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# Boston restaurants could face steep fine if they don't post food safety grades

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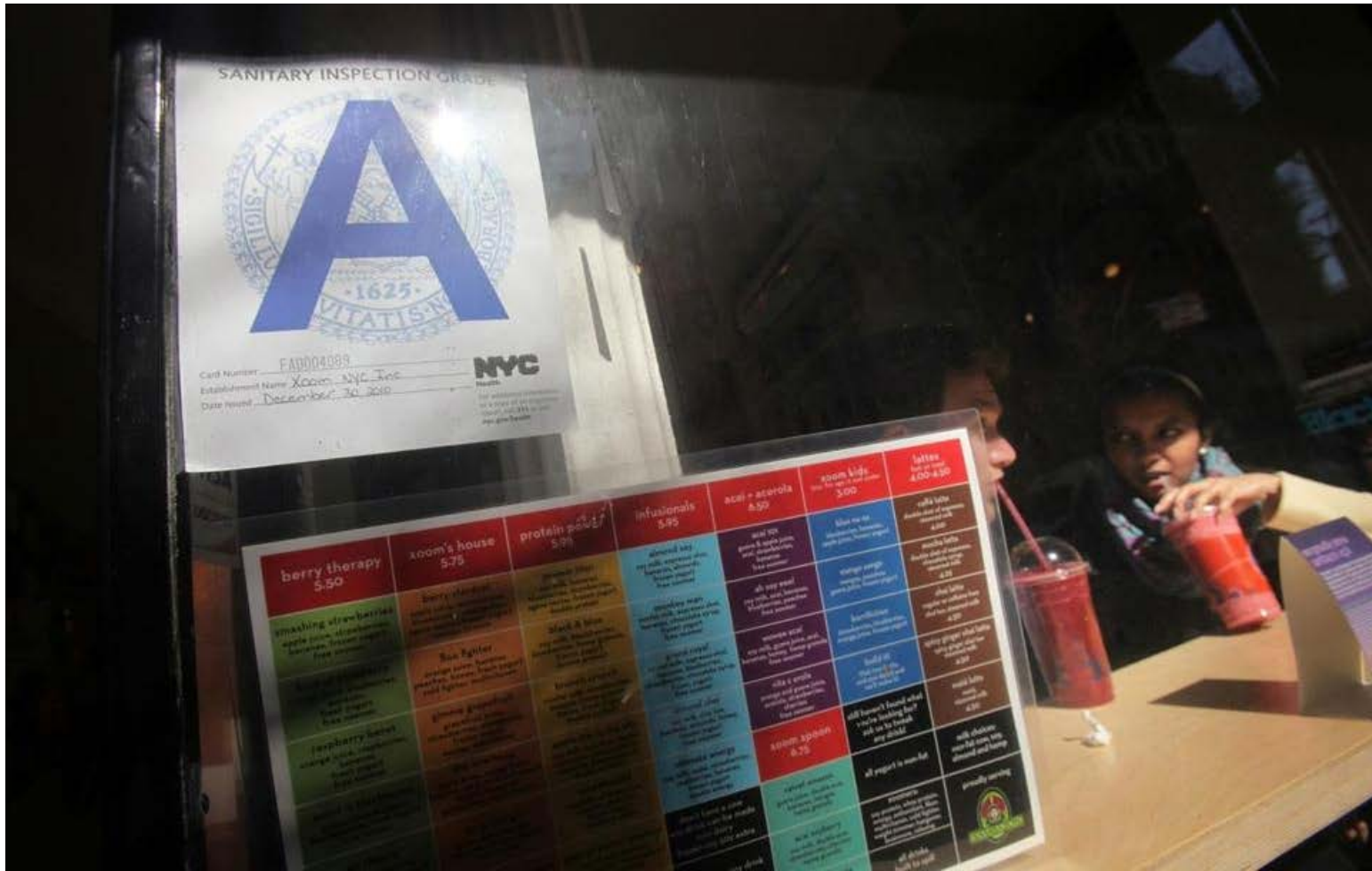
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**A Manhattan restaurant displayed its “A” inspection grade in 2011.**

**By Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 02, 2016

Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh is asking the City Council for approval to fine restaurants \$300 per day if they fail to post their food safety inspection letter grades in their storefronts.

Restaurants and food trucks would have a year to comply after the launch of the [letter-grade system being developed for restaurants citywide](#), though the grades would be available on the city's website.

The city's Inspectional Services Department has been developing the program. Officials there have said restaurants would receive either an A, B, or C grade.

The program would resemble rating systems that New York, Los Angeles, and other cities have been using since as early as the late 1990s. Locally, [Newton launched a similar program](#) in the fall that requires numerical ratings to be displayed inside restaurants.



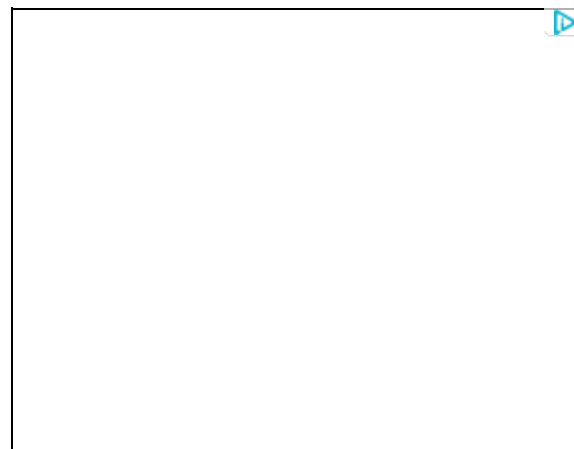
Boston officials have previously told the Globe that letter grades will be issued to all of the city's roughly 3,000 food establishments, including restaurants, food trucks, cafeterias, and other food vendors.

When an establishment gets a low grade, inspectors will return within 30 days to reinspect, city officials have said. If the violations are corrected, the city would bump up the grade accordingly. If the issues remain, the grade would stand until the next routine inspection, officials have said.

Restaurants would be subject to the \$300 fines if they fail to post their letter grades "immediately after receipt, unobstructed, at eye-level, facing outward on an exterior-facing wall or window within five feet of the main entrance in the interior of the restaurant," according to Walsh's [proposal](#) to the council, which was previously reported on by the [Universal Hub](#) website.

The council is due to take up the matter at a meeting in City Hall on [Wednesday](#).

The new rating system would not cost the city any extra money, city officials have said, because it would calculate grades based on the existing system used to inspect restaurants.





City officials [have said that they hope](#) the grading system will reduce health violations, improve public awareness about food safety, and even boost business for restaurants by increasing competition for owners to keep cleaner stores.

However, the practice of grading restaurants has faced criticism elsewhere, including [skepticism](#) over whether the ratings lead to improved conditions, and concerns that the ratings can be [arbitrary and unfair](#).

Local leaders in the restaurant industry have worried Boston's system could oversimplify the results of restaurant inspections.

In Boston, each restaurant is inspected at least once per year, though some locations are inspected more frequently if they primarily serve populations that are particularly vulnerable to food-borne illness, such as the elderly and young children.

Complaints about food safety also prompt city inspection.

The city began posting data about restaurant inspections online in 2007, shortly after a [Globe investigation](#) of inspection reports for 50 eateries in Boston revealed how city inspectors had found serious violations at nearly half of the locations, including high-end restaurants.

A [Globe review](#) of inspection [data](#) last year found that during 2014, at least two violations that can cause food-borne illness — the most serious type of infraction — were discovered at more than 1,350 of the 3,000-plus establishments in the city that serve food.

Typically, food-borne illnesses cause minor symptoms — the Centers for Disease Control estimate

that 1 in 6 Americans get sick from food each year — but they can be serious.


Nationwide, an estimated 128,000 people are hospitalized each year because of food-borne illnesses, and 3,000 die from them.

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