

At Demo Days, you hear dish about dishes



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GANSEVOORT - Demo Days might sound like a weeklong celebration of loud engines and metal-mashing in monster-truck-rally style, but it's really a program designed to do the opposite of destroy, and that's build strong businesses through education.

Demo Days, devised and implemented in late September by Saratoga Restaurant Equipment Sales, is a series of free classes meant to give food-service professionals an

avenue for hands-on learning in industry categories ranging from equipment to health department regulations.

Dave Hummel, who owns Saratoga Restaurant with his wife, Deb, dreamed up Demo Days in an effort to give his clients - schools, restaurants and hospitals - a way to get comprehensive information from a single source at a convenient time of year.

Most food-service entities want, and need, to look into things like new equipment, timely food preparation, food safety and health regulations during these months because they just came off of a busy summer season, Hummel said. Now, with the rush winding down, they have a pretty good idea of what worked and what needs improvement.

Demo Days sessions, which are held every Tuesday, are designed to help businesses make those improvements, he said. They allow customers to see the latest oven baking their menu items, to watch food processors in action, and to get a detailed lesson on how to impress the code inspector with stellar grease traps.

While Leon Deyette, a co-owner of Mr. B's Best in Queensbury, has yet to attend a session, he has been to similar events at Saratoga Restaurant Equipment Sales in the past that he believes were extremely helpful to him and his Route 9 eatery.

"Last year, we had an oven competition where several oven companies were cooking the same menu," Deyette said. "It was fun to see the ovens working - you can't see that when you're shopping."

He found the competition so informative, in fact, that it taught him something new about a profession he has been in for three decades.

"I've been cooking roast beef for 35 years, and I learned new ways to cook roast beef!" he exclaimed, adding that he wants to attend Demo Days sessions and thinks they're a fabulous idea.

Frank Cassia, who is building a Dinner by Design in Clifton Park, agrees that Demo Days is a good idea and said it was just one more example of how dedicated Saratoga Restaurant is to providing good service to its customers.

"I went to them with my equipment list (for Dinner by Design), and they were just really great," he said. "I've never been in business before and I had a lotta questions. Them doing the whole floor plan for me - their knowledge was just invaluable."

"I'll probably hit the next (Demo Days)," Cassia added.

If You Go

The Demo Days event runs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday through March at Saratoga Restaurant Equipment Sales in Gansevoort.

Today's demo is a discussion on energy bills and government rebates.

On Oct. 24, a combination oven demo will be featured.

Oct. 31's demo features the latest vegetable slicers.

For November and December dates and topics, call Saratoga Restaurant Equipment Sales at 584-6293.