

Choose Compassionate Consumption: Do Good by Dining Out:

Each time you purchase a good or patronize a service, you have a choice — and that choice makes a statement. Together with UUSC and the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC-United), you can act on a deep commitment to workers' rights, ethical eating, and building a just economy by choosing to spend wisely, in alignment with your values when you dine out. You can choose compassionate consumption.

Did you know that 75 percent of Americans eat out at least once a week? This helps make the multibillion-dollar restaurant industry possible. The U.S. restaurant industry employs over 10 million workers nationwide and is one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors of the U.S. economy. But sadly, the restaurant industry also has a very high rate of workers'-rights violations.



We all enjoy eating out. But most of us would never know if the person serving our meal, bussing our table, or cooking our food faces poverty wages; unsafe working conditions; racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination; or working while sick on a regular basis. UUSC is partnering with ROC-United to improve wages and working conditions for these workers, and to involve restaurant consumers in helping make a better industry for all. And we need your involvement!

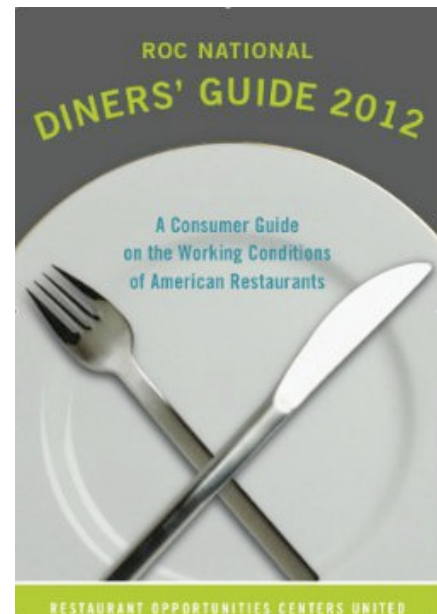
In this tool kit, you will find the following:

- Background information on the *ROC National Diners' Guide* and why it's important
- Step-by-step instructions for how to read the diners' guide
- Suggested actions you can take to use the diners' guide as a tool to raise awareness and make a difference
- Activities for a covenant group or religious education workshop

What is the *ROC National Diners' Guide*?

ROC-United, a UUSC partner organization, has released the *ROC National Diners' Guide 2012: A Consumer Guide on the Working Conditions of American Restaurants*. The *ROC National Diners' Guide 2013* (to be released in December 2012) will include additional listings and more ways for you to access the information electronically.

This guide rates the 150 most popular restaurants in the United States based on how they treat their workers. It scores the restaurants based on three key criteria: wages, paid sick days, and opportunities for career advancement. While it lists responsible restaurants where you can eat knowing that your server can afford to pay the rent and your cook isn't working while sick, the purpose of the guide is to help you open a dialogue with restaurant owners and managers to show that, as a diner, you care about how they treat their workers.





The ROC-United guide evaluates restaurants on the following criteria:


- Tipped workers are paid at least \$5.00 per hour instead of the federal minimum (\$2.13 per hour).
- Non-tipped workers are paid at least \$9.00 per hour instead of the federal minimum (\$7.25 per hour).
- Front-of-house and back-of-house restaurant workers are provided with paid sick days.
- Workers are provided with opportunities for upward mobility based on seniority and merit, and employers do not discriminate based on race or gender.

How to read the *ROC National Diners' Guide*

Based on the information gathered, each restaurant listed in the diners' guide is marked with the following symbols:

 **HIGH-ROAD RESTAURANT** If the restaurant belongs to one of ROC's Restaurant Industry Roundtables — a group of employers working to promote the high road to profitability in the industry — the restaurant receives a symbol in this category. If it does not belong, they receive a **0**.

 **TIPPED WORKER WAGES** ROC argues that a minimum wage of less than \$5 per hour for a worker who receives tips is not sustainable. A restaurant receives a tip jar symbol if the lowest wage paid to any tipped worker in the United States is \$5 per hour. If the restaurant pays less than that — or only the federal minimum wage of \$2.13 per hour for tipped workers — it receives a **0**. If the information is unknown, they receive a **?** in this category.

 **NON-TIPPED WORKER WAGES** A minimum wage of less than \$9 per hour for a worker who doesn't receive tips is also not sustainable. The restaurant receives a \$9 icon if the lowest wage paid to any non-tipped worker in the United States is \$9 per hour, a **0** if the lowest wage paid is less (or the non-tipped minimum wage of \$7.25), and a **?** if the information is unknown.




PAID SICK DAYS A restaurant receives a health symbol if it provides paid sick days, a 0 if it does not, and a ? if the information is unknown.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT A restaurant receives an upward mobility symbol in this category if 50 percent or more of its current employees have moved up in position. If the restaurant has not provided at least 50 percent of its employees a promotion, it has a 0 listed. If the information is unknown, a ? appears.



GOLD & SILVER PRIZE Some restaurants listed in the guide fared so well on the criteria that they are rewarded for their efforts. Restaurants who were awarded three of the four symbols received a **GOLD PRIZE**, and those awarded two symbols received a **SILVER PRIZE**. Look for the Gold and Silver Prize winners throughout the guide. Many of the winners are offering consumers discount coupons at their restaurants, listed at the end of the guide. Look out for restaurants that have offered coupons marked by this symbol: .

For a fun way to learn and share this material, watch the following video: ([link of “how to” video](#))

Ways to get involved using the *ROC National Diners’ Guide*

UUSC and ROC-United invite you to download the diners' guide, and choose compassionate consumption when you go out to eat! [Download](#) the guide now.

For printed copies of the diners’ guide for use with covenant group meetings or other group activities, please contact mobilization@uusc.org.

- 1. Use the guide when deciding where you will eat out.** Support the Gold and Silver Prize winners listed in the guide, and let ROC-United know about other restaurants in your community who might be willing to share documentation to show that they, too, should be listed as winners.
- 2. Take the guide with you every time you eat out.** Show managers the diners’ guide, let them know you care about how they rank in the guide, and encourage them to either provide ROC with more information that will help them win a Gold or Silver Prize, or improve their practices. Let them know that you’d like to see them move to winner status.

Give out the TIP CARDS to both workers and managers in these restaurants, to allow them to see the diners’ guide online and let them know that there is an organization fighting for better restaurant conditions for all.



3. **Share the guide with members of your community.** Encourage your congregation, household, and place of work to endorse and commit to using the guide.
4. **Make a plan for an “EAT OUT” as a group.** Choose a high-road restaurant. Be adventurous and try a new restaurant. If you don’t have a high-road restaurant in your area, commit to going to a low-road restaurant to educate workers and employers on taking the high road. At the restaurant, make a point to observe and ask about some of the issues discussed in the guide:
 - If it’s a high-road restaurant, tell your server (and the manager) that you were recommended to come to the restaurant because of the *ROC National Diners’ Guide*.
 - If it’s a low-road restaurant listed in the guide, simply ask to speak with a manager and let him or her know that you care about how they treat their workers, or ask a manager about their working conditions:
 - What is the lowest wage paid to tipped workers and the lowest wage paid to non-tipped workers?
 - Does the restaurant offer paid sick days? Are any workers working while sick?
 - How many of the workers in the restaurant have received a promotion? What is the racial composition of the waitstaff, bussers, and kitchen staff?
 - Leave tip cards, one for the worker and one for management. The cards can be found at the back of the guide or can be downloaded at rocunited.org/dinersguide.
5. **Host a covenant group meeting** to discuss these issues, the diners’ guide, and how to use it. (See below for covenant group resources.)
6. **Send a letter** to your federal representative demanding that Congress raise the federal minimum wage for tipped workers, currently at \$2.13 per hour (you can do so at uusc.org/minwage).

Contact UUSC at mobilization@uusc.org — we can provide you with useful materials, and we would like to know that you are interested in this work so we can connect you with other activities in the future.

Frequently asked questions

1. **There are no ROC high-road restaurants listed in my area — does that mean there’s nowhere I can go out to eat ethically?**

The *ROC National Diners’ Guide 2012* is the first edition released by ROC-United, and it incorporates high-road restaurants primarily in cities where a ROC affiliate is located.

This does not mean that there are not other restaurants in your local community that treat their workers fairly. Increasingly, ROC-United and UUSC will rely on consumers to help us make the guide as useful as possible by conducting your own research on how local restaurants score on the relevant criteria.

- 2. All of the restaurants listed in my area have scored zeros (0) indicating that their labor practices are not up to acceptable standards — does that mean there's nowhere I can go out to eat?**

We encourage you to continue going out to eat wherever and whenever you normally do, just don't forget to bring the diners' guide with some tip cards and open a dialogue with the restaurant managers and owners to let them know you care about how they treat their workers.

- 3. What if I know of a restaurant in my area that treats its workers ethically, and I'd like to recommend that it get added to the guide?**

Contact ROC-United at info@rocunited.org to submit your ideas for restaurants that you believe should be highlighted in the guide as responsible employers.

Understanding the Issues: Covenant Group Module

Welcome and statement of purpose

We gather as a covenant circle to deepen our sense of meaning and community. In this spiritual community, we seek to better care for one another and to work together toward creating a kinder, more compassionate, and just local and global community.

Opening words

Singing the Living Tradition #459, by Rev. William F. Schulz

This is the mission of our faith:

To teach the fragile art of
hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind
and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not
mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we
must hold the whole world in our hands.

Chalice lighting

We light this chalice to symbolize our living tradition

Let this flame symbolize our passion

To bring our faith into action

Let this flame symbolize our commitment

To bringing our prophetic voice to the people.

May our passion and commitment

Serve to advance human rights and social justice
around the world.

So that all may live in the spirit of light and love.

Check-in

How is your spirit this evening? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here? What gifts or enthusiasm do you bring to this discussion?

Share one memory of an event, milestone, or occasion you have celebrated at a restaurant.

Discussion questions, part 1

1. What makes an enjoyable dining experience? What qualities about the food you eat are important to you and might influence where you eat out? Organic? Locally sourced? Affordable?
2. What do you know about working conditions in the restaurant industry?
3. How do you think those conditions might impact your meal?

Reading 1

Take turns, each participant reading a paragraph aloud.

Worker profile: Claudia Munoz

Adapted from: Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, “Tipped Over the Edge: Gender Inequity in the Restaurant Industry,” 2012, p.14.

Claudia Muñoz is one of ROC’s leaders and has fought low wages and wage theft in the restaurant industry. She is a young immigrant from a poor family in the foothills of Monterrey, Mexico. Claudia worked her way through high school at a national pancake chain restaurant in Texas. She earned \$2.13 per hour, the minimum wage for tipped workers. Tips rarely made up



the difference between the tipped-worker minimum wage and the full minimum wage, but Claudia was told to report more tips than she actually earned so the restaurant would not have to pay the difference between \$2.13 and the minimum wage.

She often worked over 40 hours a week, but she was never paid for overtime. “They told me to clock out before doing side work. I was always scheduled to work 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and exactly at midnight ... I had to clock out. Sometimes I’d stay two more hours. Late at night they’d only keep one or two people, and we had to do all the side work.”

The \$2.13 she earned in wages amounted to a weekly paycheck of about \$10 after taxes. With tips, she earned about \$160–\$250 per week. These minimal wages made it difficult for Claudia to get by or get ahead. Worst of all, she could barely afford to eat. “There were days when I wouldn’t eat all day.”

One night, Claudia was one of three servers when business was slow. Claudia was told to roll silverware into napkins for two hours straight, not taking any customers except for one table. Claudia knew she wouldn’t make any tips, and she’d still be asked to report that she made the

minimum wage in tips. Meaning, with taxes, she'd have worked for free. When Claudia asked her manager about this arrangement, she told her to punch out and go home.

The next weekend, the manager had Claudia stay alone the entire night even though the restaurant was busy. "I was alone ... for four hours, and some people walked out without paying their bill. That night I had to stay until 7:00 a.m.... At the end of my shift, the manager ... talked to me about the people who walked out. They owed a bill of \$90. She told me that it was my fault, and I that I'd have to pay the bill. I worked from 10:00 p.m. until 9:00 a.m. — even though I clocked out at 7:00 a.m. — and instead of paying me anything, I had to pay them." Claudia walked out to her car in the parking lot and cried. "I felt like I was being robbed." She had to pay to work, rather than being paid anything at all.

Later, Claudia realized how the workplace conditions impacted her coworkers. "It really opened my eyes. It was Latinos cooking, white women working graveyard shifts, men working during the day. I saw the racism, sexism, and low wages in the industry. Everything I remember from that place was horrible."

[WATCH VIDEOS](#) of workers from Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., telling stories of their experiences of working at the Capital Grille.

Discussion questions, part 2

1. Are you surprised to learn that many restaurant workers across the country earn poverty wages, come to work sick, and work in unsafe conditions?
2. How does it feel to interact with people who work hard yet continue to live in poverty?
3. How does this issue speak to the religious values you seek to live by?
4. How might this knowledge affect your future actions as a consumer?

Introduce the *ROC National Diners' Guide*

- Talk about how the guide works.
- How are you interested in using the guide as individuals or as a group?

Reading 2

Read UUSC's Choose Compassionate Consumption pledge aloud:

Before buying a product or service, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will my purchase support a just economy?
- Was this produced with respect for workers' rights and the environment?
- Are the workers paid a living wage?
- Who is profiting from my purchase?
- Are workers depending on my tip to enable them and their families to live with dignity?
- Was this produced in a place with safe and healthy working conditions?
 - Was it made with forced or child labor?
 - Are the workers unionized?
 - Are the workers depending on tips to make a living?
- Does this purchase reflect a respect for the interdependent web of all existence?

There are no easy answers to these questions. No matter how diligent we are, there are bound to be tensions between our values and our actions as consumers. While we cannot expect perfection, together we can channel our money into goods and services that reflect our values, act to address human rights violations, and promote justice through consumer advocacy.

Checkout

Each person shares a word or phrase that says something about how she or he is feeling as the meeting draws to an end. Group members can answer these questions: How are you feeling as we close this session? What has been most meaningful to you? What are you hoping for?

Closing reading

From *Singing the Living Tradition* #501, by Frederick E. Gillis

Spirit of Community, in which we share and find strength and common purpose, we turn our minds and hearts toward one another seeking to bring into our circle or concern all who need our love and support We are part of a web of life that makes us one with all humanity, one with all the universe.

We are grateful for the miracle of consciousness that we share, the consciousness that gives us the power to remember, to love, to care.

Ambassadors of the light

Although we extinguish this flame,
the spirit of life and love lives on
in our search for truth and justice.
May our actions be an expression of our commitment
to creating a more just society for all of
humanity.
So may it be. Amen.