

Serving up sustainability

How restaurants and caterers can provide greener, healthier and more ethical food

This is a one-page summary of Sustain's sustainable food guidelines, for restaurants and caterers interested in providing greener, healthier and more ethical food. For more information, visit: www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefood

Between 20 and 30 per cent of the global warming caused by human activity is contributed by our food and agriculture systems. And barely a day goes by without the media covering a health or environment-related story about food. With more and more consumers engaging with these issues, buying more sustainable ingredients is not just the right thing to do ethically – it makes good business sense.

At the moment, there is no legal definition of 'sustainable food,' although some aspects, such as the terms 'organic' or 'Fairtrade', are clearly defined. Sustain's working definition is that sustainable food should be produced, processed and traded in ways that:

- Contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods – both in the UK and, in the case of imported products, in producer countries;
- Protect the diversity of both plants and animals (and the welfare of farmed and wild species), and avoid damaging natural resources and contributing to climate change;
- Provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products, and educational opportunities.

In our opinion, businesses adopting a sustainable approach to food should:

1. **Use local, seasonally available ingredients as standard**, to minimise energy used in food production, transport and storage. To see which foods are in season, see, for example: <http://www.eattheseasons.co.uk/>.
2. **Specify food from farming systems that minimise harm to the environment**, such as certified organic produce. For information about organic certification, see the website of the UK's largest organic certification body, the Soil Association: <http://www.soilassociation.org>.
3. **Reduce the amount of foods of animal origin (meat, dairy products and eggs) served**, as livestock farming is one of the most significant contributors to climate change, and **promote meals rich in fruit, vegetables, pulses, wholegrains and nuts**. Ensure that meat, dairy products and eggs are produced to **high environmental and animal welfare standards**. See the website of Compassion in World Farming's Eat Less Meat campaign: <http://www.eatlessmeat.org> for more information.
4. **Exclude fish species identified as most 'at risk' by the Marine Conservation Society** (<http://www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid>), and **specify fish only from sustainable sources** – such as those accredited by the Marine Stewardship Council (<http://www.msc.org>).
5. **Choose Fairtrade-certified products** for foods and drinks imported from poorer countries, to ensure a fair deal for disadvantaged producers. For a list of catering suppliers of Fairtrade products, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_caterers.htm.
6. **Avoid bottled water** and instead serve plain or filtered tap water in reusable jugs or bottles, to minimise transport and packaging waste. For information about the environmental problems associated with bottled water, see Sustain's report: *Have you bottled it? How drinking tap water can help save you and the planet* - <http://www.sustainweb.org/page.php?id=137>.
7. **Promote health and well-being** by offering generous portions of vegetables, fruit and starchy staples like wholegrains, cutting down on salt, fats and oils, and cutting out artificial additives. The Food Standards Agency (<http://www.food.gov.uk>) has a wealth of advice on all these topics.

If you run a London food business interested in using more sustainable food, contact: London Food Link, c/o Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.
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