

Sustainability in Audi's gastronomy services: "We want to make a good choice easy"

Ingolstadt, June 17, 2022 – Audi has decided to reduce emissions through its entire value chain. At first glance, it might seem surprising that its gastronomy services also play a small, but important role. However, that is cleared up on a closer look: sustainability with an eye toward what we eat means handling our resources carefully, protecting our environment, and avoiding long storage or transportation distances. Therefore, Audi's gastronomy services consistently orient their offerings toward these criteria – and they do it across the entire value chain, from fostering regional suppliers to reducing carbon emissions to avoiding food waste in Audi's company cafeterias. To mark the Day of sustainable gastronomy (June 18), Victoria Broscheit, head of Audi's gastronomy services, sat for an interview about the company's role as a multiplier for sustainable and healthy food, employees' growing interest in conscious eating – and the question of why sustainability in gastronomy services is also a matter of attitude.

Ms. Broscheit, how does sustainability factor into Audi gastronomy services' orientation?

Victoria Broscheit: Our goal at Audi is sustainable management – and we want to contribute to that in gastronomy services as well. Even beyond company catering, gastronomy as a whole needs to be greener. We can make a noticeable contribution by taking a conscious approach to food. For instance, meat consumption is a major factor. At Audi, we still offer meat, as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung (DGE, German Association for Nutrition) recommends, but not in the amounts that were common for a long time.

How can the idea of healthy food be anchored in employee catering for the long term?

We want to make it easier for people to make a good choice for themselves. That's why we put a lot of stock in nutrition and health and regard company food culture as an expression of esteem for our employees. Incidentally, that's not just exclusively a matter of food consumption. Company gastronomy services also supports communication, networking, and interpersonal exchanges. For that, we need to create additional and new offerings. Moreover, regionality, organic quality, and reduction of our carbon emissions are also among our strategic pillars.

One of the most controversial measures for improving sustainability in employee catering is veggie day in the cafeterias.

We've also introduced a meat-free Monday – one Monday per month when we only offer meat-free meals in the company cafeterias. That's not something that we enacted without discussion, of course. But that's precisely what we want: a conscious examination of our nutrition. The critical factor is that actions like this are embedded in a holistic strategy.

What does that strategy look like for Audi gastronomy services?

We have our eye on the entire value chain. That begins with purchasing. We make sure that most of our products are locally produced. That is a challenge, given that we were producing up to 20,000 meals a day before the coronavirus. We choose our suppliers very deliberately and we also offer our producers security through purchasing guarantees. That's because we understand clearly that higher standards also cost money. One example is the European Chicken Commitment, which we recently joined and through which we are committing to buying only chicken that adheres to animal welfare criteria that go beyond the minimum legal standards starting no later than 2026. Additionally, we largely acquire our products regionally and, where fruit and vegetables are concerned, seasonally. For instance, you won't get a salad with avocado from us because avocados usually have to be imported from overseas and cultivating them requires an extremely high volume of water. Forgoing products like these also represents the wishes of most of our employees: we carried out a pilot test in the summer of 2021 that made the carbon footprint of our meals more transparent. That was so well received among our guests that we will now indicate the carbon footprint of meals on our menus generally.

Avocados are a prominent example of growing consumer awareness. Are you seeing that employees have different expectations of company catering than they did a few years ago?

Yes, we're seeing a shift in demand. Today we're distributing 66 percent more vegetarian and vegan meals than we did two years ago. We regularly adjust our offerings accordingly. In 2025, we expect at least half of the meals to be vegetarian and vegan. A recent employee survey also confirms the trend: it showed employees' number one desire is for our options to be greener and healthier. That is something that we see again and again: when we serve good vegetarian dishes, we have the same demand as when we serve food with meat in it. So we have made "green" options a permanent part of our menus. Incidentally, the DGE also recommends eating no more than 300 to 600 grams (*0.66 to 1.32 pounds*) of meat per week.

Employees and potential applicants increasingly assess an employer by the values that the company represents. How does company catering factor into that?

It will play an increasingly important role. That applies not only to the culinary options on offer, but also to the spaces where people spend their breaks or meet to interact with other people. In Ingolstadt, we recently established the first work lounges. People can meet there, work together, and be creative. In the future, people will come to the office primarily to talk to other people and we are creating spaces for that. In that sense, we are implementing new spatial concepts in our company cafeterias, like seating booths. Because of the pandemic and the changes to our work habits, the workplace is becoming increasingly important as a place that brings employees together and bolsters a sense of community. Recently, we offer our employees outdoor seating as well so that they can spend their breaks in the fresh air.

The pandemic is changing not only our daily work routines, but also our dietary habits. Are you responding to that?

One very concrete measure has been our delivery service, which we launched back in February 2021. Since then, employees have been able to order from menus prepared for themselves and their families for home delivery. They come in returnable glass containers or biodegradable bagasse boxes. We also support nutritional education. For example, we've organized presentations on healthy eating in the home office. Our cooks from Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm give tips, for example, about how people can take simple steps to refine convenience products into healthy meals.

What are you doing to avoid food waste?

There are many things. One has to do with attitude: a dish can run out before business hours are over. A lot of food waste is created in gastronomy services because of overproduction. We have a lot of leverage here. Another is more precise planning, which we are also able to do better and better with the help of prognostic data. And for the waste that we still can't avoid, we look for the most sensible way to use it. For instance, we're working on a project in which food waste is dehydrated, composted, and delivered to a biogas plant.

Packaging waste, particularly plastic waste, is also in the public eye.

What is Audi's contribution in that area?

That's a question that raises two topics. One is the packaging in which products are delivered to us. We are in close contact with our suppliers about that and establish multi-use systems wherever that is feasible or have products delivered loose. The other is the question of how we distribute our food to the employees. We control that ourselves, so we've introduced a few changes. For instance, since the fall of 2020, we have dispensed takeout products exclusively in packaging made from bagasse – a compostable material that is a byproduct of sugar cane processing – and kraft paper as well as bioplastics made from renewable raw materials. We also support re-use. In Ingolstadt, we have established a comprehensive multi-use system from Vytal and in Neckarsulm we are testing another vendor. You won't find any plastic in our packaging or takeout utensils anymore. Those are a lot of small steps. Taken altogether, they allow us to have a big effect – among our employees and beyond.

Personal information

As head of Audi's gastronomy services since mid-2020, Victoria Broscheit is responsible for company cafeterias, self-service markets, and catering at the Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm locations. One focal point of her work is strategic and sustainable development of gastronomic offerings for employees.

Victoria Broscheit is already familiar to AUDI AG from her work in a wide range of fields, including sales, corporate strategy, and logistics, which she ran upon joining the company in 2004. With her degree in business administration, she was in charge of pilot production program planning and infrastructure services, among other things, before becoming the head of Audi food services.

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In 2021, the Audi Group delivered around 1.681 million cars from the Audi brand, 8,405 sports cars from the Lamborghini brand and 59,447 motorcycles from the Ducati brand to customers. In the 2021 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved a total revenue of €53.1 billion and an operating profit before special items of €5.5 billion. More than 89,000 people all over the world work for the Audi Group, around 58,000 of them in Germany. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.
