

# The New Age of Fro-Yo

Frozen-yogurt maker sno:la takes a walk on the green side

By Samantha Murphy

**T**here's a new kid in town called sno:la that specializes in all-natural frozen yogurt. But what really distinguishes the fledgling company, which opened its first location in September, in Beverly Hills, Calif., is the way in which it encompasses healthy living from the inside out.

The store's interior is constructed almost entirely from recycled materials. The silver-speckled counter is made from recycled computer chips and the walls are made with recycled wood, which is covered in artwork made from soy paint. The floor is made of concrete that has also been stained with soy paint. Due to be installed in the next few months: solar panels that will power some of the store's yogurt machines.

Although sno:la is living green with ease, founder Masako Kawashima said the company initially faced challenges with its design process.

"There were limited choices available," she explained. "It was difficult to find the right materials for the right purpose, while making it cost-efficient. But we kept on trying and didn't lose faith in what we wanted to do."

Sno:la contacted Sat Garg, of Akar Studios, Santa Monica, Calif., a specialist in ecological architecture, to help design the store. However, the company soon learned that the eco-friendly materials it had selected cost about 20% to 30% more than regular ones.

But the added expenses were worth it, said Kawashima, noting that sno:la's customers appreciate its green underpinnings. "The best is when we hear them talking about how they want to start using similar ecological materials," she added.

Sno:la features biodegradable cups, spoons and glasses. Its yogurt cups are made of sugar cane, the spoons are made of either wood or potato, and the glasses are made of corn—all compostable products. The store tries to avoid using plastic items, and most of its paper goods are made of recycled paper. It also sells reusable insulated bags that allow cus-



Recycled materials and sustainable solutions play an integral role in the design and operation of sno:la.

tomers to bring large quantities of frozen yogurt back home without melting.

Sno:la has received a warm reception from customers so far, according to Kawashima. "One small yogurt store might not change much, but we hope we're on to something bigger," she said. "We hope to continue to raise awareness."

Sno:la also supports sustainable farming. The shop uses only organic and non-fat yogurt and milk, and organic and sustainable fruits and toppings. Plus, it donates a percentage of its proceeds to SLOW Food and to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

Moving forward, Sno:la is looking to form partnerships with other companies that have similar green goals. More stores are also in the works, with the company in talks to expand into Hawaii and Japan in spring 2008.

"We plan to open two to three stores within the next four months," Kawashima said, adding that sno:la has already had a few location offers. "We'd like to start expanding into warmer cities, like those in the South, that would appreciate chilled frozen yogurt year-round. But we eventually want to move into many major nationwide cities."

Sno:la is owned by JEC Inc., the largest concert promotion company in Japan, along with Randy Phillips, CEO of AEG Live, a subsidiary of Anschutz Entertainment Group and one of the leading providers of live entertainment and sports in the world. ■