



AQUA BAN AT N.Y. HOT SPOTS

BOTTLED WATER IS SO OVER

By SUSANNAH CAHALAN

A dozen city restaurants and hotels have declared bottled water politically incorrect and are bouncing it from their premises – so get ready to pay for tap water.

At the Waverly Inn, a hot spot for boldface names in Greenwich Village, bottled water is being nixed in about two months.

It's already 86'd at Il Buco, Mario Batali's Del Posto, Gemma in the Bowery Hotel, Bobo, Gusto Organics and Broadway East.

Even the Park Slope Food-Co-op will vote later this month on banning bottled water from their shelves and hawking filters and reusable thermoses instead.

These green-thinking foodies are faced with the fact that it takes 41 million barrels of oil a year to make, transport and refrigerate water bottles, and that a crushing 30 million plastic water containers end up in landfills each day.

But both plastic and glass bottles are going.

Instead, places like The Waverly Inn will begin offering politically correct pints on the menu.

"It just seems simple and painless," said Sean MacPherson, an owner of Waverly Inn and Gemma.

Waverly will serve flat tap water for free, and charge \$5 per glass for its homemade, specially treated sparkling water from the tap – as MacPherson does at Gemma.

"I don't see why we wouldn't do it," MacPherson said. "It helps out the environment and tastes good."

At Per Se, a filtration system was installed in January. Though its house-brand is purified tap water, the restaurant still offers bottled varieties. All non-alcoholic drinks at Per Se are free of charge.

Growth of bottled-water sales was just 6 percent last year, down from 9 percent in 2006, while sales of filtration and purification systems are skyrocketing. Filter maker Brita reported double-digit sales growth last year, and competitor Natura Water's sales surged more than 100 percent in the last six months.

Grand Hyatt Hotel's Commodore Grill & Lounge in Midtown banned bottled water on Feb. 20. It sells triple-purified flat or carbonated tap water – using Natura filters from Italy – for \$6. It's part of a 60-day trial at four Hyatt hotels around the country.

"The hotel is going through a 'green' process," said Commodore's restaurant manager Jerome Pagnier.

The Marriott Downtown has also jumped on the bandwagon. The hotel installed a filtration system in its Roy's restaurant but still offers bottled water for now. By summer, the filtration system will be hotel-wide.

"We still give people some choice," said Anthony Mardach, director of Marriott's New York restaurants. "But people love it and no one says, 'How dare you charge me for tap water!' "

"We're making an effort to reduce waste today for a greener tomorrow," added Mardach.

Filtration systems range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 – and some companies rent them for \$400 to \$500 per month.

Italian mainstay Il Buco has disdained bottled water for a decade.

"Bottled water is a farce," owner Donna Lennard laughed. "You have no idea of its true source. And when you take into account how

much damage is done just making and transporting these bottles, it's incredible."

Boardrooms and bureaucrats are also doing without. Goldman Sachs recently cut bottled water perks from its offices, JP Morgan Chase installed purification systems, and the Suffolk County legislature passed a bill barring the use of taxpayer money to buy water in servings of a liter or less in government offices.

The city recently spent \$700,000 on ads urging New Yorkers to drink from the tap.