

Cuisine Solutions' sustainable sous vide

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The pandemic wreaked havoc on the passenger services industry. Occupancy rates are fluctuating, labor availability is low, ingredients and commodities markets are ever-changing, and supply chain disruptions create outages on basic materials, making it exceedingly difficult to run an operation. Transportation leaders across sectors have turned to [Cuisine Solutions](#), the global sous vide manufacturer, to ensure consistency, predictability and labor pressure relief.

The company has been helping airlines, cruises, hotels and restaurants withstand the current labor shortage. Cuisine Solutions supplies sous vide items, such as quality proteins, that food & beverage staff can then add fresh ingredients to, building a menu with multiple selections. It helps combat the staffing scarcity and reduces waste, while still ensuring delicious, nourishing food options.

Cuisine Solutions has not only been an operational aid — it is also recognized for its corporate social responsibility practices. In April, it was named *Food Engineering Magazine's* '2021 Sustainable Plant of the Year' for its sous vide processing facility in San Antonio, Texas. The facility, built in 2020, is the largest such facility in the world measuring 315,000 square feet and with nearly US\$200 million in investment.

The plant is recognized for its commitment to sustainability in design, construction, and operations. It

features solar installations, storm water management and a water recycling program.



Gerard Bertholon, Chief Strategy Officer, Cuisine Solutions

In August, *PAX International* spoke to Gerard Bertholon, Chief Strategy Officer at Cuisine Solutions, on what this accomplishment means to the sous vide manufacturer.

“Every time we build a new plant, we try to do better. It is part of our core values to continually innovate,” says Bertholon.

Cuisine Solutions has five other sous vide plants: Louviers, France; Alexandria, Virginia; Sterling, Virginia; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and, Bangkok, Thailand. It is also involved in [Emirates Cuisine Solutions](#), a joint effort by [Emirates Flight Catering](#) and Cuisine Solutions to designate a Dubai facility as the exclusive sous vide supplier in the MENA region.

But the San Antonio location is the most recognized for its sustainable practices. Cuisine Solutions tapped the development and asset management group, [Cambridge Holdings LLC](#), for the San Antonio facility after previously working together on the Sterling and Alexandria locations.

The facility features a 300-space parking lot, shaded by solar panels and available for purchase by San Antonio residents. Local residents reap the benefits of the panels without having to install them at their homes, including use of the energy and claiming a tax credit for the next 25 years.

“Water management was of the utmost importance to Cuisine Solutions when constructing the plant because it is the best medium to control the perfect cooking temperature. It’s crucial to the sous vide method and we wanted to be thoughtful about our use,” Bertholon explains.

Along with the solar panels, the parking area and roof have [bioswales](#) designed to assist with storm water runoff and remove pollution. The water runs through the bioswales, is filtered heavily and then can be reused.

A water recycling program was also developed so that water used in the sous vide cooking process is sanitized and used again for future production batches. This reduces potable water consumption by 30 percent, surpassing minimum code requirements.

“The only water that is not reused is the water for cleaning due to the use of chemicals and sanitizer,” Bertholon explains.

The manufacturing facilities are not the only aspect of Cuisine Solutions’ business model focused on sustainability. The company has been offering a range of plant-based products for years, such as fire roasted red pepper sauce, vegan Bolognese, and vegan chili.

Bertholon says some airlines are replacing meats and animal products with the plant-based equivalent to guarantee food that is fresh, consistent, and safe for passengers as it is RTE (ready to eat).

“The Thailand plant helped develop Thai-inspired plant-based meals, multiple different curry sauces, coconut oatmeal and egg bites, which are very popular,” he says. “From airlines to hotels and cruises, everybody needs a plant-based option. Some of those companies don’t have the qualification or the knowledge to create these products, so they come to us.”