what they look for (in a hotel) than, perhaps, some baby boomers," Vbra said of environmental initiatives. "As people begin to build new hotels, energy efficiency and cost is on people's minds," she said. "They'll continue to look for energy savings."

Before The Inn at Pine Plains was bought and converted into an inn last October by its current owners, Jack and Irene Banning of the Black Sheep Hill farm in Pine Plains, it was a preschool with upstairs apartments. Earlier still, the property was a residence.

A mix of new, used and collectable furnishings outfit the dining room, guest rooms and library of The Inn at Pine Plains. Now outfitted with eight guest rooms, including four one- and two-bedroom suites, plus a dining room, library and kitchen, the inn features energy-efficient mechanics as well as some of the structure's original elements from the mid-1800s, including the wide-plank flooring in the reception area, dining room and Mashomack guest suite, so named for the town's Mashomack Fish and Game Preserve. "The front part of the house goes back to the 1840s," said innkeeper Patti Vincent.

Other details throughout the inn recall the area's historic past, such as old-time photos, postcards, signage and regional maps. Moreover, like the Mashomack suite, each of the rest of the inn's rooms was named after a point of local significance. One room has a universally designed bathroom for wheelchair accessibility.

Local fruits in season are available with the guests' continental breakfasts, as are milk, yogurt and butter from Ronnybrook and Chaseholm dairy farms, both in Pine Plains.

In the near-offing will be an on-site cutting garden with flowers and herbs, and a possible gazebo where guests can take in the scenic area's natural beauty.

To help minimize heat consumption at the inn, unoccupied rooms are kept at minimal temperatures of 55°F to 60°F, and an on-demand water heater is used to conserve water usage.

"We're as eco-friendly as our budget could allow," Vernon said.

The Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz has a long-standing history of environmental conservation and land stewardship that spans its 1869 roots to the site's current practices.

Among the Mountain House's many eco-friendly initiatives are energy-efficient light bulbs in guest rooms and public spaces; extensive composting of food waste, which is used to fertilize the venue's gardens and golf course; recycling of paper, glass, soap, aluminum, trash, computers and other materials; an integrated pest management system; biodegradable laundry products; and an environmentally-friendly waste water treatment plant, along with additional efforts.

"My great-grand-uncle understood the need to provide guests with an opportunity to experience nature directly," Mohonk's president, Albert K. Smiley III, said in a released statement. "People today have little free time, so it's increasingly important to provide a place where people can easily connect with a strikingly beautiful natural environment and immediately feel nurtured by that connection."

How eco-friendly practices help

Eco-friendly practices benefit hospitality venues, their guests and communities, including low-cost and creative ideas, such as:

- Providing local maps in guestrooms, highlighting public transportation stops and other areas of interest within walking distance.

- Buying food from local vendors to reduce the carbon footprint of importing food.

- Creating "hybrid rooms," where guests can specify towel and linen reuse, recycling bins, thermostat constraints and such, possibly with a discounted room rate.

- Posting a contest for the property's employees to think of an innovative green tactic the property could employ.

- Providing the means for employees to donate $1 of their paycheck toward planting trees or another charitable organization of interest.

- Including a "free box" in employee common areas where staff can donate unwanted items and others can claim them.

• Hosting a socially responsible staff day where everyone is engaged in a volunteer activity to better the community.

• Putting a note by the thermostat in guest rooms indicating the optimal temperature for energy efficiency.

• Participating in food recycling by donating leftovers to community kitchens or scraps to local farmers to use as animal feed.

Shan, Karen Maserjian, Poughkeepsie Journal, ahla.com/Green.aspx?id=3400, March 3, 2016

Welcome GenEon Technologies!

GHA

ALLY MEMBER GenEon Technologies is the leader in On Site Generation (OSG) of cleaners, sanitizers and disinfectants. Their broad line of OSG products can reduce cleaning and sanitizing costs by more than 65% as proven by case studies. GenEon produces exceptional cleaners and degreasers for use on table tops, floors, grills and food prep areas. All ingredients used in producing GenEon's solutions are classified GRAS (Generally Accepted as Safe) by the US FDA and are toxin free.

GenEon is the only portable, on-site generator of patented blended-stream, electro-chemical activated (ECA) water technology. Dependable germ, spore, virus and bacteria killing power is essential in any cleaning or sanitizing product used in the hospitality or food service industries. Ensuring that all harmful germs are eliminated from a surface is crucial to sustaining a safe work environment and maintaining a positive reputation with guests who demand the highest quality and safety standards. From window-washing solutions to areas in direct contact with food, keeping surfaces clean, degreased and ready for use is essential for maximum productivity.

All GenEon solutions are safe for the user and will not harm or damage surfaces. The use of OSG technology lowers your hotel's carbon footprint, and can provide a lower chemical footprint for you, your staff and your guests. Visit geneontechnologies.com to learn how OSG technology can lower toxins and protect your staff's and guests' health. Call 866/217-0205 or e-mail sales@geneontechnologies.com for more information TODAY!

FREE OFFER: GenEon Technologies offers to provide two GHA properties with a GenEon InstaFlow program for a 3-month trial at NO COST. View geneontechnologies.com/products/instaflow on our compact OSG generator. The sanitizer can be used to eliminate odors, and is also ideal for cleaning grouted-tile floors. Contact us at sales@geneontechnologies.com to be one of the trial locations TODAY!

ALL NATURAL WEED KILLER

8 to 10% pickling vinegar. Spray full-strength. Do not dilute with water. Add a little orange oil, about an ounce per gallon of vinegar, add a tablespoon of liquid molasses per gallon of vinegar, and add a teaspoon of liquid kitchen soap. Keep shaken up, because it will settle out.

http://www.dallasobserver.com/news/the-dirt-doctor-6408428

ARIA Resort & Casino Redefines Guest Experience with Launch of Unprecedented In-Room Technology

Reimagining the guest experience with modern-day convenience, ARIA Resort & Casino has collaborated with Crave Interactive, a cutting-edge guest service software company, to create the largest-ever installation of the provider's in-room hotel tablets. Enhancing the resort's AAA, Five-Diamond service, the tablets will offer a hyper-tailored guest experience with new amenities such as digital in-room dining orders, one-touch spa service requests and an endless stream of news in multiple languages.

The new tablets have been created specifically for ARIA and its distinct array of services. This revolutionary in-room technology will change the way visitors build their Las Vegas itineraries with just one touch including:

Dining. Guests can order from a full in-room dining menu, schedule breakfast delivery for the next morning and even book restaurant reservations directly through the tablet.

Housekeeping. Launching in April, housekeeping integration capabilities will have requests for turndown service, extra towels and pillows or a rollaway bed at guests' fingertips.

In-Room Packages. For special occasions and celebrations, guests can order in-room packages, extending personalized experiences directly to their guestroom or suite.

Spa. Those looking for ultimate relaxation can view The Spa & Salon at ARIA's entire menu of services and reach out for a therapist's consultation to book a day of pampering.

In-Room Controls. With one touch, guests can adjust room lighting and temperature to their liking or set a personalized wake-up call that might include the television turning on to their favorite channel as the curtains sweep open to reveal the Las Vegas sun. When it's time to say "good night," one touch will close all the curtains and turn off every light.

News. Guests won't have to miss any breaking news while away from home, as ARIA's tablet offers access to thousands of publications from around the world through the PressReader application.

Communication. The tablets make it easy for groups traveling together to stay up-to-date on their itineraries, even offering multimedia messaging with graphics and video, ideal for meeting hosts.

Language. Catering to ARIA's international clientele, each tablet is available in a variety of languages, including English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian and German.

"From its inception, ARIA has been committed to providing both a luxurious and technologically advanced experience," said Shannon McCallum, Executive Director of Hotel Operations at ARIA Resort & Casino. "We continually seek

out ways to improve the guest experience and improve our offerings as trends and technology change. These new tablets are a testament to that pledge."

The new tablets will provide the intuitive functionality that ARIA guests are accustomed to, offering a user interface that is approachable and accessible to all. Installing this tablet, with its breadth and depth of capability, in all guest rooms and suites exemplifies the resort's commitment to green and technology innovations.

Gareth Hughes, CEO and Founder of Crave Interactive said, "This installation is the industry's largest and together, Crave and ARIA are setting new standards in world-class guest service. We are extremely proud to be part of a project that raises the bar for the world's most technologically advanced hotel."

ARIA's Crave tablets will be offered in all 4,004 guestrooms, with further customized services for Deluxe Rooms, Tower Suites and Sky Suites' guests. The installation will roll out through multiple phases and future enhancements will include retail ordering, M life status and Tier Credit updates, customized messaging, tablet skins and graphics, social media and much more.

http://hospitalitybusinessnews.com/20160124314/aria-resort-casino-redefines-guest-experience-with-launch-of-unprecedented-in-room-technology, January 4, 2016

How to Find a Better Venue for Outdoor Events

If you and your attendees are growing weary of hotel ballrooms and convention hall, it might be time to finally listen to your mother, who always said, "Go outside and play!" Unfortunately, finding an outdoor venue that's big enough, beautiful enough, and experienced enough to host a major event is often easier said than done.

If you're having a hard time finding that perfect "al fresco" venue, you might want to consider a golf course, according to Successful Meetings Senior Editor Andrea Doyle, who says golf courses are no longer reserved only for golf events.

"Golf courses . . . provide a lot of flexibility for meeting planners, with plenty of space for anything from receptions and cocktail events to sit-down dinners and special events such as concerts," Melinda Reilly, director of group sales at Trump National Doral tells Doyle.

Think about it: Golf courses typically are large, spacious, scenic, private and experienced event hosts. "Golf courses are beautiful venues for much more than golf including good causes, team building, celebrations and cultivating business relationships," Cheri Brennan of Ten Grands on the Green tells Doyle.

http://www.successfulmeetings.com/Strategy/SM-How-To/How-to-Find-a-Better-Venue-for-Outdoor-Events/?cid=eltrHowTo

Chick-fil-A Adds Kale to Menu

In an industry dominated by french fries as side items, Chick-fil-A is one of the first fast-food restaurants in the industry to add "superfoods" like kale and broccolini to its menu. Customers nationwide began ordering the low-calorie Superfood Side on January 18. The gourmet side was developed in collaboration with James Beard Award Nominee and Atlanta-based chef, Ford Fry of Ford Fry Restaurants.

The Superfood Side is made with a blend of hand-chopped kale and broccolini, tossed in a sweet and tangy maple vinaigrette dressing and topped with flavorful dried sour cherries. It is served with a blend of roasted nuts (walnuts, almonds and pecans) that enhances the flavor and provides added crunch.

"I really enjoyed working with the culinary team from Chick-fil-A on incorporating ingredients that are unique to the industry," said Fry. "We know that it can be challenging to eat healthy on-the-go, so we wanted to create something that customers will love eating that's also nutritious."

The side is available in 5 or 8-ounce servings, and priced starting at $2.59 for the 5 oz. and $3.79 for the 8 oz. portion. The Superfood Side will also be offered as a substitution in any combo meal for an upcharge of 94 cents.

"The Superfood Side is not something you would expect to see at a fast-food restaurant, and we're thrilled to kick off 2016 with something that can help people stick to their New Year's resolutions to eat healthfully. Customers who have tried it rave about having an option that's incredibly healthy where you don't have to sacrifice great taste," said David Farmer, vice president of menu strategy and development for Chick-fil-A. "We are always looking for new ways to introduce healthier and all-natural items to our customers, and in partnering with Ford to develop the Superfood Side, we are able to incorporate high-end restaurant flavors and ingredients to our menu."

When paired with the company's 100% breast-meat Grilled Nuggets (eight-count) and a zero-calorie beverage, the Superfood Side allows customers to enjoy a full meal of only 280 calories. On its own, the Superfood Side has 140 calories and 7 grams of fat in the 5 oz. portion and 170 calories and 8 grams of fat in the 8 oz. portion.

http://hospitalitybusinessnews.com/20160124311/chick-fil-a-jumps-the-shark-adds-kale-to-menu-in-partnership-with-acclaimed-chef, January 6, 2016

How are environmentalists putting drones to use to help further their causes?

Conservationists are utilizing drone or "unmanned aerial systems" (UAS) technology to gather highly detailed imagery and other environmental data that is traditionally challenging to obtain. Wildlife biologist John Takekawa and his team at the U.S. Geological Survey's Western Ecological Research Center (WERC), for example, are using drones to obtain aerial images of San Francisco Bay marshlands. "It's very hard to get some of the data sets in some of these areas that are remote or hard to reach in the marshes," Takekawa explains. "If you have something that can fly over and get sensors that can report back to your computer, that's what we're looking for in exploring these types of technologies."

Dr. Amy Woodget, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Worcester in the UK, uses her small Draganflyer X6 UAS to collect high-resolution imagery of river channels. The images map the physical conditions within the rivers, including the channel topography, water depth and surface flow patterns, data all crucial for gauging river health and habitat conditions essential to the survival of local wildlife. "The results obtained

using UAS technologies provide unprecedented levels of detail concerning these physical river habitat parameters, with high levels of accuracy and precision," Woodget says.

Drones are also helping preserve the Peruvian Amazon forest, where illegal gold mining and logging has cleared mahogany, Spanish cedar and other old-growth trees. Carlos Castaneda, coordinator of the Amazon Basin Conservation Association's Los Amigos Conservation Concession, monitors the 550-square-mile Los Amigos reserve in southeastern Peru, home to a large diversity of plant and animal species, including palm swamps, bamboo thickets, giant otters, harpy eagles, spider monkeys and jaguars. Small drones weighing less than five pounds enable detection of any deforestation within the area.

Considering that more and more drones are being launched for conservation research, Linda Rothschild, an evolutionary biologist at NASA's Ames Research Center, was concerned when she found out that UAVs sometimes get lost in coral reefs or other sensitive habitats. "As I started to hear about this, I thought, 'Well, wouldn't it be useful if the UAV was biodegradable, so if it crashed somewhere that was sensitive, it wouldn't matter if it dissolved,'" Rothschild says.

So Rothschild created a biodegradable drone with a team of students in the 2014 International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) competition. The team's prototype took its first short flight in November 2014 at the iGEM competition in Boston. The drone, which resembles a cardboard cup holder, is made primarily of mycelium grown by New York-based Ecovative Design. The team grew cellulose leather-like sheets to coat the mycelium body and then covered the sheets with proteins sourced from the saliva of paper wasps—a water resistant material that the insects use to cover their nests. The biodegradable drone body is certainly a step forward, though the drone still uses a standard battery, motor and propellers.

Rothschild's dream is to make a UAV where every part is made with something biodegradable, but for now, she says, "realistically, this is going to be much more of a hybrid vehicle."

http://earthtalk.org/how-can-drones-help-environmentalists/

William McDonough: 6 ways to move beyond zero-waste

"Why make something you can't sell?"

Traditionally, businesses have strived to reduce or eliminate the waste they produce. But McDonough, influential designer, architect, entreprenuer and co-author of "Cradle to Cradle" and "The Upcycle," thinks this is missing the point. Zero waste is "like going nowhere," he said. Instead, the focus should be a "cycle of endless resourcefulness."

Waste Management—which has partnered with McDonough to push for significant environmental aims—has shown how this principle can produce results. It recently worked with a Toyota plant in San Antonio, for instance, to turn waste produced at the plant into clean-burning fuel, which was then provided to another customer. In this way, the waste wasn't just reduced or eliminated, but actively reused.

Moving beyond zero waste requires a wholesale rethinking on what waste is and how it should be addressed. To help with the transition, McDonough provided these insights:

1. Move from a triple bottom line to a triple top line: The triple bottom line encompasses three aspects of a socially responsible and profitable business—economy, equity and ecology. These intersect in important ways; for instance, equity-economy could manifest as "Are men and women being paid the same?" while equity-ecology could be "Is it fair to expose people to toxins in the workplace?" When all these intersections are accounted for, it leads to a business that is socially responsible and makes money.

But according to McDonough, this isn't enough. For executives, it's not just about managing what exists—this is best left to managers—but about using waste as an asset in a top-line strategy to generate revenue. After all, McDonough said, "Businesses have to grow, or they die."

2. Don't just minimize negatives—also maximize positives: While it's great to do less bad things, it's also important to be aspirational—to not just reduce toxins, for example, but to create items designed to be positive for future generations. Or, put another way: "Being less bad is not also being good."

3. Be efficient and effective: Efficiency is doing things the right way; effectiveness is doing the right thing. Both must be employed for real progress to occur. As McDonough noted, if you do something criminal more efficiently, you're actually acting worse.

4. Embrace design, not regulations: There are two syndromes of survival—commerce, which is typically quick and effective, and guardianship, which is slow and reserves the right to kill. Instead of focusing on regulations, businesses should design things that require less regulation in the first place. "Design is the first signal of human intention," McDonough said. "Regulation is a signal of design failure."

5. Start with values: When implementing green principles, begin with a values set. When Ford installed the largest green roof in the world, for example, it started by asking questions such as "What if birds want to land here?" and "What if people want to work here?" The key, McDonough said, is to focus on "sustaining values-based innovation."

6. Think of waste as food: By thinking of waste as food and the materials as nutrients, it's possible to move from a "take make waste" cycle to the more productive "take make reuse make reuse." McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart once worked with a textiles company, for example, to turn the trimmings of textiles into nutrients used by a local garden club, and the water from the mill into local drinking water.

By reimagining waste, McDonough said, companies can move from a "world of limits, where we're afraid, to a world of abundance, where we're excited and sharing." In other words, it's not about "how much can I get from what little I give?" but something altogether more powerful: "How much can I give for all that we get?"

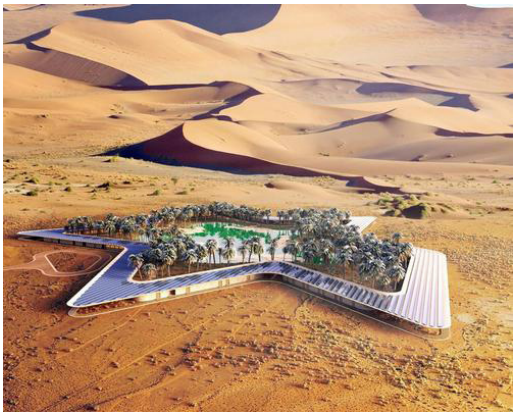
Gloudeman, Nikki, William McDonough: 6 ways to move beyond zero-waste, http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2014/02/07/william-mcdonough-6-ways-move-beyond-zero-waste, February 7, 2014

Plans unveiled for "the world's greenest resort" in an Abu Dhabi oasis

The Oasis Eco Resort, which is scheduled to open in the emirate's Liwa region in 2020, will be powered by 157,000 sq.ft. (14,500 sq.m.) of solar panels and operate a wildlife conservation area.

The design is built around the oasis' spring, and water will be extracted from the ground for use in the resort before being treated onsite and recycled for irrigation.

"At the very early stages of the project, we found out that we could extract groundwater using a deep well," said Baharash Bagherian, founder of the architecture practice. "This gave us an opportunity to create a story around a spring, which was of critical importance to the people who once lived here for trade and transportation routes."



The resort will have 84 interconnecting suites of various types, each with an outdoor terrace looking out onto the "tranquil heart" of the spring.

A restaurant and bar will also feature and provide guests with organic ingredients grown on site. Guests will be able to forage organic produce from onsite allotments or catch fish from the spring, and cook them with the resort's chef.

The resort will also include health and therapeutic spa facilities equipped with smart-glass windows which Bagherian said can "offer instant privacy at a flick of a switch."

Other mooted environmental aspects at the resort include a zero-emission zone, an onsite waste management facility and a wildlife biology department staffed by conservationists and scientists.

"By 2021, the United Arab Emirates is expected to welcome 45,000 people, of whom 31,000 will be international tourists," said Eco Resort Group in a statement. "A new generation of eco-minded entrepreneurs are looking to transform this rapidly growing sector into a green economy." The company said it had several other environmentally-minded projects in the pipeline.

Baharash Architecture has previously master-planned environmental designs for projects in the Middle East, including a solar-powered sustainable city in Dubai.

Megson, Kim, The Leisure Media Co Ltd., "Developers plan 'world's greenest resort' for Abu Dhabi desert oasis," http://www.spaopportunities.com/detail.cfm?pagetype=detail&subject=news&codeID=322214, March 7, 2016

The Buyer's Guide to Non-Toxic Candles

Some scented candles can contain toxic chemicals, despite how nice they smell. Light a safer glow by using non-scented candles, preferably made of the ingredients soy or beeswax. Scent the air naturally. Do a wick test to see if the wick contains lead.

Buy candles made only of 100% pure beeswax or 100% soy. The beeswax can remove odors and clean the air. You'll want zero paraffin in any candle you purchase because paraffin is derived from petroleum. When burned, paraffin wax emits carbon. Yep, carbon emissions in your own space!

Scent the air naturally by creating your own simmer jar. Choose your favorite natural scents such as cinnamon and cloves. Heat water on the stovetop until almost bubbling. Let the ingredients simmer for 15 minutes. Pour into a glass jar and enjoy.

Test candles for a lead wick. If a candle's wick is unburned, rub the tip of the wick on a piece of white paper. If it leaves a gray mark, like a pencil, the wick contains a lead core. Throw it out. You can also simply look at the tip of the wick, and see if it has a metal core. If it does, throw it out. The soot resulting from any metal in a candle wick will be deposited on clothing, walls, drapes, upholstery, etc., and is extremely difficult—almost impossible—to remove. You, your staff and guests are also breathing the sooty, dirty fumes.

It's also best if the candle wick is trimmed to avoid undue smoke and soot. It should be trimmed before the candle is lighted to the height of two pennies.

Greener candle choices include those made with pure cotton or paper wicks (that means wire-free). While they send soot into the air, as any burning organic compound will, they rely on renewable resources and have a longer burn-life. Oh, and, as always, the more local the better.

doctoroz.com/article/buyers-guide-non-toxic-candles
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/simran-sethi/life-cycle-burn-baby-burn_b_137172.html

8 tech innovations in Starwood's hotels: from keyless entry to robotic butlers

Starwood is rolling out two robotic "Botlrs" inexplicably named A.L.O. in their Cupertino Aloft Hotel

There's more technological innovation in the works at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide than keyless entry and a quirky robot butler, hotelnewsnow.com reports.

Though those two initiatives have received their fair share of headlines, it's a number of less-visible projects that executives hope will set the chain's select-service portfolio apart. They range from a **fresh-brewed-coffee wake-up** to **an illuminating way to find the bathroom in the dark**.

Given that iPhones were a critical component of SPG keyless entry, it's no surprise that mobile apps play a decisive role in many of these advances.

"With select-service such a crowded industry tier, we see these kinds of improvements as a way to separate ourselves from the pack. They're cool and directly impact the quality of the hotel experience, some in ways that are expected and others in a way that's totally unexpected," said Brian McGuinness, global brand leader of specialty select brands, who led a tour recently of concept rooms at Starwood's headquarters.

Eight of the top ideas Starwood is working on include:

1. Electronic concierge message - After opening the door of their Aloft room, guests will trigger an automated welcome message downloaded to their smartphone that takes them through the room's main features. Designed for the first-time guest (but also with repeat guests, who could benefit from a refresher, in mind), the brief overview allows guests to derive the most benefit out of the experience. More detailed questions can be directed to the front desk.

2. Custom wake-up with coffee - Gone are the days when guests wake up in the morning strictly with a telephone call from the front desk (automated no less). Soon guests—again at Aloft—will be able to program the time in the morning they'd like their in-room coffee to start brewing. If the smell of the coffee doesn't do the trick, they can program their playlist so the sound of music rouses them from sleep.

Similarly, they will be able to program the light effects they want in their room at any time of the day. Gradient light simulating sunrise is one example. Increasingly, such upgrades play into the mindset of today's traveler, McGuinness noted.

"They're tech-savvy and like to have options when they travel. In fact, our research indicates they tend to be more interested in acquiring experiences than stuff," he said. A decade ago, residential design was seen as leading hotel design, but now that dynamic has reversed, McGuinness said.

"Seen another way, consumers who have sophisticated technology built into their homes are going to expect to find the same conveniences when they check into a hotel," he said.

3. Recipes on a touchscreen - When Starwood initially launched Element, it was positioned as an upscale extended-stay brand. That positioning continues, though it has since taken on a sustainable, green positioning as well. Consequently, each guestroom comes with a full kitchen.

While leading the tour in an Element concept room, McGuinness pointed out a touchscreen cookbook on the wall. For long-stay guests who want to prepare their own meals, the cookbook will provide numerous choices. Foodies also will be welcome to upload their own favorite recipes for others to try.

4. Recharging in comfort - Element guests will be able to recharge their devices while sitting under an outdoor canopy made up of colorful solar panels. This upgrade is being piloted at the Element Dallas Fort Worth Airport.

5. Smart floor tiles - Tiles implanted with radio-frequency identification technology will be installed in the flooring of Element guestrooms. When guests step on the tiles by the side of the bed, they light the way to the bathroom, preventing guests from stumbling in the dark.

6. Side-by-side big-screen TVs - Executives' plans for the Four Points by Sheraton brand include outfitting guestrooms with two flat-screen televisions mounted next to each other on the same wall. For guests traveling by themselves, it allows the person to watch two sporting events simultaneously, for example. And with wireless headphones included, the upgrade will allow each member of a couple to watch his or her movie of choice without disturbing the other.

7. Digital mirrors - Floor-length mirrors in Four Points guestrooms will start doubling as the morning newspaper when they're embedded with touchscreen applications that reveal the day's headlines as well as the weather and the latest sports scores.

8. Robotic butlers - Starwood is rolling out two robotic "Botlrs" inexplicably named A.L.O. in their Cupertino Aloft Hotel. The robotic butlers, built by Savioke, are able to perform tasks in the front of the house and the back of the house, as well as navigate around guests and use elevators. For the most part, it seems that the Botlrs will be delivering amenities to guest rooms in lieu of actual humans, "freeing up existing talent's time and allowing them to create a more personalized experience for guests." When a guest calls down and asks for a toothbrush or extra towels, hotel employees simply load up the robot with the requested items, dial in the room number, and the Botlr handles the rest.

Using a combination of sensors and WiFi/4G connectivity to communicate with the hotel and the elevator software, the ROS-powered robot can get to and from the rooms without breaking anything or injuring anyone.

When the robot arrives at the room, the guest can enter in a rating on the robot's touchscreen, or offer a "tip" in the form of a tweet to the hashtag #MeetBotlr.

The timeline - Pressed as to when these upgrades might be fully rolled out at their respective brands—and whether some might end up as standards at all three brands (no less Starwood's upper-upscale and luxury brands), McGuinness declined to get specific. Some already are being piloted; others are still being tweaked. Some already have brand-name development partners in place; on others, Starwood is still in discussion with partners.

As with any brand standard, once an improvement is rolled out, it becomes part of the prototype for new developments going forward. That means owners will be responsible for footing the bill if or when any of the innovations make their way into production. Brand consistency requires it, McGuinness noted.

"A guest checking into an Aloft in Silicon Valley, for example, should be able to find the same services and features as when checking into an Aloft in New York," he said.

Keyless entry and butler - The SPG keyless entry RFID-based mobile check-in system is being rolled out to Aloft and Element hotels. If consumer response remains strong, it will continue to be rolled out across the Starwood portfolio.

The company's robot butler, or Botlr, is distributing toothbrushes and extra towels in a heavily publicized beta test that now includes Aloft hotels in both Cupertino and Newark, California.

http://www.tornosnews.gr/en/tourism-businesses/travel-tech/14764-8-tech-innovations-in-starwood.html?utm_medium=nl&utm_source=internal&mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRokua%2FAdu%2FhmjTEU5z17OQlUa%2Bg38431UFwdcjKPmjr1YYDT8FkI%2BSLDwEYGJlv6SgFSLnBMa1x3LgNXhc%3D

EDIBLE FLOWERS AND MORE

Eating flowers has been done throughout the world for centuries. Roses and orange flowers are commonly used in Middle Eastern and Persian foods; lilies are used in China; cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums are used in Japan; lavender is a favorite in England and France; and the Mediterranean countries enjoy saffron in their food.

Of course, not all flowers are edible—some are poisonous

either naturally or from the use of toxic chemical pesticides. Only eat flowers grown organically. Flowers from florists, nurseries and traditional garden centers should not be eaten. If your garden center is organic, eat away. If these plants have been under an organic program in a garden, they should be good to eat.

Rules for Edible Flowers and Other Plant Parts

1. Not all flowers are edible. Some are poisonous. Learn the difference.
2. Eat flowers only when you are positive they are edible and non-toxic.
3. Eat only flowers that have been grown organically.
4. Do not eat flowers from florists, nurseries or garden centers unless you know they've been maintained organically.
5. Do not eat flowers if you have hay fever, asthma or allergies.
6. Do not eat flowers growing on the side of the road.
7. Remove pistils and stamens from flowers before eating. Eat only the petals of the larger flowers.
8. Introduce flowers into your diet the way you would new foods to a baby—one at a time in small quantities.

NOTE: Pregnant women should avoid all strong herbs, and no plant should be ingested in excess by anyone at any time. Edible flowers can be used to enhance food at breakfast, lunch and dinner. They can also be used in teas.

Dirt Doctor Newsletter 2016 - Edible Flowers and More, March 3, 2016

Rebates on WaterSense Products

What is WaterSense?

WaterSense, a partnership program by the US Environmental Protection Agency, helps consumers make smart water choices that save money and maintain high environmental standards without compromising performance. Products and services that have earned the WaterSense label have been certified to be at **least 20% more efficient** without sacrificing performance.

Rebates: You may qualify for rebates on WaterSense products that will help you save money while conserving water. These programs change periodically and some have eligibility requirements, so be sure to check with the agency offering the rebate. Since you won't see your city or utility here, check the **http://www3.epa.gov/watersense/rebate_finder_saving_money_water.html** website periodically to find out if something new becomes available in your area. Many of these agencies are offering both residential and commercial rebates.

http://www.takecareoftexas.org/hidden/rebates-watersense-products#sthash.T3iY2wcg.dpuf

Earth Day Begins at Home

There are plenty of ways you can make every day Earth Day. Improve your own small part of the planet by considering these suggestions for spring-cleaning, garden preparation, and home improvements.

- Purchase non-toxic cleaning products. Use natural fiber sponges and cleaning agents that are biodegradable, phosphate-free, chlorine-free and unscented.

- Reduce paper use. Use cloth rags instead of paper towels; cloth napkins instead of paper ones. Buy post-consumer recycled paper, and recycle it when you've used it.

- Refurbish responsibly. Use water-based or vegetable-based paints, stains and varnishes. Don't wash paint thinners, household cleaners, oil or pesticides down the drain or pour them on the ground; use them up, give leftovers to friends or a charity or dispose at your local toxic waste disposal center.

- Repair instead of replace. Reupholster furniture. Resole your shoes.

- Replace disposable goods with renewable ones. Buy rechargeable batteries. Use dishes instead of paper plates.

- Plant for the planet. Strengthen your garden's resistance to pests by planting resilient plants, by rotating the fruits and vegetables you plant and by attracting friendly bugs to prey on the pesky ones.

earthshare.org/2008/09/earth-day-begin.html

FINAL WORDS . . .

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion and prejudice and tradition and delusion and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe . . . till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place which we can call reality, and say, This is . . .

Henry David Thoreau, Walden