



SPOTLIGHT ON... WILLAMETTE VALLEY FRUIT COMPANY

AT A GLANCE

Willamette Valley Fruit Company
2994 82nd Ave NE
Salem, OR 97305
503.362.8857
www.wvfco.com

Willamette Valley Fruit Company believes in taking care of the environment.

FIRST, THEY REDUCE WASTE: All of the fruit grown for them finds a place in pies, juices or freezer bags, and water that has been used to clean fruit is used for irrigation. But in two particular areas, the company has proved that greening a business saves money.

HERE'S HOW: Energy reduction: A new cooling system and high-speed roll-up doors for the freezer means the company saves more than \$12,000 a year on energy costs. Efficient lights in the processing plant save about \$2,300 a year in energy costs.

RECYCLING: Recycling aluminum cans during the busy pumpkin pie season pays about twice what it costs for the special collection container for those cans. Cardboard recycling has saved \$58,000 since 2005.

EARTHWISE: Willamette Valley Fruit Company was originally certified in 2008.



Where there is fruit, there is bound to be pie, juice and preserves.

And where there is fruit production, there is bound to be waste.

But Willamette Valley Fruit Company (WVFC) has been able to turn their waste into profit time and again. From reusing water and recycling pumpkin cans to sealing cool air in the freezer and switching to high-efficiency lighting, the company has proven that good environmental decisions are also good business decisions.

The fruit processing plant is surrounded by acres of fields devoted to fruit growing. There are between 30 and 40 growers in a 15-mile radius around the company.

This means one thing: lots and lots of fruit. Millions of pounds are processed at WVFC in the summer.

Top-quality fruit is quick-frozen; lesser-quality fruit is packaged for yogurt, ice cream fillings and juice concentrates.

Most of that fruit must be washed, which means the use of gallons and gallons of water. Instead of just sending it to a drain, the used water is pumped to pits where debris is filtered and the water is then used to irrigate farmers' fields near the plant. More than 400,000 gallons of water is applied to the land after filtration each year.

Clean fruit must be frozen quickly or risk the decline in taste. During the busy summer months when berries are harvested all day long, forklifts are constantly moving in and out of the freezer, stacking fruit. "We try to freeze fruit within 24 hours of picking it—to lock in the taste and freshness," said Derek Imig, inventory and logistics manager.

The old walk-in warehouse cooler had two garage doors and an old cooling system

with fans and compressors. To load up all the fruit during the day, workers had to keep both doors open a lot. The fans were constantly running to keep a 30-degree temperature inside while it was 90-degrees outside.



In spring 2012, Willamette Valley Fruit Company replaced the cooling system in the freezer, which saved the company 60 percent on energy costs. They then replaced the garage doors with high-speed roll-up doors that operate with a motion sensor. The sensor opens

the door when a forklift approaches and immediately closes it to seal in the cool air. With an Energy Trust of Oregon incentive, WVFC will see payback from their investment after just more than a year—with energy savings of more than \$12,000 a year.

Two years earlier, the company replaced the energy inefficient lights in the processing plant with efficient halogen bulbs. It was an almost \$10,000 project—with a \$2,628 Energy Trust of Oregon incentive—and the switch means \$2,304 in energy savings each year.

A second round of lighting efficiencies in the stores, offices and warehouse saves \$1,072 a year in energy costs. That project cost \$3,284 with the Energy Trust of Oregon incentive.

"So much of what you can do to reduce your carbon footprint turns out to work out financially," he said. "You are probably



Willamette Valley Fruit Company makes 24 different kinds of 9-inch pies.

SPOTLIGHT ON WILLAMETTE VALLEY FRUIT COMPANY



Automatic high-speed roll-up doors allow for easier access for forklifts loading and unloading fruit and pies, but keeps the cooler at its 30-degree temperature. Willamette Valley Fruit Company expects the doors to save more than \$12,000 a year in energy costs.

going to save a lot of money by becoming EarthWISE certified."

Nowhere is that more true for WVFC than in its recycling program.

In the winter, the company packs mushrooms for a company in Pennsylvania. Millions of mushrooms arrive from Canada and California in hundreds of cardboard boxes each week. Add those to the cardboard boxes used for baking supplies in the company's pie kitchen and other fruit that arrives in 35-pound boxes, and the cardboard could easily create a mountain taller than the warehouse. The company's garbage hauler, Pacific Sanitation, leaves a huge cardboard compactor at WVFC, and then takes the compacted cardboard to Garten Services. Garten offers the company a credit for recycling the cardboard: \$14,420 in 2011 alone. Since 2005, WVFC has saved \$58,060 just for recycling their cardboard. And since



Derek Imig, inventory and logistics manager

2007, more than 1.3 million pounds of cardboard have been recycled.

In the fall, the company's pie bakers crank out special runs of pumpkin pies for the upcoming holidays. Thousands of aluminum cans are placed in Pacific Sanitation's 30-yard box and taken to Cherry City Metal. The money WVFC gets for the scraped aluminum pays Pacific Sanitation for the rental of the box. In 2011, the \$409 credit for recycling the cans paid for the box plus an additional \$215 to WVFC.

The pie bakers also use milk like a gardener uses water. Pie makers could fill a 90-gallon rollcart with milk cartons in one day. Those are now crushed so as to not fill the rollcarts so quickly because WVFC has to pay the garbage hauler for each of the rollcarts.

Excess food waste, another byproduct of a busy pie kitchen, is placed in a food cart delivered by Pacific Sanitation. All old fruit, coffee grounds, and other food waste from the store end up in the cart. In the summer, Pacific Sanitation dumps the cart in WVFC's own compost area. In other seasons, Pacific Sanitation takes it to a food composting facility.

Willamette Valley Fruit Company pursued EarthWISE certification because it fit perfectly with many of the actions the company was already doing.

"We do it because it is the right thing to do," said Derek. "We want to take care of what God has given us."



During pumpkin pie season, Willamette Valley Fruit Company recycles aluminum cans by the dumpster-load.



Much of the company's recycling efforts are related to pie production. From aluminum cans for pumpkin pie filling to milk cartons, the pie kitchen uses a lot of recyclables. Willamette Valley Fruit Company has found a way to make recycling generate revenue.

EarthWISE Certification
Willamette Valley Fruit Company was originally certified in 2008 and is one of five EarthWISE food manufacturing companies in Marion County.



WANT TO DO THIS AT YOUR BUSINESS?

Marion County's EarthWISE program can help. Visit mcEarthwise.net, call 503.365.3188 or email Earthwise@co.marion.or.us