

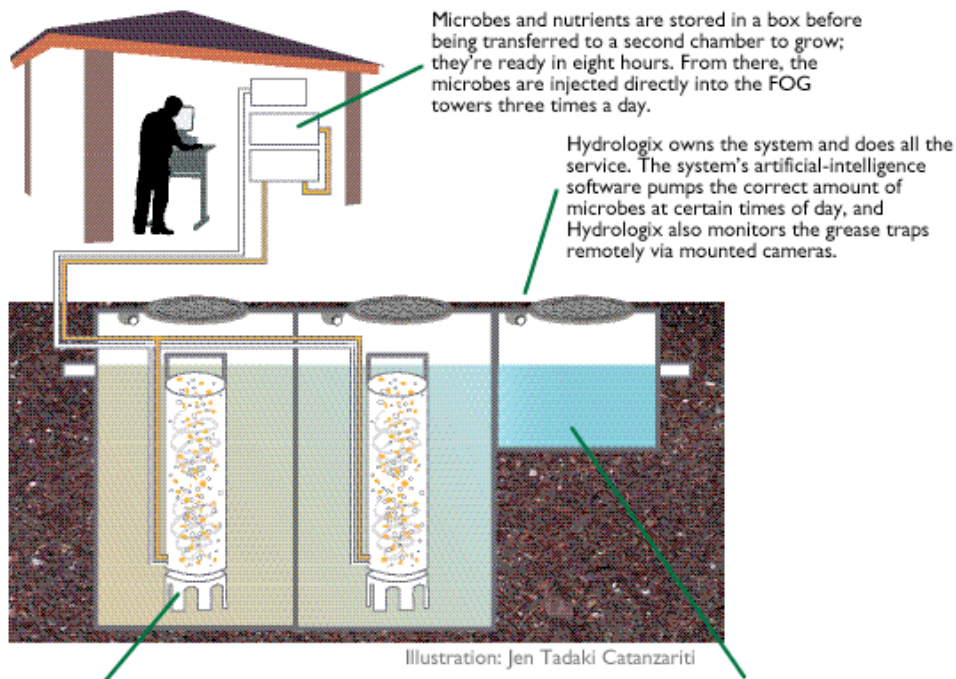
Greased Out

Microbes eat grease and clear fat before they enter the sewer system

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Sure, chicken katsu and shrimp tempura taste rich and crunchy, but where does all that cooking oil and grease go? By law, food establishments must install grease interceptors or traps to catch as much fat, oil and grease (FOG) as possible before they're dumped into the sewer system. Unfortunately, the grease traps need to be vacuum pumped every month, an expensive and stinky burden on the business owner. In addition, the traps don't catch everything, and excess FOG causes problems at the wastewater-treatment plant, leading to sewage spills.

Hydrologix, a Waikoloa-based company operating on the Big Island, Oahu and in Southern California, has created a system that uses micro-organisms to eat the grease and pre-treat the water before it enters the sewer. The result is a less foul sludge that is easier on the municipality's centralized treatment facility. Markus Lenger, chief scientific officer at Hydrologix, explains how it works:



A constant flow of air is needed for the microbes to eat and thrive in the tower full of FOG. Air and microbes move through FOG towers from the bottom up ("Like a chimney," Lenger says), as they chew up FOG.

End result: gray water. It's definitely not suitable for drinking, but it's an easier assignment for a waste-treatment plant. Also, a normal grease trap needs to be pumped every month. Lenger says the Hydrologix system can reduce maintenance pumping to once every three months.

Correction: The Hydrologix System reduces maintenance pumping to once every 1.5 to 3 years, as needed, not every three months as originally published.