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# Restaurant Sustainability Guide

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Every restaurant owner wants to attract more customers – but in today’s world, diners are crying out for so much more than good food and evening entertainment.

They want to know that their food is sourced sustainably and that your restaurant cares about the environment.

Want to make your restaurant more sustainable but don’t have the foggiest idea on where to start?

Let us guide you...

**Read time: 20 minutes**

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# Introduction to Restaurant Sustainability

If you're a restaurateur I imagine you believe your restaurant has great food, great customer service and is a great place to eat, right?

All of this may be true however no longer are these things enough to get diner's bums on seats.

Diners are looking to buy into the places that they eat, they want to know the values and principles of the restaurant, and increasingly more diners want to eat at an establishment which is sustainable.

In fact, a study found that more than two-thirds of restaurant customers would be willing to pay extra money for green restaurant practices. [↑ back to the top](#)

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## What is Restaurant Sustainability?

You may have heard the term restaurant sustainability a lot over recent years however if you had passed the topic off as merely the catchwords of the moment, you were sorely mistaken – restaurant sustainability is here to stay.

In truth, it's one of the hottest topics in the hospitality industry right now. So what exactly does restaurant sustainability mean?



### Restaurant sustainability is:

Running a restaurant which is actively committed to the promotion of sustainable solutions to areas impacted by the business, such as the environment, food sourcing, and society.

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## Why should my restaurant be more sustainable?

Restaurant sustainability isn't a new term, far from it, however now restaurants are under pressure to become more environmentally friendly.

[\(Take a look at these 6 ways your restaurant can become more sustainable for free!\)](#)

Under pressure by who? You may ask, we will delve into the nitty gritty reasons shortly, however, it is, in fact, diners, the very people whom your whole business relies upon that are demanding for more eco-friendly places to eat and drink.



While restaurant sustainability has many considerations, the goal is simple, to negate the negative effects of running a restaurant has on the planet.

Still not convinced? A study in conjunction with [Sustainable Restaurant Association](#) found over 84% of consumers cited sustainability and ethics as a determining factor in where they chose to dine.

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## What effect is the hospitality industry having on the environment?

The hospitality industry is now under the spotlight of the media and consumers alike, and it's not hard to see why.

Those in the industry such as restaurants are large consumers of energy, plastics, foods and a large variety of other goods, all of which in some way impact the environment.

Pressure is building on restaurants and here are some of the reasons why.

## 1. Food Waste

The hospitality industry is widely considered to be one of the most wasteful industries on the planet, it's a huge problem.

Restaurants specifically account for around 9% of the total amount of meals eaten in the UK annually, as a result, according to WRAP over 200,000 tonnes of food waste is produced each year. Ridiculous right?



This is having a detrimental effect on the environment, excess food has to be disposed of which means transporting large quantities of uneaten food using mainly high CO2 emitting diesel vehicles.

Thought food waste was recycled?

Wrong. In fact, **food waste accounts for 40% of the total waste from the hospitality sector which is sent to landfill.**

These landfill sites are horrendously poor for the planet, from **the huge amount of harmful gases they produce** to the destruction of land, the impact food waste is having is no laughing matter.

## 2. Food Production

Food sustainability often means different things to different people, the truth is there is much more to food sustainability than simply the food itself.

The hospitality industry must consider the impact that areas such as production and distribution of food have on agriculture, the environment and society.

The production process is often causing substantial damage to the environment as large amounts of carbon emissions are being projected into the atmosphere from farm equipment and production

plants.

The land is often damaged by pesticides and fertilisers used to facilitate the growing of crops, and over time, the quality of the soil is affected by the chemicals.

Accompany this with a more CO2 being emitted during distribution and before you know it the meal you have served has left a trail of destruction to the environment.

Damage to the land can result in a lack of fertile soil resulting in crops that struggle to grow especially in developing countries. As a consequence, some communities struggle to live off the land unless there is intervention.



### 3. Plastics

I'm sure you have seen the constant streams of shocking news articles which show the devastating effect plastic is having on the environment.

It's thanks to Important research by the likes of Sky Ocean rescue highlighting the unavoidable truth that the seas are being saturated by plastic.



Plastic pollution is so substantial that microplastics have been found in the very fish we eat and water we drink. Restaurants are heavy users of plastics and as a result, are contributing heavily to the global plastic waste.

Much of the plastics used in the hospitality industry are single-use, meaning commonly used items such as straws, bags, bottles, and cutlery are disposed of after just one use.

[Plastic straws are a huge eco-hazard, so here are 3 eco-friendly products your restaurant can use to be more sustainable!](#)

### 4. Water

When it comes to wastewater the topic is often overlooked, water is an extremely valuable resource, as 99% of the water on the planet is not freshwater, meaning **humans can only**

consume 1% of the total water on earth.

Water is like many other forms of waste in the sense that it still has to be dealt with once finished with, with that comes consequences for the environment, restaurants use water in many different ways such as to clean restaurant equipment and to serve to customers.

Using excess water has a trickle-down effect on the environment (pardon the pun). Wastewater has to be treated in huge plants which emit thousands of tonnes of CO2 into the air each year contributing to global warming.



## 5. Energy

Saving energy, when I was a child I was constantly being told to switch the lights off and if you were anything like me you often forgot.

The hospitality industry is a huge consumer of energy, in fact, commercial kitchens have been found to use 10 times the amount of energy of that of a commercial building.

This huge amount of energy usage comes at a price to the planet, the appliances which are often in constant use such as gas cookers and electric air conditioners are putting a strain on national supplies.

The more gas which is used results in more toxic pollutants which are contributing to global warming. The consequence of a high demand for natural resources such as gas means more holes need to be drilled into the earth to find new reserves, damaging land and the seabed.

Ultimately, these resources will become extinct.

New renewable technologies and fossil fuel alternatives are being created and tested rapidly, currently, only 20% of the UK's energy is produced by renewable technology.



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# How your restaurant will benefit from being environmentally friendly

Restaurant sustainability is here to stay and soon a non-sustainable restaurant will be the odd one out in a competitive industry.

There are overwhelming benefits to an environmentally friendly restaurant, such as:

- ✓ Happier diners
- ✓ More diners
- ✓ Repeat diners

It is no secret that consumers are now picking and choosing where they dine more than ever.

The reason for this is education, through news outlets, marketing campaigns and government addresses the public have been made aware of the impact business such as restaurants have on the environment.

As a result, there has been a shift in the mindset of diners, a large factor in consumer decision making is whether the restaurant has green credentials, is sustainable, and promotes the protection and the environment. So much so that an [OpenTable study found over 80% of diners want meals that have been sourced ethically.](#)

The choice to eat at a sustainable restaurant is one that diners are really passionate about, a recent study discovered two-thirds of diners would actually be willing to pay more to eat at an establishment which showed eco-friendly behaviours. If you're looking for repeat customers, then being sustainable will only improve your chances of reaching that goal, diners are more likely to return to a restaurant which promotes and adopts green practices.

Being sustainable will positively affect your bottom line, with customers being swayed to a sustainable restaurant as well as increased customer retention there should be fewer empty chairs at your tables.

Diners aside there are other areas in which you can help the environment and save money at the same time, such as being more efficient in your energy usage. We will go through methods of how



you can turn your restaurant into an environmentally friendly establishment shortly.

### **Marketing, marketing, marketing...**

Considered by many to be one of the most important tools to drive customers to the tables of restaurants, effective marketing has never been more vital in an aggressively competitive industry.

Going green and being visible to the public as sustainable is a fantastic asset to your marketing strategy, in a competitive market with an increasing interest in sustainability the phrase “be green to be seen” has never been more prevalent.



Although some consider being green to be a niche it won't be perceived this way much longer as more and more restaurants become sustainable.

Word of mouth marketing is widely considered a highly credible way of convincing someone of a view, it is also incredibly useful when it comes to improving brand reputation. The reason being it is perceived that the individual does not have any ties or an invested interest in the restaurant, therefore a valid and reliable recommendation is communicated.

**As a powerful form of communication** word of mouth is a fantastic way to increase traffic into restaurants, traditionally this is done through great food, fantastic service and a great setting. This is still the very much the case, however, another benefit attributed to adopting sustainable practice is the increase in willingness for diners to spread the message that you are doing your bit for the environment.

I know that my favourite local restaurant sources the majority of its food locally and its part of the reason I choose to dine there. To have close ties to your local community is important to diners, by being sustainable and sourcing food locally as well as supporting the local economy your reputation with local suppliers and diners will be enhanced.

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## **How can my restaurant become sustainable?**



There are many different practices you can adapt to make your restaurant more sustainable, it's important to remember as we go through 5 ways that you can achieve sustainability, that there is no better time than now to implement them.

Do not forget – there are many [FREE ways you can your restaurant can become more sustainable too!](#)

## 1. Grow your own produce

This is a no-brainer, growing just some of the ingredients you need to make your meals is a strain taken off the environment. You may not have the space you need to cultivate and nurture food such as vegetables at your premises, however, starting small is better than not starting at all.

In cities such as London space is of a premium so this brings out the creativity in many restaurateurs.



We have seen restaurants growing vegetables and herbs on rooftops, space which is not often utilised.

Not sure where to start? you could start something as simple as an orange tree, if well looked after it can provide oranges which you may be able to serve to customers, moreover if on display this tree will demonstrate to your diners that you are going the extra mile to become eco-friendly.

In addition, the more produce you grow and use the more you less you will rely on suppliers keeping the bank happy. Many have found that growing your own produce is actually a very nice conversation starter with their diners, increasing engagement can't be bad for business.

## 2. Portion sizes

Food waste has always been a problem in the hospitality industry, it's an issue which everyone must do more to combat.

Reviewing portion sizes may be obvious, but It's an often overlooked method of reducing food waste. You may have experienced this yourself, ordering a delicious dish from the menu and when it arrives and you know straight away you are going to struggle to finish it, not through loss of appetite, but due to the sheer amount of food on the plate.

In most cases the excess food will get scraped off your plate into a bin where it's likely destination is a landfill site, not very environmentally friendly right?

Reviewing how much food you offer your diners is worth considering, however, sometimes perception can have a huge impact on waste.

Let me explain, a [Danish study](#) actually found that when offered the exact same portion size on a large plate and on a small plate there was significantly less waste on the smaller plates, a huge 26% less in fact.

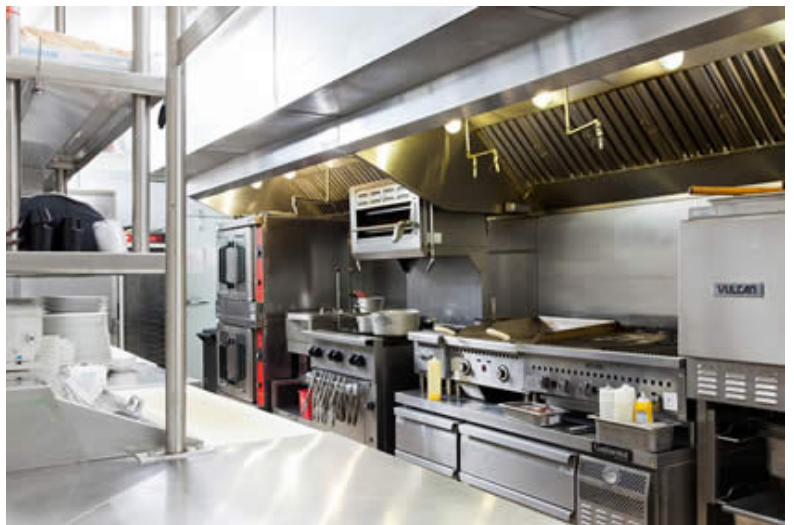


### 3. Efficient appliances

Appliances in restaurants take an absolute beating the majority of the time, many appliances running 24 hours a day.

Refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers and cookers just to name a few, are workhorses in pretty much every restaurant.

All of these appliances perform a very important job and let's face it you would be stuck without any one of them.



However, the efficiency of such products has tremendous implications for the planet as well as your restaurant's bank balance.

Energy is a huge expense to restaurants and the cost you pay is heavily influenced by the efficiency of your appliances, as appliances get older many may not be as effective and efficient compared to when they were new.

As a result, an increase in energy is needed to keep them running and the more energy that is consumed means more will need to be produced at a cost to the environment. It is worth reviewing your current energy usage to determine if your appliances are inefficient, if this is the case then upgrading is definitely worth considering.

The majority of the energy in the UK is not renewable, the more we use – the more greenhouse gases are emitted contributing to global warming. Top tip, often a dirty appliance is an inefficient

appliance, make sure products such as cooker hoods are clean so that they operate correctly and don't use more energy than is required.

#### 4. Recycle

Recycling is now a part of our everyday life especially here in the UK, reducing the amount of waste we put into landfill is essential.

In order to create landfill sites land has to be destroyed, in addition, landfills produce a huge amount of greenhouse gases which are having a devastating effect on the planet.

What steps can you take to recycle more and become environmentally friendly?

First of all, you need to create a strategy with the first step being gaining an understanding of what you can recycle with your waste disposal provider and which waste your restaurant produces can be recycled.

Many products can be recycled however not all, it's important to carefully look at the waste you produce to determine which can be recycled.

Separating your waste out into bins is a simple but effective method to waste management despite this, it is essential all staff are educated and on board with the new recycling strategy for it to succeed.



#### 5. Plant trees

Trees are incredibly important to life on earth, they produce a vast amount of the oxygen we breathe and without them it is debatable how long humans would survive.

Trees provide the planet with so much, life, economies and habitats just to name but a few.

Across the planet and specifically in developing countries trees are the centre of communities which live off them and sell the produce they bare.

By planting trees in the developing world for free, with **Carbon Free Dining**, your restaurant is helping counterbalance the carbon emissions that are emitted in the creation of your meals.

As well as providing oxygen, trees actually trap carbon that is in the atmosphere.

Your diners will be able to see you are adopting and promoting eco-friendly practices and changing lives at the same time.

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## Carbon Free Dining's role in restaurant sustainability

What is Carbon Free Dining? Carbon Free Dining empowers your diners, it gives diners the opportunity to help the environment by offsetting the carbon emissions that were produced in the making of their meal, while at the same time giving your diners a feel-good factor as they know they are changing the world for the better.



## How does Carbon Free Dining work?

I'm glad you asked, Carbon Free Dining adds an optional 99p to the bill of the table at your restaurant which is guaranteed to plant one fruit tree in a developing country.

The trees that your diners plant will have an incredibly positive impact on the community where they are planted.

The fruit trees allow communities to live off the land and reduce the reliance on foreign aid. The produce that trees bare can be sold helping the local economy, what in fact you and your diners are doing is helping put an end to poverty.

The benefits of planting trees don't stop there, by becoming a Carbon Free Dining certified restaurant the fantastic work that you and your diners are doing will spread, the public loves eco-





friendly initiatives which are protecting the environment so word of mouth becomes a fantastic and successful part of your marketing strategy.

We at Carbon Free Dining love to shout about the fantastic work you are doing, we will support you in your digital and social media marketing strategy providing you with branding and even nominating your restaurant for environmental awards.

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## Is my restaurant sustainable?

By reading the above you should have a good idea how you make your restaurant more sustainable, however only by reviewing your current practice will you be able to make active steps to reducing your carbon footprint, becoming less wasteful and ultimately helping the planet.



Here at Carbon Free Dining we wanted to help you in this process so we have created a restaurant sustainability [quiz](#), the [quiz](#) will give you a score when completed which will give you an idea of how sustainable your restaurant is.

If you complete the [quiz](#) – we will plant a life-changing fruit tree in the developing world in the name of your restaurant!

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Topics: Restaurant Sustainability



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First Name\*

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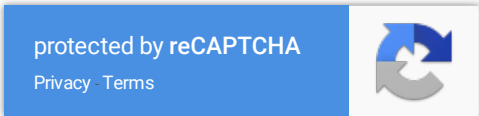
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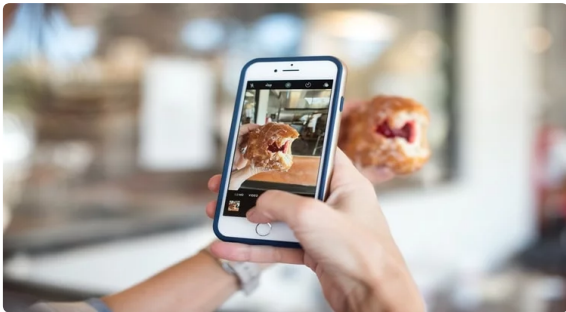
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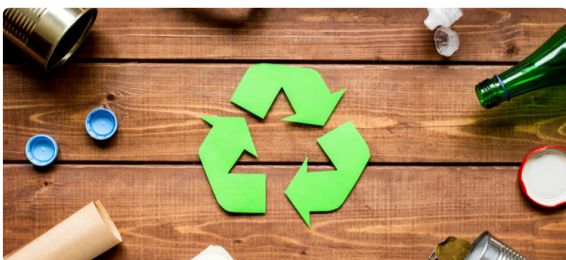
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## Carbon Free Dining

The Carbon Free Dining certification programme, managed by Green Earth Appeal, in partnership with Lightspeed is a rapidly growing, smart and cost-effective way for restaurants to showcase their Corporate Social Responsibility at zero cost to the business.

## Contact Information

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