



Hold the Salt

By Tom Cartwright

RO treatment system provides high-quality water for better ice

Nearly everyone involved in the restaurant industry has an interesting experience to tell. One such situation occurred in the northeastern U.S., in a town where serious water contamination issues were found in the municipal water (and were later immortalized in the John Travolta film, “A Civil Action”). A customer walked into a local restaurant years after the situation was resolved. When the customer approached the counter, the following dialogue took place:

CUSTOMER: Can I have a glass of water?

EMPLOYEE: Sure. *He hands the customer a glass of water.*

CUSTOMER: Are we in Woburn?

EMPLOYEE: Yes.

CUSTOMER: Oh, so is this, uh, Woburn water?

EMPLOYEE: Yes.

CUSTOMER: Didn't this stuff kill people?

EMPLOYEE: That was years ago.

CUSTOMER: No, I think it was very recent.

EMPLOYEE: No, the movie was just released very recently. The water's fine now.

CUSTOMER: I'd rather not take my chances. Can I get a bottle of water instead with a cup of ice?

EMPLOYEE: You know where ice comes from, right?

CUSTOMER: Huh?

EMPLOYEE: Never mind. Enjoy. *He hands him the bottle of water and cup of ice made from Woburn water.*

Restaurant Recovery

On the western end of Las Vegas, approximately 15 minutes from the Las Vegas Strip, exists a commercial area called Village Square, filled with retail shops, a movie theater and several bars and restaurants.

Until 2008, the area thrived as a hub for local entertainment, but after the economic crash that year, it fell hard from the effects of the recession, with more than 50% of the local establishments closing down.

As the economy has begun to revive, so has Village Square. The

parking area is being redone, and several new stores and restaurants have recently opened. One new restaurant is Chinita Mexican Bar and Grill, which opened in December 2012.

By providing an atmosphere that feels like a home away from home, Chinita owner Chantry Walsh hopes to bring together residents and visitors from the melting pot of Las Vegas for a memorable dining experience. The restaurant serves traditional specialties, such as carne asada tacos, veggie enchiladas and fajitas, plus special fare, like camarones al mojo de ajo and chipotle baby back ribs.

Chinita is Walsh's second restaurant in Las Vegas. Her other restaurant, Sonrisa, opened in the Lake Mead development in eastern Las Vegas, in an area hardest hit by the economy.

RO System Installation

In 2007, in an attempt to improve the overall customer experience at Sonrisa, Walsh purchased a point-of-entry (POE) reverse osmosis (RO) system to treat the water for the entire



Chinita offers traditional Mexican fare and margaritas, which benefit from better-tasting ice.

restaurant. In her plans for Chinita, she opted to do the same.

For the new restaurant, she wanted a system that could keep the dishes and glassware spot-free, while also providing clear ice and clean drinking water for customers. Of particular importance to her was serving her signature margaritas with the best ice possible.

The location already had an older commercial water softener in place to treat hot water, but nothing for the cold-water appliances. Rather than having the water softener repaired and adding banks of individual filters for soda, tea, ice and drinking water—which would have required four sets of filter banks to accommodate each beverage station—Walsh opted to install another POE RO system to treat both hot and cold water.

Due to the plumbing and appliances layout, it was necessary to pre-plumb all of the lines prior to the restaurant's opening. This involved finding the main incoming water line, which was located in the far southwest corner of the building, next to the water heater.

Once it was located, a manual three-way bypass was installed. From the bypass, a 1-in. feed line of PEX tubing was run through the ceiling (this location has drop-in ceiling tiles), from the water heater to the RO system. The total distance was just less than 100 ft. When the 1-in. feed line was run from the main to the RO system, an additional 3/4-in. line was run from the RO system to the water heater. This line was installed to feed RO water to the heater.

Next, the RO system was installed. Because this was a new restaurant, space had been made available to accommodate the 24-by-24-by-42-in. RO system,

as well as the 29-in.-diameter, 300-gal storage tank.

Once the RO system was installed, individual 1/2-in. water lines were run, again above the ceiling tiles, to the ice machine and beverage stations.

This particular system was designed to produce, on average, 1,400 gal per day of RO-treated water, with the 300-gal tank holding enough water to support the restaurant's peak water usage periods. Once the system was up and running, it was able to reduce the incoming total dissolved solids from 650 mg/L to 55 mg/L.

The benefits are substantial:

- The restaurant now has "bottled-quality water" for all of its customers, as well as crystal-clear ice cubes.
- The glassware, dishes and silverware come out spot free and do not need any additional wiping. The restaurant requires only a minimal amount of rinse aid for the dishwashing machine.
- The margaritas taste like an authentic margarita should—without an aftertaste that can come from untreated ice.
- The total annual system service is \$250. Had Walsh opted for the water softener and filters, the annual service cost for salt and replacement filters would have been closer to \$1,500.

Along with the benefits of the purified water, the ice is just as nice. *wqp*

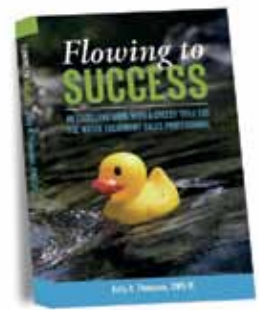
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