

## ON THE ROCKS, HOLD THE SALT

Nearly everyone involved in the restaurant industry has some interesting experience to tell. One such situation occurred in the eastern United States, in a town where serious water contamination issues had been found with the city water. 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 ice made from Woburn water*

On the western end of Las Vegas, approximately fifteen minutes from the famous Las Vegas Strip, exists a commercial section, named Village Square that was filled with retail shops, a movie theater, along with several locally appreciated bars and restaurants. Up until 2008, this area of Las Vegas thrived as a hub for local entertainment, yet after the housing crash that year, this area fell hard from the effects of the recession, with over 50% of the local establishments closing their doors.

As the economy has begun to revive, so has Village Square. The entire parking area is in the process of being redone, and several new stores and restaurants have recently opened their doors. One new restaurant of note is Chinita Mexican Bar and Grill. Chinita's opened in

December, 2012. With an atmosphere that feels like home away from home, Chinita Mexican Bar & Grill and its owner Chanthy Walsh hope to bring residents and visitors from the melting pot of Las Vegas together for a memorable dining experience. Here you will find traditional specialties such as carne asada tacos, veggie enchiladas, sizzling fajitas and special fare as the famous camarones al mojo de ajo and chipotle baby back ribs. For Ms. Walsh, Chinita's represents her 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.

In 2007, in an attempt to improve the overall customer experience at Sonrisa, Ms. Walsh purchased a point of entry reverse osmosis system to treat the water for her entire restaurant. As she began planning to open Chinita's, she opted to do the same. At Chinita's, she was looking for a system that was able to keep her dishes and glassware spot-free, while also providing clear ice and clean drinking water for her customers. Of particular importance to her was to serve her signature margaritas with the best ice possible.

The location already had an older commercial water softener in place to treat the hot water, but no water treatment for any of the cold water appliances. Rather than have the water softener repaired and adding banks of individual filters for her soda, tea, ice and drinking water – which would have required four sets of filter banks to accommodate each beverage station, Chanty opted to have another point of entry reverse osmosis system installed to treat all the hot water as well as all the cold water using appliances.

Due to the layout of the plumbing and the locations of the appliances, it was necessary to preplumb all the lines prior to the restaurant opening. This involved finding the main incoming water line, which in this case was located in the far southwest corner of the building next to the water heater. Once located, a manual three way bypass was installed. From the bypass, a one inch feed line of Pex tubing was run through the ceiling (this location has a drop-in ceiling tiles), from the water heater to the area where the reverse osmosis system was to be located. The total distance was just under 100 feet. At the same time the one inch feed line was run from the main to the RO system location, an additional three quarter inch line was run from the location of the RO system back to the water heater. This line was to feed RO water to the water heater.

Next the RO system was installed. Because this was a new restaurant, space had already been made available to accommodate the 24" x 24" x 42" RO system as well as the 29" diameter 300 gallon storage tank.

Once the RO system was installed, individual ½" water lines were run, again above the ceiling, to the ice machine and beverage stations.

This particular system was designed to produce on average 1400 gallons per day of reverse osmosis treated water, with the 300 gallon tank holding enough water to support the

restaurants peak water usage times. Once the system was up and running, it was able to reduce the incoming TDS from 650 milligrams per liter down to 55 milligrams per liter. The benefits to Chinita's were substantial.

- The restaurant now had "bottled-quality water" for all of their customers, as well as crystal clear ice cubes.
- The glassware, dishes and silverware came out spot free and did not need any additional wiping, and resulted in the restaurant requiring only minimal amounts of rinse aid at the dishwashing machine.
- Chinita's margaritas taste like an authentic margarita should without the aftertaste that can come from untreated ice.
- Their total annual system service is \$250, where had she opted for the water softener and filters that annual service 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.

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