



Turn **it** on

Better light for a better business

By John Casadonte

It's well known that lighting in the front of an establishment, such as a restaurant, is an essential part of its brand – setting the tone for a patron's experience. But, for a commercial kitchen's back of house operations, lighting equally is as important for an effective workspace, since a typical restaurant's lights run 16 to 20 hours a day.

Better, energy-efficient light can help deliver a more profitable experience for any high-volume commercial foodservice establishment.

That's why the Welch family, owners of A&W Restaurant in Franksville, Wis., chose Cree LED lighting when rebuilding their store in a new location.

For 60 years, the Welch family operated the A&W Restaurant in Franksville, but when construction on a major highway where the restaurant was located limited accessibility for customers, Brittany Welch, site and marketing manager, set out to rebuild the restaurant in a new location. "We were lucky that there was land available on the other side of the interstate highway, so we started to rebuild," she says.



In a fast paced environment, knowing and seeing problems can prevent accidents, and the proper lighting experience does not distract or fatigue employees.

When reviewing the lighting plan for the new restaurant, Welch sought all LED technology, choosing 14 Cree Edge High Output luminaires for the parking lot, instead of the metal halide lights used in their previous lot, and 82 CR6 downlights and 22 CR24 troffers in the kitchen and dining areas.

“We didn’t go back once we started on the road with Cree,” Welch says. “They had ideas about how the restaurant could be lit and how we could save energy. Everybody was very nice, easy to communicate with and very professional.”

A&W recognized improved visibility while cooking, and with high color rendering index (CRI), Cree LED lighting helped A&W manage quality control in the kitchen while demonstrating true color quality.

Additionally, staff can move safely around the restaurant and kitchen machinery with the improved lighting. In a fast-paced environment, knowing and seeing problems can prevent accidents, and the proper lighting experience does not distract or fatigue employees.

“Previously, we had T12 lights in the kitchen – now with the Cree lights, we can see while cooking, the kitchen looks clean and the whole atmosphere is happier and crisp,” Welch says.



“My efforts in building this store are two-fold – to be economically sound with energy-efficient methods and, at the same time, to provide a modern space for the enjoyment of customers.”

– Ric Richards, McDonald’s franchise owner and operator, Cary, N.C.

Promising economics

Consuming five to seven times more energy per square foot than other commercial buildings, restaurants are energy-intensive businesses, with lighting accounting for 13 percent of total energy expenses.

In addition to offering better light quality, LED technology can cut energy consumption in half compared to traditional lighting. And, because Cree LED lighting is covered under a 10-year limited warranty and doesn’t need to be re-lamped like other solutions, commercial kitchens can save on their maintenance expenses as well.

Gone are the days of frequently having to call in electrical service companies to change lights.

Additionally, LED technology is inherently smarter than conventional light sources, offering increased opportunities for control integration to manage usage. With integrated occupancy sensors, A&W attributes Cree LED lighting to an estimated 56 percent energy savings, helping generate \$800 cost savings per month on the electric bill.

Sustainable brand experience

Many commercial restaurants also look to LED lighting as a way to build their commitment to sustainability.

On track to be the first LEED (Leadership in Energy Environmental Design) certified McDonald’s Restaurant in North Carolina, a new, more energy-efficient McDonald’s in Cary, N.C., is using LED lighting from Cree to meet both business and customer needs.

Featuring 97 percent LED lighting, the McDonald’s uses a fully automated, intelligent light system that combines high-efficiency Cree LED lighting and daylighting from Solatube skylights with a photo sensor to maintain the proper light levels on work surfaces. When compared to the standard lighting packages, this store consumes 78 percent less electricity for lighting.

“My efforts in building this store are two-fold – to be economically sound with energy-efficient methods and, at the same time, to provide a modern space for the enjoyment of customers,” says Ric Richards, franchise owner and operator. “Cree’s LED lighting products are an important element in our ability to reach our energy efficiency targets.”

Why wait?

Leading manufacturers continue to improve LED technology and design, al-

lowing managers to purchase LED lighting solutions with attractive economics and 10-year warranties, providing ease of mind when making the decision and having confidence in the products they are installing.

In fact, today, the upfront investment to switch to LED lighting is lower than one might expect and payback can be achieved in as little as one year. Many incentives and rebates also are available through utilities and government programs, accelerating payback and savings. A&W, for example, leveraged its statewide energy efficiency program, Focus on Energy, to secure rebates for their Cree LED lighting.

Whether for better working environments, or the savings, LED lighting has proven to be the best choice for new and existing spaces. The economics of LED lighting solutions have reached the point where waiting for existing technology to burn out actually decreases the potential lifetime savings.

Why wait? **CK**

John Casadonte is a vertical marketing manager at Cree, an industry leader in LED lighting for interior and exterior applications. He currently supports Cree’s Education initiative to help sustainability efforts and achieve LEED qualification for the many institutions nationwide.