NEW DELHI: You might have always known the taste and varieties of the food your favourite restaurant offers but soon you will also know the hygiene and cleanliness standard it maintains.

India's top food safety regulator has launched a food hygiene rating for restaurants across the country, taking a cue from countries like United Kingdom and Australia.

Under the initiative by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, restaurants, cafes, canteen and other food joints will be awarded one to five smileys or emojis - with five smilies indicating “very good” hygiene standards and one smiley denoting “poor” standards.

These ratings will be prominently displayed in the restaurant premises and will also be listed on FSSAI website allowing the consumers to check the rating before visiting a particular food joint.

Under the project, restaurants which follow mandatory requirements like having FSSAI license or registration, train all food handlers and appoint a certified Food Safety Supervisors, have food safety display boards prominently displayed and get food samples tested periodically, can opt for the ratings.
“They will then be asked to self-assess themselves on a score of 0 to 100 and that will then be re-assessed by our food safety officers following which the final scores will be awarded,” a senior FSSAI official told The New Indian Express.

Restaurants receiving scores above 81 will get five smileys denoting “very good” hygiene standards while those below twenty will get just one smiley implying “poor” hygiene standards. In addition, restaurants with four and five smileys will also be given a tag of "Responsible Place to Eat”.

A pilot project has already kicked off in Delhi and the rating process is underway for some major restaurant chains, the official added.

“The scheme aims to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat out, and through these choices, encourage businesses to improve their hygiene standards and thus reduce the incidence of food-borne illnesses,” he added.

Some of the well-known hygiene rating schemes being followed globally include “Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)” in the United Kingdom and “Scores on Doors” a star rating scheme in Australia.

Sources in the FSSAI added that once acquired, ratings will not expire and will be based on the last inspection but the frequency of routine inspections might vary from every six months to one year. “The frequency of rating might also depend on findings from previous hygiene inspections—a joint defined as needing improvement, for example, will be inspected more frequently,” said an FSSAI.

“Also we get any complaint from members of public, we can carry random inspections to reassess the ratings of a food business operator.”