

# Steve Simon, Partner

Fifth Group Restaurants

Atlanta, GA

*“Pioneering Zero Waste for a Restaurateur ”*



# What is Fifth Group Restaurants?

- Seven restaurants and an event and design company operating in intown Atlanta
  - **South City Kitchen**
    - Midtown and Vinings – contemporary Southern – 1993 and 2006
  - **La Tavola Trattoria**
    - Virginia Highland - neighborhood Italian (50 seats inside) – 1999
  - **Ecco**
    - Midtown - European, Esquire Magazine “Best New Restaurant” – 2006
  - **The Original El Taco**
    - Virginia Highland - loud, fun, approachable taqueria – 2008
  - **Alma Cocina**
    - Downtown - contemporary Latin cuisine – 2011
  - **Lure**
    - Midtown - sustainable seafood, Urban Design Award – 2012
  - **Bold American Events**
    - on site and off premise – 1000 events/year - 1996





# We Wanted To Start Doing More Things Right

Fall of 2008, asked to serve on Green Foodservice Alliance (GFA) Board, part of the Georgia Restaurant Association

- *Business was tough, needed something to feel positive about as a company*
- *Minimal and inconsistent recycling throughout company, no organics separation, no other initiatives in place*
- **1<sup>st</sup> step** – beginning of 2009 – mandate all spent fryer grease to be hauled by a local Bio-Diesel production and reseller
- **2<sup>nd</sup> step** – recyclables
  - *Had to locate reliable hauler and break existing contracts – neither were so easy*
  - *Immediate waste diversion/reduction of approximately 60-70% of volume*
  - *This step and all of the following steps started at one restaurant (Ecco) as a trial, then rolled out company-wide – Each step had to be proven as viable operationally and financially*
- **3<sup>rd</sup> step** – Learned about the viability of diverting organics/composting
  - *Only 1 licensed facility in the city at this time (since closed by the city) – limited haulers*
  - *Thought we determined that everything else was compostable! “Zero Waste” here we come! Not so fast...*
  - *5 tons / month per unit on average (10,000 lbs) – 800,000 lbs/400 tons a year diverted from landfill*
- **4<sup>th</sup> step** – tracking - a must! The effective way to measure your impact

**Result = First Dumpster Free Restaurant in GA**





# Challenges

- **Awareness—you won't know what it's like until you try it—lots of lessons good and bad**
  - *What can I be doing to make a difference? Ask someone – there are many resources now*
  - *How much will it cost?*
  - *What are the operational implications? Time, space, training*
  - *Can we eliminate our dumpster completely? Probably not practical at this point...*
- **Management & Staff Support**
  - *Get buy-in early from everyone – **good buy in = good results** – cannot be a one-man show*
  - *Requires consistent training and follow up for the life of the project*
- **Operational Concerns**
  - *Available Vendors/Contractors – more available now than ever*
  - *Cancelling/re-negotiating current provider contracts – can be a challenge*
  - *Space allocations – will require modifications to your current system, but do-able*
  - *Separation of Product – ongoing staff training*
  - **Share resources/equipment with neighboring businesses where possible!**





# 2014 Environmental Goals

- All of our restaurants will send as little material to landfill as possible
- Save 100,000 gallons of H2O at Lure thru our harvesting system
- Bring our last unit on board by assisting landlord in implementing separation for recycling and composting for major retail center
- Environmentally friendly extermination, cleaning & chemical program
- Evaluate recently purchased power management system and implement company wide if successful
- Air quality improvement – test “grease-lock” system for exhaust hoods to reduce chemical cleanings, water use, energy...improve quality of air exhausting
- Expand on-site gardens and use compost we create to close loop
- More local food production – support this growing industry







# Tips

- You don't have to be the *first* to make a positive impact
- You don't have to know **how** to accomplish the goal when you start
- Participate at some level
- More is better, however, some is **far better** than doing nothing
- Your impact is contagious – you won't believe the positive influence you can have on your staff, neighborhood, and industry
- DO YOUR PART! Just try...you'll be surprised how it becomes second nature...

