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Sustainable Restaurants: How is Pittsburgh Contributing?

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Opinion Piece

Let's Talk About Waste!

Ever think about how eco-friendly your daily habits are? How much water, food, or rubbish do you alone waste in a single week? Think about every drop of water from your faucet, every piece of scrap paper tossed away, and every expired piece of food in your fridge. That's a lot, right? Now consider how much restaurants can potentially waste in one day. Surely, restaurant environments have the potential to produce tons of waste. According to opentable.com, Pittsburgh alone has 2,793 restaurants! How many of these restaurants practice sustainability?

Introducing Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurant.

[Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurant](#), a program that promotes sustainable practices in restaurant settings, has made choosing more sustainable restaurants much easier for the Pittsburgh community. It is an initiative of Sustainable Pittsburgh, which is supported by the Henry L. Hillman Foundation. Sustainable Pittsburgh has been working with Pittsburgh-based businesses since 1998. Together they work towards affecting and informing decision-making to integrate economic success, social equity, and environmental quality as a means for bringing sustainable solutions for communities and businesses.

The main goal of Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurants is to not only recognize what restaurants do well, but also help them build and better on the sustainable practices they already have. Once a restaurant gets designated, Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurants continues to challenge them to maintain and improve their commitment to sustainability.

Passing the Sustainability Test.

Similar to how we receive grades based on how well our class work is completed, Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurants also gives local restaurants a grade or designation regarding their practices. The program awards four levels of sustainability designations. These designations are based on sustainability performance in the following six categories:

- Energy efficiency
- Water conservation
- Waste reduction
- People
- Responsible sourcing
- Nutrition

Like the Olympics, but for sustainability, restaurants can earn a platinum, gold, silver, or bronze designation. Restaurants perform an online performance assessment, which evaluates how socially and environmentally responsible its current business practices are.

Which Restaurants Are Sustainability Champions?

You're probably wondering, "Is my favorite restaurant doing Mother Nature dirty? How sustainable are their business practices?". Not only does Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurants designate sustainability and help restaurants better their practices, but they also provide us with a [list of participating restaurants and their designations](#). Participating restaurants span from Greensburg, Pittsburgh, and Cranberry, PA. Some of the restaurants close to Duquesne are Red Ring (Gold), Buford's Kitchen Downtown (Silver), The Milkshake Factory Downtown (Silver), and Millie's Homemade Ice Cream Market Square (Silver).

Should we boycott those restaurants that are not participating? Of course not. However, we can use our voices to motivate undesignated restaurants to do better and improve their practices. A virtual map of all the participating restaurants can be found on Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurants' website. Is your favorite restaurant working towards becoming a more sustainable business?

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