2026 EGGSPOSÉ REPORT



THE STATE of CAGE-FREE

in the US Restaurant Industry



THE HUMANE LEAGUE®

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

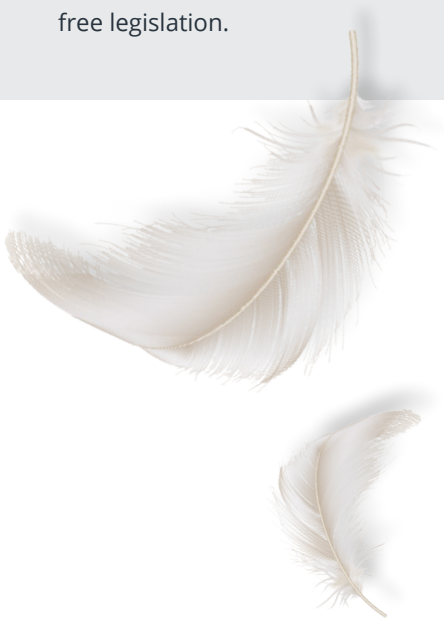
Restaurants in the United States are in a white-hot competition for diners. Full-service restaurants, fast-casual brands, and quick-service restaurants (QSRs), as well as convenience stores, are all competing for the same increasingly cautious consumer dollar. Whether they see themselves as direct competitors or not, Chili's is now vying with McDonald's, 7-Eleven is competing with Burger King, and fast-casual restaurants are contending with QSRs and full-service dining. In this hyper-competitive market, every element of a brand's value proposition matters—including whether its sourcing claims and promises match its actual practices.

As the final installment in our 2026 Cage-Free Eggsposé series, this report evaluates approximately 100 full-service restaurants, fast-casual restaurants, quick-service restaurants, and convenience stores in the US on their progress toward fulfilling their 100% cage-free egg commitments.

It's the third year in a row we've publicly assessed US restaurants' cage-free performance—and the timing is significant. The 2025 deadlines that many restaurants set for transitioning to 100% cage-free eggs have passed. Now the companies that made those commitments, years ago, are being asked to show what they've actually accomplished.

ANIMAL WELFARE IS A PRODUCT ATTRIBUTE SHOPPERS VALUE:

- **80%** of US consumers would support a state-level ban on cages for farm animals.
- **78%** of US consumers express concern about the welfare of animals raised for food.
- **72%** of Gen Z shoppers look for animal welfare as a value when choosing food.
- **63%** of egg-laying hen farmers surveyed support cage-free laws like California's Proposition 12 and Massachusetts' Question 3. Not one respondent opposed cage-free legislation.



Cover hen photo: Matias Vassor • Open Wing Alliance • We Animals
Image representative of factory farming

First, the good news: A substantial number have fully delivered, and the majority are reporting progress. McDonald's, Starbucks, Taco Bell, Dairy Queen, Papa John's, The Cheesecake Factory, Applebee's, IHOP, and Outback Steakhouse/Bloomin' Brands are among the big companies that have fulfilled their cage-free commitments in the United States. A small number of major brands, including Burger King and its parent company Restaurant Brands International, are now reporting regularly on their progress. And many smaller brands—Peet's, Taco John's, Farmer Boys, Mendocino Farms, Rubio's, Pret A Manger, Snooze AM Eatery, Black Bear Diner—have also kept their promises and achieved their 100% cage-free goals.

As for the less good news: Other restaurants are falling behind, making inexcusably slow cage-free progress, or simply refusing to report their progress at all. Chick-fil-A, Sonic, Dunkin', Bojangles, Krystal, Honeygrow, Chopt, and Wawa are among those not reporting progress. And Cracker Barrel continues to report extremely slow progress.

For consumers in 2026, it's more than fair to ask why these restaurants are making this choice. And to demand that these laggards set credible new timelines, and report consistently—and publicly—on their progress.

They need to be reminded that a commitment without a deadline is just an aspiration. A pledge with no reporting can't be evaluated. And a promise that's continually delayed means that a brand is not credible.

With 2025 well behind us, consumers deserve to see how—and when—restaurants' cage-free commitments will be fulfilled.



Photo: Farm Transparency Project • Animals Uncovered
Image representative of factory farming

- **26%** of US consumers actively try to reduce their intake of products containing eggs from industrial farming, and an additional 8% avoid such products altogether.
- **77%** of Americans say they prefer to buy eggs from hens not kept in cages.
- **81%** of US residents agreed that sustainability should include the health and welfare of animals, humans, and the planet—indicating that consumers do not view animal welfare as separate from sustainability.
- **10** US states have banned the use of battery cages and/or the sale of eggs from cages.

Corporate Cage-Free

HALL OF FAME

Fulfilled

These companies are leading the US food restaurant sector in 100% cage-free egg sourcing. They fulfilled their public cage-free commitments within established deadlines and reported progress transparently.

YEAR FULFILLED

2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025
2026

TACO BELL
100% cage-free
in the US since 2016

PEET'S COFFEE
100% cage-free
in the US since 2023

THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY
100% cage-free
in the US since 2023

MCDONALD'S
100% cage-free
in the US since 2024

APPLEBEE'S/IHOP
100% cage-free
in the US since 2025

OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE (BLOOMIN' BRANDS)
100% cage-free
in the US since 2025

Corporate Cage-Free

HALL OF SHAME

Broken promise

These companies are lagging behind in the US food restaurant sector's transition to 100% cage-free sourcing by not being transparent about their cage-free commitments.

YEAR COMMITTED

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

DUNKIN' *(2015)*
Not reporting cage-free progress, missed 2025 fulfillment goal

WENDY'S *(2016)*
Refuses to apply cage-free policy to most locations

P.F. CHANG'S *(2016)*
Has never reported cage-free progress, missed 2025 fulfillment goal

CHICK-FIL-A *(2016)*
Has never reported cage-free progress, removed 2026 fulfillment goal

WAWA *(2016)*
Not reporting cage-free progress, missed 2020 fulfillment goal

CRACKER BARREL *(2016)*
Reporting slow cage-free progress, removed 2026 fulfillment goal

THE FINAL RATINGS

THE RESULTS ARE IN

Ratings are based on publicly available information from each company.

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍👍	Taco Bell	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Starbucks	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Peet's Coffee	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Papa John's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	McDonald's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Carl's Jr.	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Del Taco	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Krispy Kreme Doughnuts	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Arby's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Caribou Coffee	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Dairy Queen	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Jack in the Box	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Taco John's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Subway	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	White Castle	Yes	Fulfilled

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍👍	Jollibee	Yes	Fulfilled
👍	Pizza Hut	Yes	Reporting progress
👍	KFC	Yes	Reporting progress
👍	Burger King	Yes	Reporting progress
👍	Tim Hortons	Yes	Reporting progress
👍	Popeyes	Yes	Reporting progress
👎	Barnes & Noble	Yes	Reporting removed
👎	Eat'n Park	Yes	Partial reporting
👎	Einstein Bros. Bagels	Yes	Outdated reporting
👎	Quiznos	Yes	Partial reporting
👎	Bojangles'	Yes	Not reporting
👎👎	Hardee's	Removed timeline	Reporting removed
👎👎	Dunkin'	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Sonic	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Jimmy John's	Removed	Not reporting

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👎👎	Baskin-Robbins	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Krystal	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Jack's	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	GO TO FOODS	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Nathan's Famous	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Whataburger	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	au bon pain	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Chick-fil-A	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Wendy's	Partial policy only	Partial policy



Photo: Jo-Anne McArthur • We Animals | Image representative of factory farming

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍	7-ELEVEN	Yes	Reporting progress
👍	CIRCLE K	Yes	Fulfilled (partial)
👎👎	Casey's	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	KWIK TRIP	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	SHEETZ	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	SUNOCO LP	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Pilot FLYING J	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Wawa	Removed	Not reporting



Photo: Farm Transparency Project • Animals Uncovered | Image representative of factory farming

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍👍	SHAKE SHACK	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	noodles & COMPANY	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	FarmerBoys BREAKFAST, BURGERS & MORE	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Mendocino Farms	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	★ PRET A MANGER ★	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	rubio's COASTAL GRILL	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	POTBELLY SANDWICH SHOP	Yes	Fulfilled
👍	FIREHOUSE SUBS FOUNDED BY FIREMEN	Yes	Reporting progress
👎	Panera BREAD	Removed timeline	Reporting progress
👎	PANDA EXPRESS CHINESE KITCHEN	Yes	Not reporting
👎	LE PAIN QUOTIDIEN	Yes	Not reporting
👎👎	sweetgreen	Removed timeline	Not reporting
👎👎	just salad	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	QDOBA MEXICAN EATS	Removed timeline	Not reporting
👎👎	honeygrow	Removed	Not reporting

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👎👎	DONATOS PIZZA	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	PEI WEI ASIAN KITCHEN	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Portillo's	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	CHOPT	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	GROUPE MTY GROUP	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	GO TO FOODS	Removed	Not reporting



Photo: Andrew Skowron • Open Cages | Image representative of factory farming

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍👍	The Cheesecake Factory	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Snooze AN A.M. EATERY	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	BONEFISH GRILL	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Fleming's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	IHOP	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Applebee's	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Olive Garden ITALIAN KITCHEN	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	LONGHORN STEAKHOUSE	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	GREAT FOOD • CLASSIC ROCK Yard House WORLD'S LARGEST SELECTION OF DRAFT BEER	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Cheddar's SCRATCH KITCHEN	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	THE CAPITAL GRILLE	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Seasons 52 FRESH GRILL | WINE BAR	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Eddie V's PRIME SEAFOOD	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Bahama Breeze	Yes	Fulfilled

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👍👍	BJ's Restaurant Brewhouse	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Chili's	Yes	Fulfilled (company-owned locations)
👍👍	Maggiano's Little Italy	Yes	Fulfilled (company-owned locations)
👍👍	FirstWatch	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	golden corral	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	Black Bear Diner	Yes	Fulfilled
👍👍	LaRosa's Family Pizzeria	Yes	Fulfilled
👍	Red Robin Gourmet Burgers and Brews	Yes	Reporting progress
👎	Denny's	Yes	Outdated reporting
👎	Benihana	Yes	Outdated reporting
👎	Kona Grill kitchen • sushi • cocktails	Yes	Outdated reporting
👎	Earls Kitchen + Bar	Partial policy only	Unclear reporting
👎👎	T.G.I. Friday's	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Cracker Barrel	Removed timeline	Reporting slow progress
👎👎	Another Broken Egg Cafe	Removed timeline	Not reporting

Rating	Company	Meaningful and public policy	US cage-free status
👎👎	PINSTRIPES	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	FIREBIRDS WOOD FIRED GRILL	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	BUFFALO WILD WINGS	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Johnny Rockets THE ORIGINAL HAMBURGER	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	SHONEY'S	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	OLD CHICAGO PIZZA + TAPROOM	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	FOGO DE CHÃO	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Ruby Tuesday	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	eggspectation restaurant - bar	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Le Peep Breakfast Brunch+Lunch	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	Bob Evans RESTAURANT	Removed	Not reporting
👎👎	P.F. CHANG'S	Removed	Not reporting



Photo: Bogna Wiltowska • We Animals | Image representative of factory farming



AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Liz Fergus
Sr. Corporate Relations Manager, US

Today, everyone is competing with everyone. QSR prices have risen faster than casual-dining prices, which has narrowed the traditional gap between fast-food and full-service restaurants. Chili's has explicitly positioned itself to compete with McDonald's in the value battle. And more and more convenience stores are challenging traditional fast-food restaurants by upgrading their foodservice offerings.

At the same time, diners have become more discerning about which restaurants are delivering value—the definition of which is changing. For restaurants, big portions or low prices are no longer the only metric. In a sector that's working for every cent, value also means quality and, increasingly, sourcing. Diners, like other consumers, are judging not just what their money gets them but also how and where it's sourced.

Brand honesty is increasingly key. Restaurants that make false, misleading, or unsupportable claims can no longer expect to keep diners. The same goes for restaurants whose messaging and practices don't align. Diner loyalty depends more and more on knowing that the place they've chosen to eat and spend their money is trustworthy. One way restaurants today can demonstrate their credibility is by committing to strong sourcing standards and, critically, keeping their cage-free promises.

> "At Mendocino Farms, we're proud to source 100% cage-free eggs across our restaurants, one more way we back up the quality and hospitality we've stood by for over 20 years.
>
> ***–Mendocino Farms***



Photo: Haig • World Animal Protection • We Animals

Panera BREAD®

PANERA BREAD:

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Restaurant company CEOs, take note: There's a new winning formula to losing customers, goodwill, and profits.

First, raise your prices. Then, shrink your portion sizes. After that, think about removing popular items from your menu, stop baking your food onsite, and—this is critical—relax your sourcing standards, including your commitments to animal welfare.

That's what Panera Bread has done over the past couple of years. Its (in)actions include failing to ensure that the "secondary eggs" it uses in its mayonnaise, sauces, batters, pastas, pastries, and desserts—a category that comprises 35% of the company's total egg volume—are 100% cage-free. In fact, Panera removed that objective from its list of stated goals, without providing a new timeline or plan for completing the transition.

At the same time, Panera's sales have fallen. In 2024 alone they fell a full 5%. What had been the No. 1 fast-casual brand in the US sank to third place, behind Chipotle and Panda Express.

For years Panera succeeded by respecting its customers, signaling transparency, and promoting wholesomeness, which helped it distinguish itself from the competition. The company realized years ago that customers care about where their food comes from. That's why Panera was an early adopter of ambitious animal welfare standards, setting a goal in 2015 to be 100% cage-free by 2020. It was a move that got the attention of consumers, while the company's forward-thinking "Food Beliefs"—including its commitment to high-quality ingredients—were embraced by the media. For years the company reaped the benefits of its public praise.

But now, many of Panera's big promises look like little more than savvy marketing. To cut costs and appeal to potential Wall Street investors, Panera decided to roll back the same values it had espoused. And its reputation hasn't shielded it from the ensuing backlash.

Now Panera has the unenviable task of trying to restore the customer trust it chose to break.

Photo: Farm Transparency Project| Image representative of factory farming



BRAND TRUST AND DISCERNING CONSUMERS

Aimee Drugan
Sr. US Corporate Relations Lead

Consumers today increasingly judge brands both on what they sell and on what they say. Trust is particularly important when companies make claims about responsible sourcing, sustainability, animal welfare, or corporate responsibility.

Cage-free commitments are one of the clearest examples of this principle. A company that keeps its cage-free promise demonstrates that its public values are connected to its actual supply chain. A company that breaks its promise—missing its deadline, ceasing reporting, or weakening its policy—creates a real credibility gap.

And credibility matters more than it has before, because consumers are more discerning. In fact, nearly 70% of today's US consumers say animal wellness is "very" or "extremely" important to their purchasing decisions. Animal welfare is especially important for younger consumers—the demographic that represents the restaurant industry's long-term growth opportunity.



> "Snooze believes it only takes a moment to make a difference, and that starts with how we treat our supply partners. That's why we source 100% cage-free eggs and build lasting relationships with our partners. Commitments like these build trust with our guests, one plate at a time.
>
> –***Snooze, an AM Eatery***



Hens in a cage-free barn

7-ELEVEN

7-ELEVEN:
A PROFILE IN PROGRESS

7-Eleven isn't like other convenience stores. It's bigger. Much bigger. With more locations than any other retailer on Earth—13,000+ stores in the US and Canada alone—it's the biggest convenience store chain in the world.

But until recently, it was just like other convenience stores in one important way: It lacked transparency when it came to animal welfare standards. Though 7-Eleven's food offerings have grown enormously in recent years, from simple snacks to full breakfast meals that use a lot of eggs, the company hasn't kept pace in terms of its clear sourcing commitments.

Until now. After being rated unfavorably in the 2025 Eggsposé for failing to report any progress toward its 100% cage-free goal, the company publicly disclosed in late 2025 that 27% of its primary egg volume across all 7-Eleven banners and brands in the US and Canada came from cage-free sources. It also reported that its house brand, 7-Select, was sourcing only cage-free eggs for its shell and hard-boiled eggs in the US—making 7-Eleven the first convenience store in the US to report that achievement.

Just as important is the reporting itself—the clearest we've seen from any convenience store in North America. That sets a bar the company's competitors can't ignore. When the biggest player in an industry publishes real numbers—and shows what's possible—it's sure to have big ripple effects. Other convenience store chains will scramble to keep up.

And more hens will be spared from battery cages.



CONCLUSION

In 2026, the restaurant industry's cage-free transition is happening at scale. Major restaurant brands have demonstrated that 100% cage-free sourcing can be achieved across large, complex US supply chains. At the same time, smaller and emerging brands—which used to argue that they lack the purchasing power, resources, or leverage that the largest restaurant corporations have—have also completed the cage-free transition. For giants and upstarts alike, cage-free sourcing is achievable. Size is no excuse for inaction.

The companies that have completed the transition have turned a corporate responsibility promise into an operational reality. In doing so, they've strengthened the credibility of their brands and helped move the broader restaurant industry forward.

For companies that haven't fulfilled their commitments, the message is equally clear: The competitive landscape has changed, the deadlines have passed, and consumers are paying closer attention. Every year of delay makes the gap between a company's public promises and its actual sourcing practices more visible.

At a time when the restaurant industry is fighting for every consumer dollar, trust is no longer a luxury. Responsible sourcing isn't just a corporate communications exercise. And a cage-free commitment is more than a line on a company website. It's a promise that puts brand integrity on the line.

The brands that keep that promise are helping define what responsible restaurant sourcing looks like in 2026 and beyond. The brands that don't should be prepared to explain why.

Reach out to our team to discuss your cage-free transition.

Contact us

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