

Recycled Vegetable Oil Powers Vans, Cars



When Jared Fisher needs fuel for his vans, he doesn't head for the gas station. Instead, he goes to restaurants to collect used vegetable oil. He pours that vegetable oil into his vans' fuel tanks.

Most cars and vans are built to run on gas. They won't run on vegetable oil. But Fisher's vans have been specially built so they can operate on recycled vegetable oil or diesel fuel.

Fisher owns a company that runs bicycle trips and other vacation tours. He uses his vans to carry travelers from place to place. He bought the special vans to save some money and help protect the environment. Recycling vegetable oil for fuel is much less expensive than buying diesel fuel, he says. Also, burning vegetable oil does not cause as much pollution as diesel fuel does.

Fisher spends between four and six hours a week collecting used vegetable oil. In 2007, he collected about 3,000 gallons of the oil from restaurants. That saved him about \$9,000, which is the amount he would have spent on 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel. This year, the savings could be even bigger because the cost of diesel fuel is now about \$4 a gallon.

People have tried using vegetable oil in diesel engines since the early 1900s. Diesel fuel and vegetable oil are a lot alike, but vegetable oil is thicker. Vehicles like the ones Fisher drives use the engine's heat to heat the vegetable oil so it is not so thick.

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diesel designed
operate engine
expensive fuel

MORE FACTS ABOUT USING VEGETABLE OIL AS FUEL

- When one of Fisher's vans ran out of fuel, he took corn oil from his kitchen and poured it into the tank!
- The original diesel engines were designed to run on peanut oil.
- Most vegetable oil that is recycled for fuel comes from restaurants that use oil to fry food or factories that make snack foods fried in oil.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

What other materials do you know that, when recycled, can be used for completely different purposes?

