



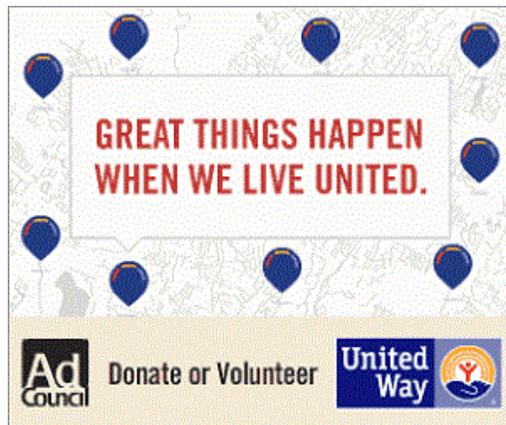
# Why Restaurants Are Rushing to Adopt Higher Welfare Standards for Chickens

First Pret and Panera, then Starbucks, now Chipotle: What they're thinking, when it comes to chickens.

Brent Cox Published 3:00 pm, Friday, February 10, 2017



Photo: Hilary Brodey | EyeEm | Getty Images



For the food industry, the egg truly came before the chicken: **In the past two years, one corporate press release after another** has announced yet another food company's commitment to sourcing exclusively cage-free eggs.

Related: **[Chipotle Stops Selling Pork at Hundreds of Locations After Supplier Violates the Chain's Animal-Welfare Standards](#)**

In fact, as of this year, 2017, every major restaurant, supermarket and foodservice chain has pledged to ban cages from its egg supply.

And the same momentum is building in another, related movement, focused on improving the welfare of chickens raised for meat. In November 2016, Foodservice giants Compass Group, Aramark and Sodexo all kicked off a domino effect by releasing

new chicken welfare policies.

Then, in December, **Pret A Manger** became the first restaurant chain to resolve to use only chickens raised according to standards set by the international certification program, Global Animal Partnership (GAP). Those standards support sourcing breeds of chickens that have higher animal welfare outcomes, such as lower rates of disease, injury and death.

The GAP standards support such company practices as giving animals more space, light and other environmental enrichments, and accepting independent, third-party auditing to prove their compliance.

Other leading restaurant companies have followed. Panera Bread, Starbucks, Shake Shack, Chipotle and more have all publicly committed to adopting higher chicken-welfare standards.

Clearly, then, the move to treat chickens better is the next big transition for restaurants, and it's one that will benefit both brands and birds alike. Chickens raised for meat, known as "broilers" in the industry, are among the most abused animals on Earth.

The grisly specifics? Broiler chickens are bred to grow so unnaturally large at such a rapid pace that their legs and organs often can't support their own weight. At the slaughterhouse, chickens are shackled upside down and have their throats cut open while they are still fully conscious.

Related: [Nestle Commits to Going Cage Free by 2020](#)

These abuses have become unacceptable to customers and unprofitable for the companies that support them. The result has been protests, boycotts and negative social media campaigns. Companies that refuse to adopt welfare policies are seeing their images tarnished.

Of course, the new welfare policies won't relieve all of the animals' suffering; but they will at least eliminate the worst of the worst abuses -- and at the same time shield companies from public ire.

So, if you're a food industry entrepreneur, here are three things to take away from this fast-growing trend:

1. Listen closely to consumer expectations, and be quick to respond. It's no coincidence that the most successful companies are the ones proactively embracing this shift toward improved animal welfare.

Chains like Chipotle are known for listening to customers' demands and quickly answering them by implementing new practices. The company's [2014 decision](#) to add tofu sofritas in response to diners' requests for a plant-based meat option is just one example.

By contrast, struggling Chipotle competitor Qdoba, which has [shut down](#) dozens of locations over the past few years, refuses to release a broiler welfare policy. Although consumers have been flooding the company's Facebook and Twitter pages with complaints, the chain has neither acknowledged nor responded to calls to reform the cruel practices it supports.

2. Your animal welfare policy could make or break your business. Implementing progressive animal welfare policies -- and offering high-quality plant-based options, as, for instance, Chipotle does -- is no longer optional for food companies that wish to thrive; it's become imperative.

One reason why lies with how millennials are [rehabing](#) the restaurant industry: According to a World Animal Protection study, [83 percent](#) of young people surveyed said they take animal welfare into account when buying food. Additionally, a full [12 percent](#) of millennials surveyed by the Hartman Group described themselves as "faithful vegetarians."

Of those in the survey who did eat meat, many said they were embracing "flexitarianism," meaning diet plans like "VB6" (vegan before 6 p.m.).

What's more, alternative protein sources are **expected to claim a third of the protein market by 2054**, and consumers will be looking to your business for these options.

The wrath of millennials and other concerned consumers comes down especially hard on companies stuck behind the trend of improved animal welfare. Younger generations are adept at using online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and petition sites like Change.org to make their voices heard and torment companies until they drop cruel practices.

To see this outrage in action, just take a look at the hashtag **#WalmartDoubleStandards**, used in an ongoing campaign to convince the retail giant to extend its U.S. cage-free policy to Latin America.

3. Smart is the new big: Use your smaller size and smarts to your advantage. Clearly, today's customers are drawn to new companies that hear and swiftly respond to customers' calls for higher sustainability policies. Conversely, they're suspicious of older, slower-moving companies, like McDonald's, which seem to suffer from a top-down approach by which executives tell consumers what to want and what to expect.

This is an outdated relationship that millennials and other customers who care about the social impact of their purchasing decisions no longer accept. Today's consumers want to feel they have a voice and plenty of choice -- and they want to know they're being heard.

Related: [Fast-Food Giants' Top Cheese Supplier Embroiled in Shocking Animal Abuse Scandal](#)

Your company's choices in the area of animal welfare can forward that aim.

Related:

[Why Restaurants Are Rushing to Adopt Higher Welfare Standards for Chickens](#)

[How 2 Young Restaurateurs Broke Through a Crowded Industry](#)

[What I Learned Dining at Eatsa, an Automat Restaurant for Today's World](#)

Copyright 2017 Entrepreneur.com Inc., All rights reserved

This article originally appeared on entrepreneur.com

## Sponsored Content





**Over 1 Million People Say These Are The Best Balance Transfer Credit Cards**

NextAdvisor



**Trumps Final Warning To Homeowners - Claim Your Federal \$4,240 Rebate**

proandeasy.club



**The Fastest Way To Pay Off \$10,000 In Credit Card Debt**

NerdWallet



**This Defiant, Deadly Image Is World Press Photo of the Year**

Newser

## Sponsored Content

- **Ever look yourself up? This new site is addicting, enter your name** TruthFinder
- **The No. 1 Stock to Own for 2017** Banyan Hill Publishing
- **A Mind-Blowing 10% Cash Back Card Has Arrived (See Terms)** NextAdvisor
- **Stock to Crash, Presidential Advisor Warns** Banyan Hill Publishing
- **This Stock Has Buyout Written All Over It** investor-daily
- **Teen Goes Missing In Aruba. But 10 Years Later, Police Uncover Truth** LifeDaily
- **These Are the Best Luxury Cars** Yahoo Search

## We Recommend

- **Dear Abby: My teen daughter ran off with a lowlife**
- **Stamford bouncer pleads guilty to burglary beatdown**
- **Arrests in car break-ins in Riverside**
- **Stamford man charged with selling pot**
- **Norwalk restaurant is southwestern Connecticut's top-Yelped restaurant**
- **Frank Pellegrino, 'Sopranos' and 'Goodfellas' Actor, Dies at 72**
- **Reports: women's clothier nears bankruptcy**

Recommended by Outbrain

[View Comments](#)

## Sponsored Content



**America's new \$2.7 billion submarine is a nuclear marvel.**

CNET