

A Chat with Nash Shivji

The owner of The BBQ Shop in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, feels strongly that being Greener is primarily about doing the right thing.

Hearth & Home: *Do you consider your business a Green company?*

Nash Shivji: “It’s important to us and we give it our best shot. We are lucky in British Columbia because the government is taking a leadership position in recycling, so there are systems in place that help us implement recycling programs. Before opening The BBQ Shop about four years ago, my family owned a hardware store and we were among the first to offer paint recycling. Now, in this store we try to do everything we can to reduce our footprint.”

Please tell us about some of your efforts to be Green.

Shivji: “We recycle all cardboard, pop cans, water bottles and printer cartridges. We print fewer copies and use email more. Our thermostats are on a timer and temperatures are set lower in winter in the store. Deliveries and pick-ups are coordinated by geographical area to reduce trips and conserve fuel. We use low-flow faucets and we carpool to work.”

Have you done anything to specifically make your barbecue business Greener?

Shivji: “We try to recycle the old grill whenever a customer buys a new one. When we sell a grill, we try to sell a service in which we assemble and deliver the new grill and retrieve the old one. We take the old grills back to our store and a scrap metal business comes around to collect them. We do this with old parts, too. It keeps them out of the landfill.

“Sometimes we find a new use for the old grills we pick up. For instance, we took back an old classic Weber Performer (gas-ignition charcoal kettle grill) and put it on display to show customers how long it lasts. We took the insides out of an old Broilmaster grill, cleaned it up and now use it to display chicken roasters with boxes piled up inside.”

Is the fact that you recycle grills and parts important to your customers?

Shivji: “Many times a customer will come into our store looking for parts or a new grill and they tell us they bought their old grill at a Big Box store. It might only be a year, or year-and-a-half old, but we are unable to get parts to fix it. When they realize it will have to go to a landfill, they are very unhappy.

“We try to educate them that buying a quality, long-lasting product has less impact on the environment. Humans will never have a zero footprint on the Earth, but we can minimize it. Once the customer understands that idea, it becomes important to them.”

So would you say that your customers are willing to pay more to be environmentally responsible?

Shivji: “No, ultimately it’s price or value that most influences the purchase decision. Our staff tells customers, ‘If you buy a grill for \$1,000 and use it for 10 years, it costs you \$100 a year. But if you buy a grill for \$200 and it lasts only one year, it costs you \$200 a year.’ When you break it down to cost per year, it’s very convincing.

“We teach customers that the additional benefit of buying quality is a reduction of grills going to the landfill, less fuel and pollution from shipping, and less cardboard packaging and other waste than would be generated by buying a new grill every couple of years.”

Does your desire to be environmentally responsible impact the selection of products you carry in your store?

Shivji: “We look for good quality products with long warranties and, whenever possible, try to buy locally. It’s not always possible, but we try. We are selling more and more North American-made products for that reason –

they are better quality so they last longer before heading to a landfill, and don’t need to be shipped from China so they have an environmental advantage in that respect. When a supplier has two lines – one made in North America and one made in China – we try to carry the one made in North America.

“Besides grills, we try to carry other products that are Greener choices. For instance, some barbecue cleaners are caustic, but we carry only non-toxic, non-corrosive cleaners that would not cause a problem for the environment, even if they run off into the soil.

“With grill covers, we look for products that are

North American made and have the longest warranties. Even if it costs more initially, it’s less expensive in the long run and won’t end up in a landfill after one season. It takes a lot of explanation and salesmanship to teach this to customers, but so many times they thank us for explaining and helping them understand the issues better.”

Do you promote or advertise the fact that you are striving to be Green?

Shivji: “No, we have not done that, but I think we should. It’s becoming more and more of an issue. When we were filling out the (*Hearth & Home Green Survey*) our staff started to think about all the things we do, and we came up with a pretty substantial list. I think we will begin to promote what we are doing to be Green on our Web site.”

Do you think that would benefit your business?

Shivji: “If everybody does the right thing, it will come back to us tenfold and we’ll all benefit. It’s not just about making a sale and a quick profit. It’s about doing the right thing.” 



Nash Shivji.