



# Green Restaurant Certification

How to Unlock Rewards



Is your restaurant missing out on the green gold rush? Sustainability is the new 'it' factor in the food industry. So obtaining a Green Restaurant Association (GRA) Certificate is definitely a game changer for those eateries aiming **to become a green restaurant.**

With consumers increasingly eco-conscious, there's a surge in demand for ethically produced food. In fact, **nearly 30% of industry decision-makers** cited consumer demand for eco-friendly products as their top factor driving organizational change.

Beyond the obvious benefits for restaurants of obtaining the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) Certificate, tax incentives, and special loans are also designed to support more sustainable production practices. However, many eatery owners still need to learn about these opportunities, making it challenging to align their actions with this growing trend.

# Introduction

As of 2023, the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) has certified just over 600 restaurants across the U.S. and Canada. Therefore this certification is quite an exclusive seal for restaurants. To earn this recognition, restaurants must meet certain stringent criteria, but the rewards are well worth it!

So, if Earth Day Week is sparking your interest in going green, join us as we answer all your frequently asked questions and show you how to navigate the Green Restaurant Certification process with ease. Don't miss out on this opportunity to become a sustainability leader and attract eco-conscious customers!

# How to be a **Green Restaurant** officially certified?

The Green Restaurant Association (GRA), is a non-profit leader in the industry, that has been championing environmental sustainability in the restaurant industry since 1990. It offers the most widely recognized Green Restaurant Certification program in the United States.

Their certification standards are the result of over 30 years of research, with thousands of restaurants serving as a living laboratory for continuous improvement.

This program provides a framework for restaurants to implement sustainable practices across their operations. In 2023, 600 eateries were certified in the United States and Canada.



**GREENING RESTAURANTS SINCE 1990**

## What are the benefits of Green Restaurant Certification?

There are numerous benefits to obtaining a Green Restaurant Certification, impacting your business, the environment, and your customers:

- **Environmental Impact:** By implementing sustainable practices, you are actively reducing your restaurant's footprint on the planet. This includes conserving energy and water, minimizing waste, and supporting responsible sourcing.
- **Enhanced Brand Image:** Customers are drawn to businesses that share their values. The Green Restaurant Certification is a recognizable symbol of environmental responsibility, giving you a competitive edge and attracting eco-conscious patrons.
- **Increased Customer Loyalty:** Studies show that customers are willing to pay more for sustainable products and services. Certification demonstrates your commitment to the environment, fostering customer loyalty and repeat business.
- **Cost Savings:** **Many green practices in restaurants**, like energy efficiency and water conservation, can lead to significant cost reductions in the long run. Additionally, some local governments and utilities offer incentives for certified green businesses.
- **Improved Employee Morale:** Working for a company committed to sustainability can boost employee morale and create a more positive work environment.

# Greening Your Business: Loans & Tax Incentives

The good news is there are financial resources available to help restaurants implement green practices. Here are a few options to explore:

- **Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans:** The SBA offers various loan programs that can be used to finance energy-efficient equipment, water conservation measures, and other green upgrades.
  - **USDA Rural Development Programs:** The USDA provides grants and loan guarantees for rural businesses investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

- **State and Local Incentives:** Many states and municipalities offer tax breaks, rebates, and other incentives for businesses pursuing sustainability initiatives.

- **Tax Incentives:** Green-certified restaurants may be eligible for tax breaks related to energy-efficient equipment, renewable energy installations, or sustainable building improvements. Consult with a tax professional to explore available options.

**Pro Tip:** Research local & state government websites or contact your local sustainability office to learn about specific incentives in your area.

# How to Obtain Your Green Restaurant Certification?

The Green Restaurant Association makes the certification process straightforward and accessible. However, to earn this certificate, eateries must meet some criteria across a program divided by categories. Since the benefits are plenty it is worth it for small restaurants to know the proceedings to gain the Green Restaurant Certificate.

Let's explore the steps you need to follow:

**Join the Program:** Sign up for the Green Restaurant Certification program through the GRA website <https://www.dinegreen.com/>

**Self-Assessment:** Complete a self-assessment questionnaire to gauge your restaurant's current environmental practices.

**Action Plan:** Develop an action plan outlining the steps you will take to achieve certification.

**On-Site Verification:** A GRA-approved auditor will conduct an on-site inspection to verify your self-assessment and action plan.

**Certification:** Once you meet the GreenPoints™ requirements, you will be awarded the Green Restaurant Certification.

# How does the Green Restaurant Association evaluate your eaterie?

The Green Restaurant Association assesses your eligibility for obtaining a Green Restaurant Certificate using a metric called **GreenPoints™**. These points serve as the currency of sustainability within the GRA's certification framework. Restaurants can earn these points across eight essential categories:

**Energy:** Efficient energy practices, such as using LED lighting or optimizing kitchen equipment, contribute to GreenPoints™.

**Water:** Conserving water through smart fixtures, leak detection, and water-saving practices adds to a restaurant's score.

**Waste:** Proper waste management, recycling, and composting initiatives earn GreenPoints™.

**Reusables & Disposables:** Opting for reusable items over disposables (like utensils and containers) positively impacts the score.



**Chemicals & Pollution:** Minimizing harmful chemicals and pollutants in cleaning products and operations is crucial.

**Food:** Sourcing sustainable ingredients, reducing food waste, and supporting local farmers contribute to GreenPoints™.

**Building & Furnishing:** Environmentally friendly construction materials, energy-efficient appliances, and sustainable furnishings play a role.

**Education & Transparency:** Educating staff and customers about **sustainability practices** and being transparent about efforts matter.

To become a Certified green restaurant, establishments must accumulate a certain number of GreenPoints™ across the categories.



## What types of Certification Levels your Eaterie can Obtain?

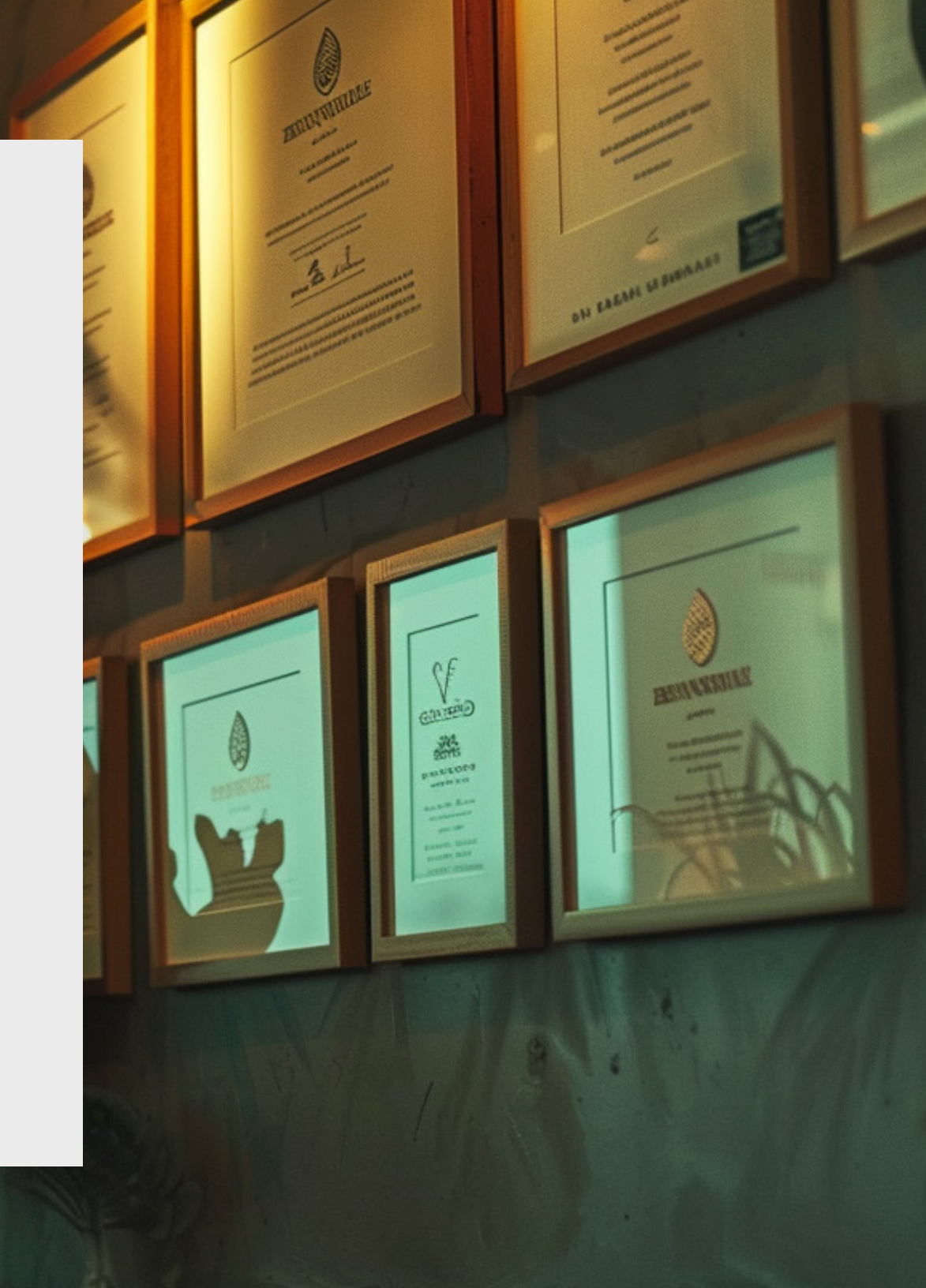
Restaurants can achieve one of four certification levels based on their GreenPoints™ accumulation:

**2 Star Certified:** Restaurants earn at least 100 GreenPoints™.

**3 Star Certified:** Achieving 175 Green Points™ or more.

**4 Star Certified:** Restaurants with 250 GreenPoints™ or higher.

**5 Star Certified:** The pinnacle, reserved for those accumulating 300 or more GreenPoints™.



# How Long does it Take to Obtain a GRA Certificate?

The time it takes to complete the process varies depending on the size and complexity of your operation.

Generally, you can expect it to take 2-3 months, though it could be shorter if you already have sustainable practices in place.



# Can Coffee Shops, Food Trucks, and Bakeries Obtain a GRA Certificate?

Absolutely! The Green Restaurant Association (GRA) extends its certification program to a diverse range of food establishments, including coffee shops, food trucks, and bakeries.

These eateries can actively participate in the sustainability movement by adopting environmentally responsible practices.



## Real-life Examples in the U.S: Eateries with GRA Certificate

If you are ready to pursue the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) certification and want to research examples of colleagues who have already achieved it, you can explore real-life case studies of ventures in the United States

- **True Food Kitchen:** With multiple locations across the U.S., True Food Kitchen focuses on serving healthy, sustainable, and seasonal dishes. Their menu includes a variety of plant-based options, organic ingredients, and responsibly sourced proteins.

- **The Plant Cafe Organic:** Located in San Francisco, California, The Plant Cafe Organic offers organic, plant-based meals made from locally sourced ingredients. They prioritize sustainability and eco-friendly practices.

- **Cafe Gratitude:** With locations in California, Oregon, and Kansas City, Cafe Gratitude serves 100% organic, plant-based cuisine. Their commitment to sustainability extends to their practices, ingredients, and community involvement.

- **Dig Inn:** Operating in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, Dig Inn emphasizes farm-to-table dining. They source ingredients directly from local farmers and focus on seasonal, wholesome meals.

- **Blue Hill at Stone Barns:** Located in Pocantico Hills, New York, Blue Hill at Stone Barns is a renowned farm-to-table restaurant. They grow their own produce on-site and create innovative, sustainable dishes.

# The Final Breakdown

The Green Restaurant Certification isn't just a badge of honor; it's a strategic investment in your restaurant's future. Consumers are demanding sustainable practices, and savvy restaurants are reaping the rewards. Earning this certification positions you as an industry leader, attracts eco-conscious patrons and fosters customer loyalty.

Beyond the environmental benefits, green practices can lead to significant cost savings in the long run. Between energy-efficient upgrades and government incentives, going green can boost your bottom line.

Plus, a positive work environment built around sustainability can improve employee morale.

## **Ready to take the next step?**

Visit the Green Restaurant Association website for starting today!

[iposos.com](https://www.iposos.com)



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