The Akron Zoo's Komodo Kingdom Café seats over 200 people and provides onsite catering for events. In May of 2012, Chef Alan Strobel, Food Service Supervisor Tiffany Orwig, and their staff were excited when more than a year's worth of work culminated in Komodo Café being awarded four-stars by the Green Restaurant Association (GRA), making it one of the greenest restaurants in the U.S. The Zoo’s café is the first four-star green restaurant in the state of Ohio and only the seventh in the United States. The Akron Zoo is the first zoo in the country to receive such an honor. It is currently ranked as the fifth greenest restaurant in the U.S. according to the GRA.

Because the café is inside Komodo Kingdom, which was the first LEED certified structure in Summit County, Ohio, it helped the café achieve some of the most difficult sustainability points. For example, the café received credits due to the building’s geothermal heating and cooling system. The café also received points because it increased its usage of vegan and vegetarian foods. Other categories receiving high marks include the Zoo’s food waste composting program and the use of Green Seal certified cleaning products.

The certification process took about a year, during which every aspect of the Zoo’s food service operation was examined from four perspectives: sustainable operations, efficiency, cost effectiveness, and guest perception. Many successful adjustments in the café’s menu, food preparation, purchasing, and waste management resulted from these exercises, and food service staff is proud to be able to effectively engage the Akron Zoo’s conservation mission in the service of our guests every day.

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