

Police: Two Cooking Oil Thieves Arrested Behind Restaurant

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Two Yonkers men were caught trying to steal used cooking oil from behind a Darien restaurant at 6:50 a.m., Friday, police said.

Usually, that would be a good time to steal the oil. After all, restaurant employees, and most other people, would not be around. Except at Lithos restaurant at 319 Post Road, because the owner also owns the next-door Darien Diner, which tends to be busier at 6:50 a.m.

Police described what happened next with this account (including accusations not proven in court):

The owner told police that he saw the two men trying to steal the oil. Police arriving at the scene found the men with a dark blue Econoline van parked near the used cooking oil dumpster. In the van were three very large containers with used cooking oil in them (two nearly empty; the other, half full), a hose that could suck out the oil, and a gas-powered pump.

The owner said that in recent months, men in a dark blue van had been seen taking the cooking oil, and that the outdoors waste container hadn't been filling up as much as expected.

The two men with the van — its owner, Washington Campos, 30, of Yonkers, N.Y., and Juan Nunez, 31, of the same address — were each charged with sixth-degree larceny and attempted sixth-degree larceny.

Campos told police he and Nunez were only behind the restaurant to check to see if there was oil that the restaurant might want taken away, and they planned to ask the owner for it later. Nunez didn't speak English. Neither man said anything more to police about the incident.

Police observed that the plastic dumpster lid, usually secured with a metal pin, was bent in a way that would gain access to the oil.

Campos was held on \$2,000 bond and Nunez on \$1,500 until they appeared in court. The Connecticut Judicial Branch website states that each of the men had two appearances in court by Monday. Bond was increased for each of them — to \$7,500 for Campos and to \$15,000 for Nunez. Each paid it.

Nunez was previously arrested on an accusation of stealing used cooking oil, police said. According to the Connecticut Judicial Branch website, he was arrested on larceny charges at least twice over the past year.

One arrest was earlier this year after an incident in Monroe. The Connecticut Post reported a "Juan Nunez-Silverio" of the same age and hometown was charged with an accomplice of [trying to steal used cooking oil](#) from a restaurant in Monroe last spring.

In August, a man with the same name, age and hometown was accused of being one of three men [trying to steal used cooking oil](#) from outside the Dairy King restaurant on Main Avenue in Norwalk, according to the Norwalk Hour.

Used cooking oil has been stolen from restaurants for some time now. It's sold to companies that recycle it for bio-fuel or in some cases for animal feed, especially in Europe. The owner of Lithos told police that the restaurant has an agreement with a company to come pick it up regularly in return for the equivalent of \$60 per used oil dumpster.

According to a June 2015 article in Forbes magazine, [used cooking oil had become much more valuable](#) by last year:

As a traded commodity, used cooking oil from deep fryers (“yellow grease”) is regarded as the most sustainable types of biodiesel, and demand is surging. The unrefined, raw material alone is now referred to as “liquid gold,” fetching over \$3 per gallon in New York City, when restaurant owners had to pay to have it taken away just a few years ago. Because of the rising value, theft and “black market” selling have followed [...]