The importance of a grease trap to your operations

While areas of operation such as kitchen, swimming pool, laundry, workshop and guest information centre are always given so much attention in any accommodation facility, one of the areas that is sometimes overlooked is the grease trap. This may be due to the fact that it is not beautiful by any means. Furthermore, grease traps are often located out of sight although still near most kitchens. In camps, lodges and hotels large volumes of fats and oils are often generated from cooking especially in busy periods, and pass through the drainage channel from the kitchen, whose wastewater is managed through a soak pit or other types of wastewater management systems. Based on science, it is important that the wastewater from the kitchen pass through a grease trap.

It may be given little attention, but the reality is that a grease trap is one of the most important things you can have in your hotel operations. Besides absence, lack of proper maintenance can cause so much problems in environmental and financial sense. Therefore, this week’s article focuses on how the grease trap works, the benefits and the potential problems that can be experienced.

How grease traps work

Perhaps most of us still remember what we learned in the chemistry class regarding fats and oils; that they are poor conductors of heat and therefore serve as excellent insulators of the body, and that this characteristic helps to slow down loss of heat from our skins. Even more importantly, we learned that fats and oils are lighter than water, and it is this same principle that a grease trap uses.

From the wash-up area of the kitchen, wastewater flows through a strainer before finally reaching a grease trap. The flow rate is usually reduced significantly and the fats and oils float while the
water passes through an outlet. As the use of the trap continues, the fats and oils can accumulate to an extent that they escape through the outlet. It is therefore imperative that it is cleaned regularly. The illustration below is a grease trap showing how the wastewater flows through it.

Source: https://www.darpro-solutions.com/our-services/grease-trap-services

**Potential problems when not cleaned regularly**

If the grease trap is not cleaned regularly and the fats and oils escape through the outlet, there is a likelihood that the drainage system might get blocked leading to damage. It is therefore recommended that properties establish a cleaning schedule with a dedicated staff assigned the duty of carrying out the cleaning. The picture below is a grease trap installed at Kicheche Mara Camp.
The illustration below is a grease trap that is not well maintained in one of the ecorated properties which is in contrast with the one above.

It is important to note that the frequency of cleaning a grease trap is dependent on a number of factors. Firstly, cleaning practices in the kitchen usually determine the volumes of fats and oils that are released into the drainage channel. The practice of scrapping fats and oils from plates before being washed is one that has been found to be very effective in this area, and is highly recommended for any kitchen. Secondly, the type of food that you prepare will play a big role in
determining how often the grease trap is cleaned. Where foods that are prepared result in generation of more oils and fats then regular cleaning is required. Finally, when the number of guests is high the result is that more food is prepared which demands regular cleaning of the grease trap, as the amount of fats and oils generated co-relates with the amount of food.

Understanding the importance of a grease trap can go a long way in ensuring effectiveness in management of the grey water generated from the kitchen; ensuring that the drainage systems remain working, and that you do not incur a lot of costs in repairing the systems. Therefore, it is our hope that you have learnt how the grease traps work, and basic ways to ensure maintenance.