



## **Sustainable Restaurant Award – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who can enter? Is it compulsory for all restaurants on the 50 Best list?**

All restaurants on the 50 Best list are eligible and encouraged to enter. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important part of running a successful restaurant, submitting an entry to win this award also provides restaurants with a free tool to measure their progress. Every restaurant that takes part receives a free sustainability report, detailing how they performed in the questionnaire, meaning the exercise of taking part is a useful one.

### **How is the award judged/how do you determine a winner?**

The winner is determined through a two-fold process. All entrants complete a questionnaire of over 50 questions and submit supporting documentation – this gives them a % score. The top scorers are then judged by the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA), based on both their responses and a qualitative assessment of other publicly available information such as their menus, their website and any other efforts they are undertaking to improve their sustainability and demonstrate their advocacy.

### **Why do you ask the questions you ask?**

The questions are adapted from the SRA's industry-recognised Food Made Good Standard. They are based around three key pillars (sourcing, society and environment) and split into 10 key areas. The SRA has been working with food service businesses since 2010 and with 50 Best since 2013, meaning it understands the issues that need to be covered, and it has aligned the questions with other internationally recognised frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For an example of the topics covered, in the section on 'Celebrate provenance', the questionnaire asks about the traceability of ingredients. In 'Treat staff fairly', it asks about the actions the restaurant is taking to ensure the business is a fair and inclusive place to work; and in 'Reduce your footprint', it asks whether there are reduction targets in place for electricity, gas or water.

### **Do you always ask the same questions?**

The questionnaire is reviewed every year to ensure it reflects the latest science and thinking around sustainability. We aim to maintain an element of consistency for those businesses that take part year on year, however the nature of sustainability means that we occasionally need to make changes. For 2023, the questionnaire has been updated to reflect a more global outlook on sustainability and the SRA consulted subject experts and chefs from around the world to ensure that it is accessible, applicable and action focused.

## **How do you check the answers from the businesses?**

Given the international nature of 50 Best, it isn't possible to visit all businesses that take part – although restaurants may be visited where there is a chance to do so. We rely primarily on the information provided to us and the supporting evidence we ask for. This can be in the form of pictures, social media posts, a sustainability report or press releases. We then also check the menus of the top scorers and, where possible, supplier information and standards. The approach seeks to strike the right balance between rigour and pragmatism. We take it as a mark of success that Chef Christian Puglisi of Relae called the audit “a pain in the ass that took ages to complete but made us think about some things we hadn't considered before”.

## **Is any restaurant ever “sustainable”?**

Sustainability is not only about managing negative impacts, but also maximising positive ones and in that sense, there is no such thing as a definitive sustainable restaurant – there is always more that can be done to have a positive impact. For example, once direct impacts have been managed, restaurants can play a vital role in regenerating areas, bringing direct and indirect jobs and income, and benefiting local communities as well as those further afield through their supply chain. Chefs also have huge power to influence, impacting the food many of us eat and helping to raise awareness, shift diets and ensure a more sustainable future food system for everyone. In the end, sustainability is a journey, not a destination – a sustainable restaurant is one that is constantly striving to deliver more social value with the lightest environmental impact.

## **What if someone is serving something ‘unsustainable’ but is doing lots of other great things?**

Sustainability is both a complex subject and a journey for restaurants, and the Sustainable Restaurant Award questionnaire reflects the fact that there is neither one version of what a sustainable restaurant looks like nor a definitive “sustainable” restaurant. By assessing multiple elements of sustainability, we sometimes find that a restaurant's excellence in some areas can outweigh obvious deficiencies in another. It is quite possible that an otherwise exemplary restaurant could be serving a mayonnaise using eggs from caged hens; their score would still be high, despite serving an “unsustainable” ingredient.

This holistic approach to sustainability – one that includes food's impact on climate, biodiversity, animal ethics and poverty alleviation, among others – also means that we sometimes have to compare things that are not directly comparable: is the top-notch seafood sourcing of restaurant A more sustainable than the direct trade with coffee growers at restaurant B? Deciding a winner is therefore not always an easy process.

## **I've entered and I would like to know how I've done.**

Once the awards have taken place and the winner has been announced, the SRA follows up with a report detailing how each restaurant performed in the rating. If a venue would like more specific information following the report, they can follow up directly, and the SRA will be able to provide more information.

## **I've answered the questionnaire, but I'd like to learn more about my businesses' sustainability.**

If you'd like to delve further into how sustainable your operations are, the Food Made Good Standard is the SRA's assessment tool available to chefs around the world who want to know more about how they're performing.

The assessment builds upon the Sustainable Restaurant Award questionnaire, providing a more in-depth review of the businesses' operations. All the questions included in the Sustainable Restaurant Award questionnaire are also part of the Food Made Good Standard, so you're already part of the way there!

Not only does completing the Food Made Good Standard provide restaurants with a detailed overview of sustainability within the business, but its one-, two- and three-star certifications allow venues to celebrate successes as well as identify areas for future improvement.

Since 2010, more than 10,000 sites have benefitted from completing this comprehensive assessment process. Find out more about the [Food Made Good Standard](#).