

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

White Knight™ Introduces a Waste Management Solution that Saves

Microbes

By C.N. Hetzner

It's an idyllic afternoon on Captiva Island. The sun is high in a blue sky and a breeze is blowing just enough to push aside the humidity. The smells of lime juice, sautéed garlic, grilled grouper and hibiscus perfume the patio where tables of diners at The Keylime Bistro are enjoying their meals as much as the weather and Jimmy Buffett music playing through the sound system.

That perfect moment shatters when a "honey wagon" drives up and parks. The driver connects the sections of hose. The lid is popped on the septic system and the piercing shriek of the pump begins.

Restaurant goers know that good restaurants can produce memories that last forever. Restaurant owners know restaurants produce waste as much as memories. Restaurants are theater. Backstage from the show, lots of things go on that patrons don't need to think about. Waste management is one those things.

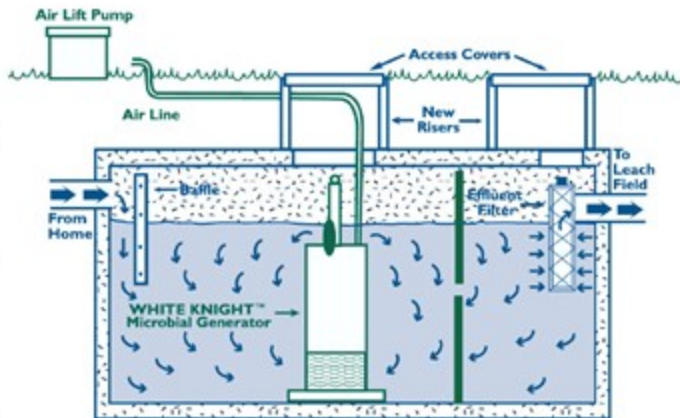
Unfortunately, for Sandy Stilwell Silverglide, owner of the Keylime Bistro as well as several other businesses in and around Captiva, the management of the waste generated by her busy seventy-five seat restaurant began to take center stage.

When Silverglide bought the restaurant in 1999, the septic system was hobbling along. Within a year pumping was being done daily at a cost of \$10,000 a month.

In 2002, a state of the art system was installed over the course of two months for \$175,000. In 2007, that system began having problems, the kinds of problems that were obvious to patrons and their noses.

Attempts were made to salvage the system. Some of those helped, but only for a short time. Mostly the system just limped along with frequent pumping and the associated costs, both financial and in reputation that accompany a failing system.

Silverglide decided things could not go on as they were. Crews Environmental of



Ft. Myers, the company that handles all of Silverglide's septic servicing, estimated it would cost \$175,000 to install a new system. With gross revenues of \$2 million, incurring a cost of that magnitude was not feasible for the owner. As an alternative, a remediation approach using a waste management bio-technology (approved for use in Florida since 2002) was recommended.

When a septic system fails the traditional solution to the problem is to start over—shut down the operation, bring in the back hoe and dump trucks, tear out the old system and begin anew. The bio-technological breakthrough of the system Silverglide installed to alleviate her problem is, simply, to use a better batch of bugs that will eat the bio-mat.

In a way, what the bio-technology does is analogous to changing from cleaning up oil spills with pumps and booms to removing the oil by adding petroleum-eating bacteria to the polluted water.

In an oil spill, the colony of bacteria flourish until the oil is consumed and then the colony

dies off from lack of food. In a septic system, the goal is to maintain a flourishing colony of bacteria because the waste just keeps coming.

Septic Preservation Services is a company that has designed and installed thousands of White Knight™ systems (like the one described) throughout New England, Hawaii and

Florida. Its president, Steve O'Connor, explains the heart of the system is in providing an oxygen-enriched environment for a colony of especially effective aerobic bacteria.

Knowing what she was doing by limping along was not only costing Silverglide a lot of money but also turning off customers due to the ever-present odor, but being faced with a replacement cost that was beyond what the



Keylime Bistro, Captiva Island.

economics of the restaurant could justify.

Silverglide decided to remediate her system with the White Knight™ bio-technology. That decision, however, was not made without serious second guessing. Silverglide's fear was

the remediation wouldn't work and that she still would have to install a new system.

The restaurant only had to close for one day. While the septic system work was being done outside the Keylime Bistro, Silverglide had workers on the inside doing painting and other delayed maintenance.

For restaurant owners, one of the ironies of providing healthier food to their customers is that some of those healthy ingredients make their waste management systems unhealthier. Older managers and owners can remember when a restaurant's traps filled quickly with greases that would solidify at relatively high temperatures.

Now, even at low temperatures, ingredients such as canola oil pass through the grease traps and flow into the waste management system.

Prior to the installation of the Keylime Bistro system, tests were taken to record the FOG (fat, oil, grease) levels along with BOD (biological oxygen demand) and TSS (total suspended solids).

Once these three variables were known, O'Connor designed a system to meet the restaurant's specific waste management needs.

In a traditional septic system, most of

the breakdown of waste takes place in an anaerobic (airless) environment. Having a low-oxygen environment limits both the kinds and efficiencies of the bio-chemical processes that are supposed to occur.

The White Knight™ system works by adding a colony of patented aerobic microbes, IOS500™, to the system and providing them with an oxygen-enriched environment. With lots of waste and lots of oxygen, the microbes confuse a restaurant's waste management system with heaven.

At the Keylime Bistro, after the old system was pumped dry, the installation began with adding oxygen to the system by installing air pumps placed in weather tight enclosures. Special columns that help to support the bacteria colony were added to the tank. A colony of IOS500™ microbes grew on each column.

As the microbial colony grows, the first effect in the waste management process is they consume more of the solids that flow into the treatment tanks.

The microbes soon begin to disperse through the entire system. When they do, they begin to eat the bio-mat barrier, which allows the treated waste water to diffuse through

the system and into the ground beneath as planned.

The remediation of Sandy Silverglide's Keylime Bistro system cost about one quarter of what a replacement system was projected to cost.

Since the remediation in early December of 2009, the system has not needed to be pumped. Prior to the remediation, 5,000 gallons of waste were being pumped weekly.

When asked about her satisfaction with the solution to the Keylime Bistro's waste management problems, Sandy Silverglide said, "I was very pleased and would use it at my other restaurants if/when that became necessary. I hope my experience would be helpful to other restaurant owners trying to manage their profits as well as their waste."

Even the most knowledgeable customer isn't likely to be aware that a portion of the perfect memories that are being made in the front of the house is because of a stream of air and a colony of very happy bacteria working at the very back of the back of the house.

C.N. Hetzner is a contributor to FRL magazine and a PR consultant for Septic Preservation Services. More information is available at www.septicpreservation.com

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