



Into the Sunset

By [Coco Tanaka](#)

If I told you Isaac Hayes was a vegetarian, would that inspire you to lean green at this year's Sunset Junction Street Fair? The icon's final wish was to see all of Silver Lake eating funnel cakes from compostable takeout containers. Show a little respect for a fallen headliner.

OK, I'm not saying Hayes really cared about composting, or that he was a vegetarian, because he totally didn't, and wasn't. An old roommate had a soul food cookbook penned by the late Chef/chef, and I think one of the more referenced chapters was called "Chicken for Sunday and Any Day" or "I Freaking Love Barbecue" or something to that effect. But if believing that Hayes was a hardline Begley acolyte motivates you even slightly to appreciate the sustainable slant of this year's Sunset Junction, so be it. The ends probably justify my emotionally manipulative means.

Despite the regrettably regular contingent of dirty hippies, the street fair hasn't exactly been an

environmental love-in to date. It generates a ton of waste and lures seas of cars, and I'm pretty sure the bands aren't relying on solar power. I'll say this much for the fair's yearly crop of leather daddies: I don't know that they're rushing to shill for the NRDC, but when the chaps are assless, that means that much less leather. Seriously, aside from this year's inclusion of the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition (trying to find a good parking spot at the fair is downright masochistic – consider using the Bike Valet), the environment has been an ignored P.S. on Sunset Junction's list of priorities ... until now.

Enter the Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce Green Committee, strapping on its fightin' boots to begin lowering the impact of one of Silver Lake's most time-honored pavement orgies. The committee's ambitiously named Zero-Waste Initiative (so much more persuasive than Half-Waste Initiative, no?) is encouraging vendors to eschew plastic for compostable takeout containers. They're providing bins for food waste and recycling, enlightening the tipsy masses as to just why they should separate their paper plate from their taquito scraps. Co-chairing the nascent Green Committee is Meg Dickler-Taylor, proprietress of Large Marge Sustainables, a local farm-driven catering company. Meg is the kind of conscientious greenie who can't help but push people's activist buttons – her enthusiasm is SARS-level contagious without ever approaching self-righteousness. “L.A. wants to become zero-waste by 2020, which is amazing – but it's a very big goal,” she says. “We have a lot of work to do, and this is the first step,” and that step harks back to the most elementary of green deeds: taking out the trash.

Since those who would knead the green movement into palatably chewy mainstream dough are all too eager to unveil the latest and greatest Earth craze (biodegradable sofa cushions, or ways to convert your SUV into a hydrogen hybrid that runs on the sound of baby laughter), it's become commonplace to discount the separation of garbage as archaic environmentalism. It isn't. The act of throwing one item in Bin A and another in Bin B is no less effective for its simplicity, and it means less landfills, less energy, and, for the resourceful urban miners wading through the rubbish for redemption values, a tidy little payday.

Predictably, most vendors at Sunset Junction have a yen for a more eco tomorrow that's handily trumped by their yen to turn a profit. Two exceptions are Barrett's Lemonade & Foods and Mr. Goodburnz, hailing from Huntington, which have both agreed to the SLCC-GC's gentle suggestions that vendors shun Styrofoam, plastic, and paper for compostable containers and cutlery. “We're trying to tell vendors that people in the Silver Lake area are interested in preserving the environment, and customers really will pay a small premium to accommodate that, even if it's 25 cents,” Meg says. She isn't the tsk-tsking type of eco-militant who would try to guilt you into separating your street fair waste. She'll leave that to the Bin Angels, recruited volunteers who will man the weekend waste and literally talk trash to the 25,000 expected fair attendees. The recyclers from on high will stand guard to explain the clusters of bin trios: one for recycling, one for organic waste, and one for plain ol' trash, the bin Meg & Co. would ultimately like to phase out. “The Bin Angels encourage people to take an extra second to think about what their plastic container is made of. They'll be able to tell people, ‘Hey, that container in your hand will break down. In spring, you'll be able to pick up the free compost at Griffith Park and use it in your garden.’” Their knowledge is courtesy of SLCC-GC co-chair Leslie VanKeuren, who manages Gingergrass restaurant, a Silver Lake hub for Vietnamese eats and composting out back. Her motto, “Think before you toss,” has become a kind of committee campaign slogan – a “reduce, reuse, recycle” for the aughties. Put to a funky beat with a lot of organ, that might be catchy. Isaac Hayes would've loved it, I know it.

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