



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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Commissioner

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Restaurant Letter Grading: The First Year

On July 28, 2010, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene began issuing and requiring restaurants to post A, B or C grade cards reflecting their performance on sanitary inspections. Grade posting provides diners with easily interpretable information previously available only on a website and gives restaurants the incentive to maintain the highest food safety practices. After one year, the Health Department has issued 90% of restaurants a letter grade. By the fall of 2011, all restaurants will have grade cards for posting at their entrances.

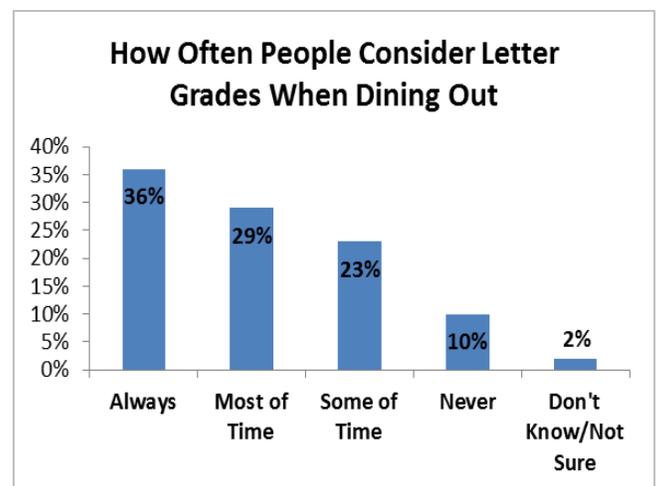
The response to grading shows that New Yorkers want to know restaurants' inspection results. Results of the first year of letter grading suggest that it is motivating most restaurant operators to train their workers in food protection and to maintain the highest sanitary standards. The Department expects these improvements to lead, over time, to a reduced risk of restaurant-related, food-borne illnesses.

The restaurant letter grading program, 18 months in planning, and now one year old, reflects the input provided by restaurateurs, restaurant associations, food safety experts, and the dining public. The Health Department continues to meet regularly with restaurateurs and convenes a quarterly Food Safety Technical Advisory Committee that advises the Department on its food protection rules. Over time, the Department will explore what types of food hazards persist in some restaurants, what can be done to reduce their occurrences, and how the grading program can be adjusted to promote the safest possible dining.

New Yorkers Strongly Support Restaurant Grading

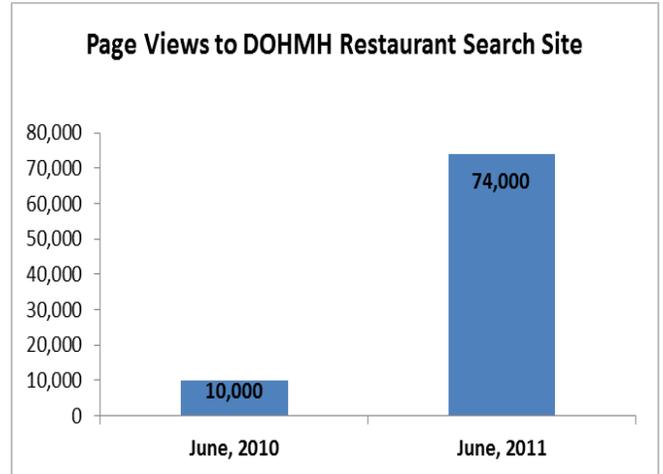
New Yorkers support the grading program and consider grade cards when they eat out

In July 2011, Baruch College Survey Research conducted a survey of New Yorkers as part of the City's comprehensive evaluation of restaurant grading. In the survey, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a representative group of New Yorkers were asked about their familiarity with restaurant letter grades. Fully 70% of New York City adults report noticing grades in restaurant windows. Of those who do, 88% consider grades when deciding where to eat, with 65% considering them all or most of the time. Ninety percent of all New Yorkers approve of grade posting.



More New Yorkers use the Department's website to search for restaurant inspection results

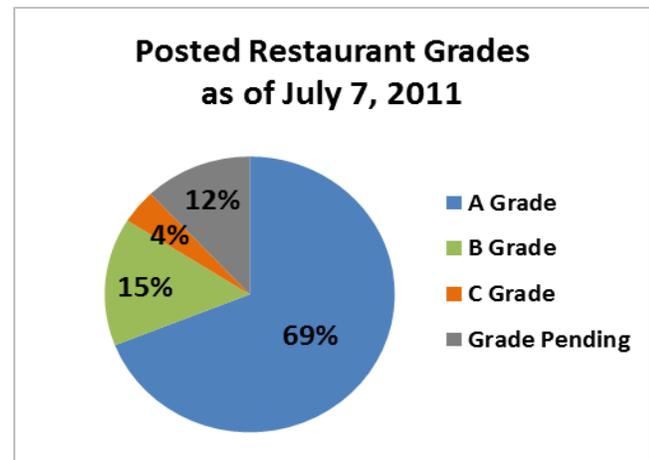
The Department's enhanced restaurant inspection website remains popular and reflects increasing awareness of letter grading across the five boroughs. Diners can search by neighborhood, cuisine type and inspection results. In June 2011, the site received 74,000 page views, a more than seven-fold increase over the 10,000 page views in June 2010. Additional enhancements launched in July 2011 categorize inspection results by grade and inspection type, and restaurant names are more easily searchable.



Grading Has Contributed to Significant Improvements in Restaurants' Food Safety Practices

Nearly all restaurants are achieving A or B grades

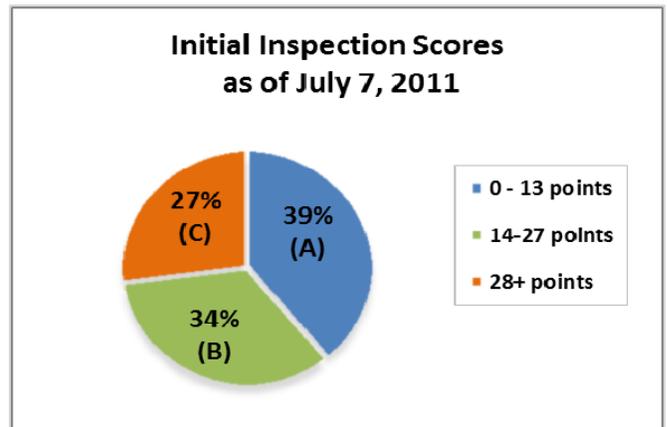
As of July 2011, 90% of restaurants had a grade card for posting: 69% of restaurants had As, 15% had Bs and 4% had Cs. These restaurants had already appeared before a City hearing examiner. Twelve percent of restaurants had been inspected for a grade and were waiting to appear before an examiner. Under the grading program's due process protections, these restaurants are entitled to post either the B or C card issued at the inspection or a grade pending card. Overall, 83% of grades are unchanged between inspection and hearing.



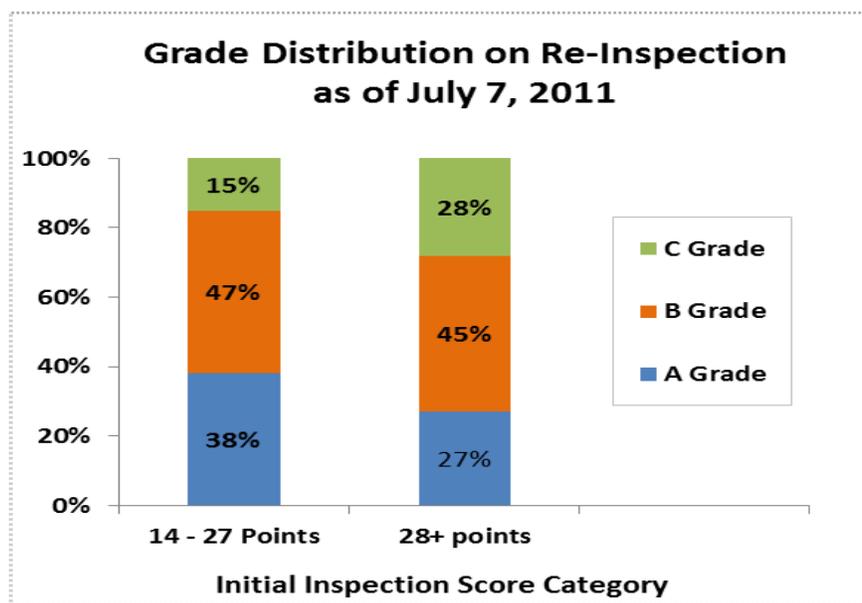
Restaurants improve between their initial and re-inspections

The grading program's inspection system was designed to promote rapid improvement in a restaurant's food safety practices. If a restaurant does not earn an A on its initial inspection, it is not graded and the Department conducts an unannounced second inspection about a month later. That re-inspection *is* graded.

The inspection system is encouraging restaurants to improve their food safety practices. Thirty nine percent of restaurants received an A grade on initial inspection; the remaining 61% required a re-inspection.



Among those scoring in the B range on initial inspection, nearly 40% improved to earn an A on re-inspection. Of restaurants that scored in the C range on their initial inspection, 72% improved enough to earn an A or B on re-inspection.

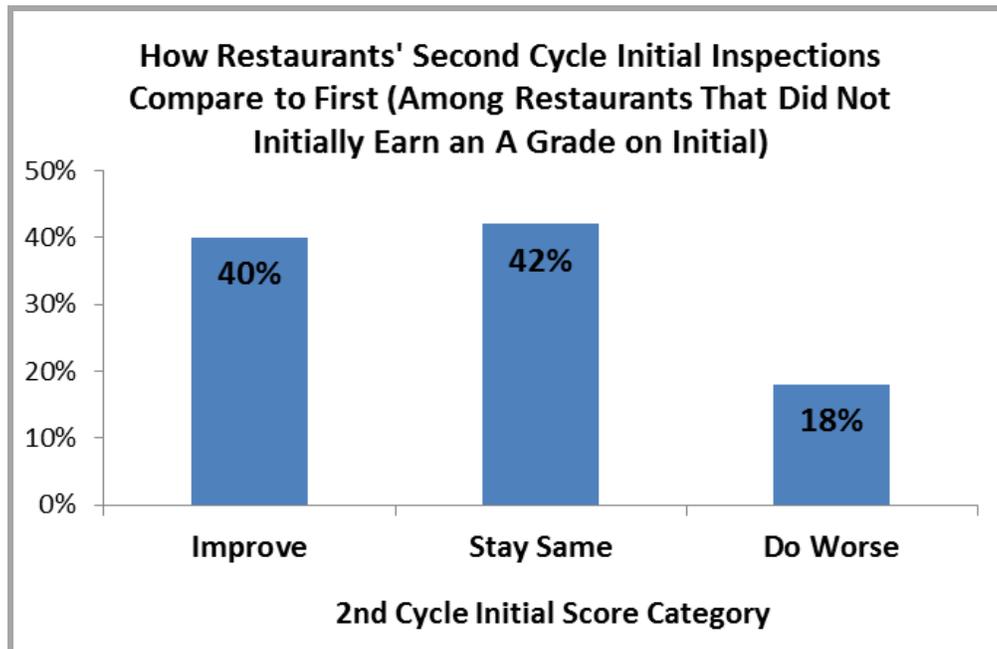


Restaurants Improve on Second Round of Grading Inspections

Many restaurants have begun their second round of grading, allowing the Department to compare results from initial inspections in two grading cycles. Because these inspections are farther apart in time, they are an indicator of restaurants' typical food safety practices.

Many restaurants have improved between their first and second rounds. In January, after the first six months of grading, only 27% of restaurants earned A grades on their initial inspection. As of July 2011, 40% are now earning As on initial inspections. Among restaurants in their second grading cycle this year, 40% improved between initial inspections. C-range restaurants made the greatest progress: 55% advanced to the B or A range on their next cycle.

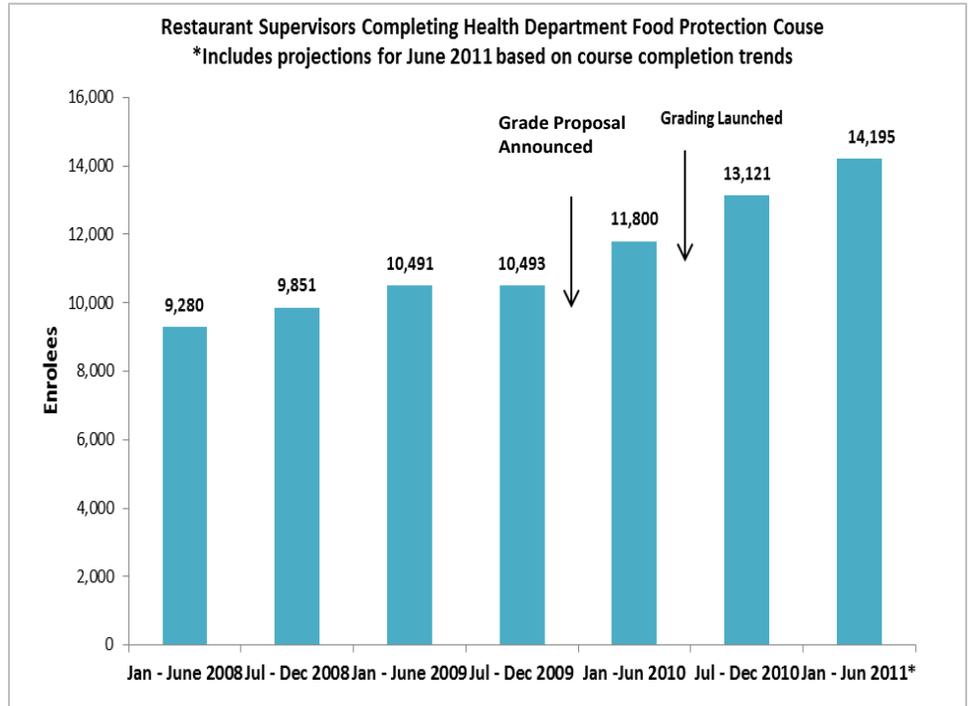
When a restaurant improves between initial inspections, the Department inspects it less frequently. For instance, C range scores that move to the B range have one less inspection per year. C range scores that move to the A range are inspected two fewer times per year, reflecting the department's confidence in their operation.



Restaurant Owners Are Training More Workers to Achieve High Grades

Thousands more food workers and supervisors have completed Department food safety courses

Enrollment in the Department's food protection courses continues at record levels since the Agency formally announced the grading program in December 2009, an indication that the program is motivating restaurant operators to train more employees in food safety practices. In the subsequent 18 months, the Department's Health Academy has trained more than 39,000 restaurant supervisors or staff in food protection. This represents 10,000 more trained food handlers over the comparable period before grading was announced.



The Department is Issuing Violations to Restaurants that Fail to Post Grade Cards

Restaurant compliance with grade card posting is fundamental to the program's success

During routine sanitary inspections and those conducted in response to complaints, inspectors make sure that the restaurant is properly posting its grade card. Inspectors also conduct targeted, unannounced inspections for card posting compliance at restaurants required to be posting B or C cards.

As of the end of July, the Department had issued 943 violations to restaurants for failing to post their required grade cards and another 123 violations to restaurants that were not posting the cards in the required location. These violations carry recommended fines of up to \$1,000 for the first offense and as much as \$2,000 for subsequent offenses.

The grading program relies on public awareness to motivate restaurant operators to maintain high food safety practices. Consumers can learn which grade card should be posted near a restaurant's entrance by checking nyc.gov and searching "restaurant letter grading." If the grade card is missing or is not in the required position, consumers should call 311 to file a complaint.