

Water Dispensing/Purification Systems a Viable, Profitable Alternative to Single-Use Plastic, Glass Bottles

9/7/2011 By Glenn Hasek



NATIONAL REPORT—The carbon footprint of single-use plastic and glass bottled water containers is huge. Consider the raw materials that go into the bottles, the manufacturing of the bottles themselves, the transportation of the bottles and finally, their disposal (only 20 percent of plastic bottles and 28 percent of glass bottles are ever recycled). Fortunately, many vendors are now making it easy to eliminate most of the carbon footprint of bottled water—thanks to on-site water purification and dispensing systems that incorporate reusable, branded glass bottles. Some restaurants are even charging upwards of \$10 for the premium water that is bottled on-site, fattening the revenue stream for bottled beverages.

While water from on-site purification systems is primarily being used in restaurants, it is also being used for room service and in meeting rooms. According to David Flanders, director of marketing and business development, AquaHealth, Inc., some hotel owners are looking at providing on-site bottled and purified water in guestrooms. Hydration stations on each floor are also being considered. Guests would fill their own reusable sports bottles. There would be a one time fee for the sports bottle. Hotels could put their own branding on the sports bottle. Flanders says some of his customers are trying to figure out how to eliminate all single-use plastic and glass water bottles from their properties.

While some vendors have been supplying water purification/dispensing systems for upwards of 20 years or longer, some are just beginning to offer the systems. Purification/filtration technology varies from one company to the next with some using reverse osmosis and some not. Most companies provide the glass bottles with their own brand(s) to use for the water, and most companies offer the option of private labeling the bottled water. Purchasing and leasing options are typically available and some companies prefer leasing their systems so that they can maintain them (and water quality) more easily. There are some labor issues to consider—washing the bottles, for example—but there should be no net gain in labor costs when compared to ordering, handling and disposing/recycling single-use bottles.

Different Water Options



Some vendors offer not only purified, chilled water but also sparkling water and flavored water options as well. Apiqe (formerly Aeterna Water), for example, offers “bag in a box” mixes to create juices, multivitamin drinks, iced teas, mixers, and fruit drinks. Dispensers from all vendors listed below come in different sizes and require a water line, AC outlet and, if sparkling water is produced, a CO2 connection and tank.

The following are descriptions of the systems currently being offered by some of the leading bottling system providers:

[Vero Water LLC](#)—Vero uses a seven step reverse osmosis purification system with its still and sparkling bottling systems. The company’s systems are available for purchase, lease, or “pay by liter served.” Models are available for small restaurants and bistros up to large hotels, resorts, cafeterias and industrial kitchens. The company’s largest system can dispense up to 68 liters an hour. Vero supplies bottles and can add a property’s logo on the bottles.



Vero is co-owned by Joshua Kunis and David Deshe. “Vero works in all tiers of restaurants,” Kunis says. “Because Vero is a brand, we prefer to work with a lease agreement. We take care of the filter and reverse osmosis membrane. It gives us more control of the product.”

Food service establishments working with Vero serve Vero branded water, a business model Deshe says results in the establishment getting the highest price point for its water.

“We have quite a few hotels that are using it for room service,” Deshe adds. “You need to educate the hotel guest that it is an environmentally friendly system.”

Kunis, who has been running Vero Water with Deshe for about two years, says the trend to serve on-site bottled and purified water is rapidly growing. “There has been tremendous interest from leading hotel and restaurant brands,” he says.

Riley Philips, sales and event coordinator at the Eden Roc Renaissance Hotel, says he has been using a Vero system at the hotel’s 1500 Degrees restaurant since the restaurant opened. Guests are made aware of the water’s \$2.00 per glass price at the bottom of the menu. Associates serve Vero branded water with the hotel’s logo on the bottles.

Two Brands from AquaHealth

[AquaHealth, Inc.](#)—AquaHealth has been in the business of providing its “Earth Friendly Bottled Water” since 1992. “Our goal is to minimize or eliminate one-time-use glass bottles,” the company’s David Flanders says. AquaHealth’s dispensers provide purified chilled or sparkling water in 1 liter bottles that can either be branded Vivante (for fine dining) or AquaHealth for other restaurants, catering or banquets. Bottles can also be private labeled.

Flanders explained that the type of filtration system used in AquaHealth’s dispensers depends on the total dissolved solids in the water. Some regions may require reverse osmosis (to remove solids) while others may not. Preset buttons on the front of AquaHealth dispensers make it easy to dispense predetermined quantities of water.

In regard to bottle maintenance, Flanders says some of AquaHealth’s customers use storage racks to transport bottles within a facility. Bottles are inverted as they go through dishwashing machines. “Don’t wash the bottles during a food cycle,” he says. “There may be occasions when you need to use a bottle brush.”

AquaHealth offers different flavor choices and provides lease rental and lease purchase programs. “Our leasing programs are all-inclusive,” Flanders says.

Vivreau’s Space Saving Mini Bottler



[Vivreau USA](#)—In business for more than 20 years, Vivreau USA's Table Water Bottling System comes with an attractively designed carafe style bottle. The bottles are available in 425 ml and 750 ml sizes. The company's Mini Bottler is one of several systems the company offers and features a space saving design.

“The installation of a Table Water Bottling System, with reusable designer glass bottles for pure chilled still and sparkling water, has an immediate and dramatic impact on a client's carbon footprint,” the company's website says.

According to Marc Herman, president of Vivreau USA, on each bottle the company provides it includes a message stating, "Our environmentally positive water is helping reduce your carbon footprint."

Vivreau only rents its systems. The company takes care of the filter changes and will imprint a hotel's logo on the bottles.

Herman says some hotels are using his company's filtered water for turndown service.

"We have restaurants that sell from \$2 unlimited to \$10 a bottle," he says. "It has to make financial sense for everyone."

[pura vida h2o](#)—Unlike other companies, pura vida h2o's systems are built for public access and can accept credit cards and other payment options. Clients share in the profits of water sales. Like other companies, pura vida h2o uses a multi-tier purification process.

[Natura Water, LLC](#)—Natura Water's systems provide chilled still and sparkling water while using a three-step purification process. Glass bottles are available in various sizes with the Natura logo. Many hotels are currently using Natura Water including the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza (Los Angeles) and Renaissance Hollywood Hotel.

Also be sure to check out [Apiqe](#) (formerly Aeterna Water).

For information on certifications and standards for drinking water treatment units, [click here](#).

For additional information on water filtration methods, see the Appendix at the end of chapter four of the recently released [Greening Food and Beverage Services](#).

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It's Time to Eliminate Single-Use Bottles from Your Property

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Have you kicked the bottled water habit yet? If you run a hotel that has a restaurant, meeting space and that also offers room service, you definitely need to consider a water

filtration/dispensing system to eliminate single-use plastic and glass bottled water. I learned about filtration/dispensing systems the last couple of weeks ([see article](#)) and highly recommend them. There are a number of vendors that supply these systems; the systems are available in different sizes. Typically, glass bottles are provided with either the vendor's logo or a hotel property's logo. When using a water filtration/dispensing system you can charge for premium bottled water (from \$2 to \$10 a bottle). Imagine that—actually making money while dramatically helping the environment at the same time! A no-brainer.

According to pura vida h2o, 1.5 million barrels of oil, enough to run 100,000 cars, are used to make plastic water bottles each year. It requires seven times as much water to make the bottle as it does to fill it. Massive amounts of greenhouse gases are produced from manufacturing plastic bottles, and 60 million plastic water bottles are disposed of in the United States alone every day. Yikes!

There are operational considerations that come into play when leasing or purchasing a water filtration/dispensing system. My advice would be to let the vendor take care of maintenance as part of any signed agreement. Reusable bottles must be washed so you will have to establish a process for doing that. Some vendors offer bottles with narrow openings; I would recommend opting for bottles with wider openings to ensure a good washing. You don't want customers complaining about the cleanliness of your bottles.

Great Branding Opportunity

Whether or not to private label your water is up to you but it seems to me it is a great opportunity to strengthen your own brand. Be creative. Vivreau USA includes a green message on the bottles that it provides. It reads: "Our environmentally positive water is helping reduce your carbon footprint." A great idea. You may also opt to keep the vendor's brand on your bottles. While I don't believe these brands have yet to reach national recognition, they do sound luxurious—Vivante, Natura, etc.

Let's assume you have taken the step to eliminate single-use plastic and glass bottled water from restaurants and meeting spaces, and you are already providing filtered water as a room service/turndown service option. Think about how you can replace any remaining disposable water bottles from your guestroom floors. It can be done. One vendor I spoke with said one of his customers is considering hydration stations for each floor. A guest would purchase a reusable sports bottle and just fill it up when thirsty. A reusable bottle would present another branding opportunity for your property and give you yet one more way to generate additional revenue.

The water filtration/dispensing systems I described are already being used at many hotels around the world. Be sure to ask vendors for references. If you are already using one or more of these systems, I would love to hear from you about your experiences. I can be reached at (440) 243-2055 or by e-mail at editor@greenlodgingnews.com.