



# Gauging the Restaurant Industry's Interest in Sustainability

Cardboard recycling photo: Affairs to Remember Catering

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Interest in environmental sustainability continues to grow in the restaurant community, according to recent National Restaurant Association research. Operators report that they are starting or participating in efforts to help save resources as well as utility costs.

The topic of sustainability was front and center when the Association surveyed fullservice and quickservice operators earlier this year about how industry trends were affecting their businesses.

Some environmental strategies were more common than others, and results varied between the fullservice and quickservice segments, suggesting further exploration may be on the horizon.

The Association asked restaurateurs nationwide about the sustainability steps they have implemented at their locations. The survey featured questions about water conservation, recycling, composting, food donation, energy efficiency and

how operators handle used fryer oil. Respondents were asked whether they used such items as faucet aerators, tankless water heaters or solar panels to reduce water and energy use. They also were asked if they recycled their plastic, cans, bottles and glass, if they composted food waste and if they donated food to food banks. Some 1,000 restaurant operators participated in the phone survey in January 2014.



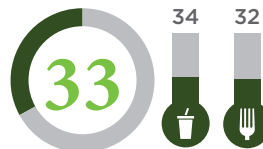
**KEY:**  = Quickservice segment  = Fullservice segment

## WATER CONSERVATION

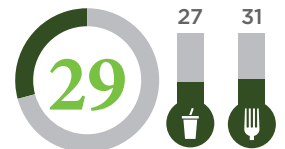
In an effort to cut down on utility costs as well as deal with drought conditions affecting many parts of the nation, restaurants are looking to reduce their water consumption. Some are installing water-saving devices in both front- and back-of-the-house operations. According to the survey, 29 percent of respondents said they installed aerators on their faucets and 48 percent installed low-flush toilets or waterless urinals at their establishments.

**Is your restaurant business currently using any of the following items? % yes**

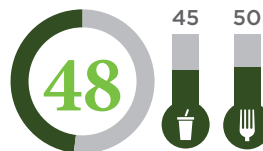
**Tankless water heater**



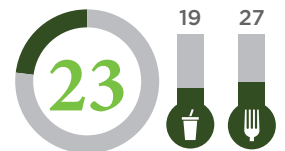
**Faucet aerators**



**Low-flush toilets or waterless urinals**



**Motion-activated toilets or faucets**

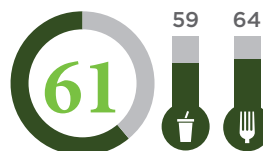


## MATERIALS

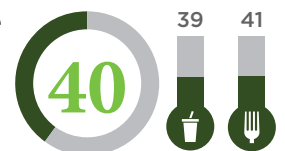
Respondents indicated they purchase products made from recycled materials, such as cups, napkins, cutlery and packaging. When asked if they purchased recycled products, 61 percent said yes, and 40 percent said they purchased products that could be composted.

**Does your business purchase ...? % yes**

**Products made from recycled materials**



**Compostable products**





## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As energy costs continue to rise and the restaurant industry faces ever-tightening profit margins, operators are seeking ways to cut down on energy use without affecting the customer experience.

Among operators surveyed, 63 percent said they use compact fluorescent lighting. More than half — 54 percent — said they installed programmable HVAC thermostats and 37 percent indicated they used Energy Star-rated appliances.

Is your restaurant business currently using any of the following items? % yes

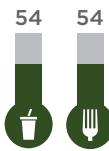
EPA Energy Star-rated appliances



Compact fluorescent lighting



Programmable HVAC thermostats



Solar panels



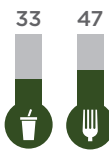
## WASTE REDUCTION

Many respondents indicated they made efforts in waste reduction through such practices as recycling, converting used fryer oil to biodiesel and other uses, composting, tracking of food waste and donating unused and leftover food.

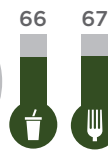
Among those polled, 74 percent of operators said they recycled their fats, oils and grease. Another 66 percent said they recycled their cardboard and paper materials. Nearly four in 10 operators surveyed report that they recycled their plastic, cans or glass, and 75 percent said they regularly tracked the amount of food waste produced at their restaurants. More than 20 percent said they donated leftover food to food banks or similar organizations. Another 17 percent said they composted food waste.

Does your restaurant business currently recycle any of the following items? % yes

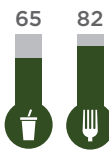
Plastic, cans or glass



Cardboard or paper

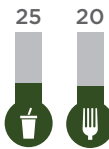


Fats, oils and grease



Is your restaurant business currently doing any of the following? % yes

Donate leftover food to food banks or other groups



Compost your food waste



Track the amount of food waste on a regular basis

