

Turning Restaurant Food Scraps Into Fuel



[By Nannette Miranda](#)

Oct. 24 - KGO - If you're done eating dinner, don't take out the garbage yet. Those table scraps you were about to throw out could help curb the state's appetite for new energy sources. U.C. Davis researchers unveiled technology today that is turning leftovers into fuel.

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Next time you go out to eat, your leftovers and extra scraps from the restaurant's kitchen could be used to make electricity and fuel. Really! And why not? Californians throw away over 500 million tons of food in landfills every year.

Prof. Ruihong Zhang, Ph.D., U.C. Davis Scientist: "We can harness a lot of value from those materials that are causing environmental public health problems."

Dr. Ruihong Zhang developed the process. Organic waste is put into this digester, where naturally occurring bacteria breaks it down into energy. With a flip of a switch, the energy powers a generator that inflates these giant figures.

One bin holds about a ton of scraps. One ton can make enough energy to power 10 homes a day. That could help the state's already overstressed power grid and reduce the need for polluting power plants.

Adding other kinds of bacteria can produce natural gas, creating methane that can power vehicles like city busses.

Researchers say table scraps could one day power fuel cell cars.

Dave Konwinski, Onsite Power Systems CEO: "You take this technology and you implement it. You could probably reduce the state's dependency on petroleum by 20 percent with just the waste we have."

Konwinski bought the first license and hopes to have the first system in place in a matter of months. Each costs between \$1 million and \$10million dollars to build, depending on the size. He expects the investment to pay off in about three years.

Meanwhile, you can eat and feel good about it.

Charles Phan, The Slanted Door Restaurant: "Spiritually, we feel good about not throwing away all the stuff down the drain."



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