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New association aims to make UK restaurant sector more sustainable

Peta Hodge
3rd March 2010

Some of the country's best known restaurants, including Le Manoir Aux Quat' Saisons, Carluccio's, Moro and Benares, have become founder members of the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA).

The aim of the **SRA** is to make it easier for **restaurants** to take positive **sustainable** action, "to change not only the [food](#) that people eat and enjoy, but also the way it is sourced, transported and created".

According to the Environment Agency, the hotel and restaurant sector is bottom of the league tables when it comes to levels of environmental awareness, creating three million tonnes of food [waste](#) each year and throwing out 600,000 tonnes of glass bottles.

The SRA aims to change this, by working with restaurants throughout the UK to help them change their working practices.

Drawing on expert advice from the likes of Compassion in World [Farming](#), Envirowise, Fairtrade Foundation and the Soil Association, the SRA aims to provide its members with advice on issues ranging from sourcing ethical fish and meat to [energy conservation](#) and waste management.

SRA members can gain sustainable accreditation

Members will be able to have their efforts audited by assessment company GoodCorporation, gaining gold, silver or bronze 'Champion' accreditation status, which can then be communicated to restaurant guides and reviewers.

Clearly the SRA is intending to offer its members commercial as well as environmental benefits. It cites a survey conducted by Tabletop, which showed that 70 per cent of respondents were more likely to eat at a restaurant that was accredited by a reputable sustainability body.

This finding is supported by anecdotal evidence from one of the SRA's founder members, Carluccio's. Managing director Simon Kossoff said: "Our customers tell us that the broad issues around sustainability are more and more important.

"We know we have some way to go at Carluccio's toward becoming more sustainable, but the SRA gives us the support and confidence to start the journey and make positive changes."

Benares restaurant's chef patron, Atul Kochhar agreed: "As a restaurateur and chef, I've noticed an increase in the number of diners who are really starting to ask questions about provenance but we also need to educate them on other environmental issues relating to the restaurant industry, including everything from waste to where we source our fish – and the SRA has the ideal tools to help us do this."

SRA membership open to all sized restaurants

Membership of the SRA is open to restaurants of all sizes and types – from small independents to chains and pubs – as long as they are willing to sign up to the SRA's values and commit to at least three new sustainable activities each year they are members.

The SRA has signed up 80 restaurants so far and is talking to over 200 more.

Managing director Simon Heppner commented: “There are a wide range of pressures for restaurants to be more sustainable and we aim to show that it doesn’t have to be complicated or expensive and is instead a simple and achievable goal.

“Through responding to this challenge restaurants can not only satisfy existing customers and gain new ones, they can also make positive changes for the environment and society and be properly rewarded for their efforts.”

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