OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

A Quick Guide For Restaurants

HOW TO EASILY COMPLY WITH THE OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS CRITERIA

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

Mandatory Criteria

FOLLOW ALL 7!

1. **Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.** Foodware includes dinnerware, drinkware, silverware, and ramekins/containers. Cloth napkins should also be used when possible. Essentially, when a customer sits down to enjoy their meal onsite, everything should be served to them in or on something reusable. This results in less waste and more cost savings!

2. **Paper straws are provided only upon request.** Exceptions may be made for alternatives made from other naturally occurring materials and reusables. Bioplastics or compostable straws are not acceptable alternatives. There are a number of preferred straw vendors offering discounts to Ocean Friendly Restaurants, making it easy to make the switch from plastic. Email OFR@surfrider.org for a discount code. It's still best practice to have customers request a straw, even if they are paper, since they are often not needed and the most sustainable option is no straw at all. Straws should be provided without question to anyone who needs one, including people with disabilities.

3. **No expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam is used.** EPS (aka Styrofoam™) is an inexpensive form of plastic typically used in disposable products such as cups, plates, and clamshells. It is commonly found during beach cleanups and negatively impacts marine life and ecosystems as a whole. We recommend using paper-based or aluminum alternatives for take-out. Filling reusable items should be encouraged when possible, which will also lead to greater cost savings. Avoid bioplastic options touted as compostable for a variety of reasons, described in detail in the Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide.

4. **No plastic bags are used for takeout or to-go orders.** Plastic bags are a top threat to marine life, especially turtles who mistake them for food. If you need to provide a bag to customers, please make it paper or encourage customers to bring their own!

5. **Single-use utensils, straws, condiments, and other accessory items are provided only upon request.** Not everyone who gets takeout needs disposable add-ons. Some people may take food home while others may carry utensils in their backpack or car. Take this criteria a step further by offering wooden or paper utensils for those who ask. Instead of handing out all condiments, let people ask for what they need. This is another example where simply asking people to opt-in can help reduce the use of disposable items and, once again, save you money!

6. **Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.** Plastic bottles and caps are among the top ten items collected at beach cleanups, especially in states that do not have a bottle recycling law that requires a deposit on bottles and cans. If individual containers are needed, glass bottles and aluminum cans are both more Ocean Friendly options.

7. **Proper recycling practices are followed.** Proper recycling can help divert waste from the landfill to live a second life as something new. If you sell any plastic bottles, aluminum cans, or glass, please provide recycling containers that are easily visible for customers. Ensure that cardboard and any other delivery packaging are also recycled. Most cities and states have recycling mandates so please check with your municipality and/or waste hauler for local requirements.

Optional Criteria

CHOOSE ATLEAST 3!

1. **A discount is offered for customers with a reusable item (e.g. cup, container, bag).** By offering a small discount for customers that bring their own coffee mug, food container, or reusable bag, you will build a loyal following with your conservation practices. Reusable items are growing in popularity among eco-conscious consumers and make the biggest impact for a clean beach and ocean by tackling pollution through source reduction. Consider selling reusables onsite to encourage this Ocean Friendly behavior!

2. **Vegetarian/vegan food options are offered on a regular basis.** Offering vegetarian and vegan food options can reduce the impact of climate change, rainforest destruction, and pollution, while saving water, land, and other precious resources. Not to mention it will increase the number of customers who can frequent your establishment considering that plant-based diets are on the rise. Learn more at chooseveg.com/environment.

3. **All seafood is 'Best Choice' or 'Good Alternative' as defined by Seafood Watch, or certified as sustainable.** The Surfrider Foundation is a strong supporter of marine protected areas to increase fish abundance and diversity in the ocean. The Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program has a carefully curated list of recommendations to help you choose seafood that's fished or farmed in ways that have less impact on the environment and preserve natural populations. Visit seafoodwatch.org and msc.org for information on certified sustainably sourced seafood. Conduct your own seafood sustainability assessment at fishchoice.com.

4. **Energy efficiency efforts are in place.** Conserving energy will lower your carbon footprint and help to lessen the impacts of climate change. According to the Energy Information Administration, restaurants are some of the most energy intensive commercial buildings in the country. Thankfully, there are a number of options for energy and cost savings for both equipment and lighting. Learn more at sustainablefoodservice.com/cat/energy-efficiency.htm.

5. **Water conservation and pollution mitigation efforts are implemented.** Providing water to customers only upon request is a simple action to take. Another is installing low-flow faucets and toilets, which can help to conserve a significant amount of water. Make it a company policy to use a broom, rather than a hose, to clear sidewalks, driveways, loading docks and parking lots to reduce urban runoff. When poured down the drain, fats, oils, and greases (FOGs) harden inside sewer pipes, constricting wastewater flow. This can lead to sewer overflows that can reach nearby waterways and the ocean. Make it a priority to follow your local requirements for a grease trap and FOG management. Outdated septic tanks can also present a potential hazard for wastewater pollution by leaching nitrogen into groundwater supplies and local waterways. Ensure your systems are up-to-date and reflect local standards. Ask your local Chapter for more ideas on ways to comply.

6. **Concessions and pre-packaged food items are not sold in plastic packaging.** This includes any food sold or displayed that is pre-wrapped in plastic such as chips, candy, sandwiches, or grab-and-go snacks. While these items might be convenient, the amount of plastic quickly adds up. Food packaging pollution is on the rise and is now one of the top items found at cleanups. Instead, look for packaging that is paper or aluminum, or try setting up bulk bins for concessions with paper bags or reusable containers. You can also avoid pre-packaging foods by displaying them un-wrapped in a case. When customers order, place these items into paper, aluminum or reusable containers. Rather than selling bags of chips, try making your own and offering them in paper bags. There are so many ways to get creative, reduce your plastic use, and enhance customer experience.

7. **Composting efforts are in place for food waste.** When food waste ends up in landfills, it doesn't actually compost. Rather, the anaerobic environment breaks down food waste and releases greenhouse gases, mainly methane which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Emissions from food waste make up about 11% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Composting food waste can help to drastically curb these emissions and potentially save you money on waste hauler fees. If you aren't able to compost your food waste onsite, look for city-sponsored or privately operated composting programs.

8. **Neither single-use plastic nor bio-based plastic containers are used for takeout or to-go orders, reusable containers are preferred.** Takeout is here to stay so why not make your takeout plastic-free. Switch to paper or aluminum containers for takeout and avoid plastic and bio-based plastics. A good rule of thumb: If it looks like plastic, it acts like plastic. For completely zero-waste takeout, try offering reusables! Find a third party company in your area that will supply and sanitize reusable containers for you or implement your own reusable-return system. Check out the Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide for creative ways to implement reusables in your restaurant.