

KNOW YOUR 3 Rs

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Make the World Greener

One caterer that made the transition successfully is Limelight Food Illuminated in Chicago. "We always tried to operate with the best possible environmental focus," says Rita Gutekanst, a principal with Limelight who sits on The Green City Market's board, Chicago's only organic market. Being on the board made the decision to go green a "no brainer" for the catering company, she adds. Gutekanst has more than 20 years in the foodservice industry. During the that time, she has built a reputation as a leader and innovator. After working at several restaurants early in her career, she launched Rita's Catering in 1990, but changed the name two years ago. With business partner Marguerite Lytle, Limelight has become one of Chicago's premiere caterers. "When we changed the name, we also formally developed the organic side of the business," Gutekanst says. "Ultimately, it was client driven." The company's Web site specifically mentions the change stating: "We believe that good healthful food forges a bond between all those who share it, connecting us to the earth and enriching our experience. We insist that ingredients be in peak condition. In fact, it's not unusual to find us with any one of the local growers, selecting culinary delights for your next catered affair." Gutekanst says the change caused no problems, but she admits there were some challenges. "Local and sustainable food in the middle of the winter in Chicago is a challenge,



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LIMELIGHT



Food illuminated

but we have so many wonderful contacts with growers, that they all do whatever they can to network and help," she says. "There are a lot of root vegetables in the winter, so serving salads, soups and roasted vegetables along with grass-fed beef, organic chicken or fish and organic bread make a great meal," Gutekanst says. "All our menus are seasonal anyway. Our pastry department has developed wonderful desserts and we work with a local organic bakery." Also helping out are a number of local farmers who operate green hot houses, Gutekanst says. One matter that is important in the move to being green is to accept the image that the company only serves health food. Fortunately, the perception is not long lasting. "I think the perception is less and less the case as time goes by," Gutekanst says. She also says that in the two years that Limelight has gone green, business has remained strong. "there has been a lot of growth in our organic line," She says. "We do need to be careful with our costs; organic is still more expensive to produce. Hopefully that will change, but we have the clientele to support it. Our clients think that what we are doing is great."

