

TENNESSEE GREEN STAR PARTNERSHIP MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



By: Vaughn Cassidy

Lodge Cast Iron is one of our oldest partners, having been a Tennessee Green Star Partner since 2003. They are a family-owned business that has been making cast iron cookware in South Pittsburg, TN since 1896. The founder, Joseph Lodge, originally named the cast iron legend Blacklock, and the company changed the name in 1910 in honor of the founder. Today, Lodge employs 550 people, many of them in the South Pittsburg Foundry, enameling facility, and administrative offices. Their core product lines are seasoned cast iron, enameled cast iron, and seasoned carbon steel, which are sold at their four retail stores in Tennessee and Alabama, and through other small and major retailers throughout the world.

Although most people in the world are familiar with cast iron cookware, they may be less familiar with the inherent sustainability of Lodge's manufacturing processes. The durability of Lodge's products enables them to be passed down for generations, reducing the likelihood that their products will end up in a landfill. Since 1986, the source of materials for Lodge's cast iron has changed from almost entirely pig-iron to just over 60% recycled and reused iron and steel. Not only are their products durable and recyclable, but many of the raw materials included in products and packaging are also sourced from less than 300 miles from South Pittsburg. Reducing transportation is an important part of Lodge's sustainability. Even within the facility, the "ladle to ladle" approach is to reuse all the product returns and products with quality flaws in the molten iron.

The recycling numbers for Lodge over the course of 2023 are varied and impressive: Over 6,000 tons of recycled steel were incorporated into cast iron products. On the non-production side, 336 tons of scrap metal, 133 tons of cardboard and 12 tons of shrink wrap were recycled from their packaging operation by a local recycling vendor. One of the most unique items recycled at Lodge for 2023 is 3,350 gallons of seasoning oil. Lodge has the distinction of being the first cast iron cookware maker in the US to preseason their products.

Sustainability is even practiced in the culinary studio, the heart of content creation for the Lodge brand. The large amounts of food scrap produced in the culinary studio are composted by a Chattanooga company called New Terra. Almost 500 pounds of food waste was composted from the culinary studio in 2023.

Foundries are very energy intensive, and the use of an immense amount of electricity is unavoidable. Lodge decided in 1991 to opt for an electromagnetic induction furnace to heat their iron. This was after nearly 100 years of operation using a coal powered furnace. This change resulted in a reduction of carbon emissions and hazardous waste. The danger and hazards to employees is greatly improved as well since electromagnetic induction is more easily controlled without the generation of hazardous air emissions.

FEATURED THIS MONTH

- A manufacturer of cast iron cookware since 1896
- Employs 550 fulltime employees
- No forever chemicals like PFAS in their products
- 6,000 tons of recycled used in 2023

FUN FACT:

Opened Lodge Museum of Cast Iron in 2023



LODGE
CAST IRON

2024 Sustainability Report

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Sustainability Report

Employees as well as the community of South Pittsburg are a top priority for Lodge.

One of the best outreach events for Lodge Cast Iron to involve their employees and their products is the National Cornbread Festival, of which Lodge is a key sponsor. Every year since 1997, the small town of South Pittsburg swells from a few thousand people to nearly 25,000 in recent years, all with the goal of celebrating cornbread. The proceeds from the event are directed back into the community. Over the years, historic buildings have been restored through local non-profits. Theatres, schools, athletic facilities, and libraries have been recovered for another generation. What's more, in 2023, the Lodge Museum of Cast Iron, the South Pittsburg Lodge Factory Store, and the Big Bad Breakfast restaurant brought in over 150,000 people to South Pittsburg.

The Office of Sustainable Practices is pleased to have Lodge Cast Iron in the TN Green Star Partnership. Our program provides the best opportunity in Tennessee for sustainable leaders of industry to network together as well as to share successes and challenges through participation in our webinars, workshops and quarterly open discussions. The Office of Sustainable Practices would like to thank all of our Green Star Partners throughout Tennessee for their continuing efforts to make our state a great example of a sustainable place to live, work and play.



Lodge Cast Iron uses an electromagnetic induction furnace to melt recovered steel and iron for their products.



The Tennessee Green Star Partnership is a voluntary environmental leadership program designed to recognize industries in the state that are committed to sustainable practices. If you are interested in joining Lodge Cast Iron and other sustainable industries, please contact us.