



First Watch Reduces Plastic Footprint by 30 Million Straws

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Florida-based Daytime Dining concept makes a key investment in environmental sustainability with WinCup's phade® compostable, eco-friendly drinking straw

BRADENTON, Fla., Aug. 02, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [First Watch](#) (NASDAQ: FWRG), the leader in Daytime Dining, has partnered with WinCup, Inc. to replace about 30 million plastic straws annually in its more than 440 restaurants nationwide with phade®, a first-of-its-kind sustainable straw that naturally breaks down in the ocean in a matter of months. The new partners collectively place innovation and environmental sustainability as their core priorities, while providing a customer experience that looks and feels like a traditional plastic straw yet will safely return to nature through composting. Currently, First Watch offers phade® straws in two of its markets and intends to rollout nationally in the next two months.

"First Watch is committed to doing the right thing for the communities we serve, and a big part of that is giving our teams and customers the chance to be a part of something bigger than themselves," said Matt Eisenacher, Senior Vice President of Brand Strategy and Innovation at First Watch. "Several years ago, we started offering plastic straws only by request. Now, we're taking that next step by responsibly sourcing a straw that degrades naturally within months rather than several decades. In markets where we tested the new straws, our customers raved about them and preferred them over other renewable alternatives like paper straws."

The secret behind phade® lies in its careful development that uses natural, raw materials to create straws that quickly and safely return to the earth in a matter of months after use, a significantly reduced timeline when compared to the hundreds of years it can take traditional petroleum-based straws to leave the environment. This is thanks to the straw's unique PHA (short for polyhydroxyalkanoate) properties, which because of its organic, plant-based make-up, bacteria treat as a food source in nearly all natural environments.

"We are thrilled to partner with First Watch to provide a sustainable resource for its restaurants as the company works to provide innovative options to their customers," said Michael Winters, WinCup President and Chief Revenue Officer. "We know customers will be excited once they experience phade® as an alternative to traditional plastic straws that harm the environment and paper straws that create a poor customer experience. It's an honor for us to be a part of First Watch's progress toward creating a more sustainable future."

First Watch's partnership with WinCup comes as the Bradenton, Florida-based company is experiencing unprecedented growth. Named the fastest growing full-service restaurant company in 2021 by FSR Magazine, First Watch today has a geographical footprint stretching across 28 states.

The restaurant concept is making progress in ensuring its experiences and operations are based in sustainable practices. These efforts include offerings such as its award-winning Project Sunrise coffee, which supports independent groups of female farmers in Colombia, 100% recyclable to-go paper bags and containers made from 90% post-consumer waste fibers, napkins made with 100% recycled paper and, most recently, compostable phade® straws.

"With our Home Office located in Florida – not too far from our coastal beaches and state parks – we are proud to do our part to protect the environment," said Eisenacher. "Though our work is ongoing and we still have far to go, we see this as a critical step along our journey to minimizing our plastic footprint. Our passion to do so comes from being surrounded by such natural beauty and by sourcing our ingredients from growers across the country and beyond. For them and the many generations of employees and customers we serve, we're committed to continually improve our practices and ensure this planet we all call home can thrive for years and decades to come."

In addition to sharing commitments to quality performance, team wellbeing and doing the right thing, First Watch was drawn to WinCup in part because of its unique, award-winning focus on sustainable solutions. WinCup has won numerous awards for the development and launch of phade®, including the 2021 Innovation Award for Foodservice for Sustainability Solutions from the National Restaurant Association and SmartBrief, and 2020 Innovation in Bioplastics Award from the Bioplastics Division of PLASTICS (The Plastics Industry Association). Connecting the two organizations helps empower customers to play a role in taking care of the planet.

"The technology behind phade® is truly unmatched and the partnerships we now have with leaders in the restaurant industry – like First Watch – further validate our work and progress over the last several years," said Brad Laporte, WinCup's Chief Executive Officer. "With WinCup's demonstrated experience commercializing phade® and our national footprint as market demand continues to increase, we can ensure not only our company, but all our partners can play a meaningful role in reducing global plastic pollution."

About First Watch

First Watch is an award-winning Daytime Dining concept serving made-to-order breakfast, brunch and lunch using fresh ingredients. A recipient of hundreds of local "Best Breakfast" and "Best Brunch" accolades, First Watch's chef-driven menu includes elevated executions of classic favorites along with First Watch specialties such as the protein-packed Quinoa Power Bowl®, Farm Stand Breakfast Tacos, Avocado Toast, Chickichanga,

First Watch x phade Straws



First Watch, the leader in Daytime Dining, announced plans to replace about 30 million plastic straws annually in its more than 440 restaurants nationwide with WinCup's phade®, a first-of-its-kind sustainable drinking straw that naturally breaks down in the ocean in a matter of months.

Morning Meditation (juiced in-house daily), Vodka Kale Tonic and its famous Million Dollar Bacon. In 2022, First Watch was awarded a sought-after MenuMasters honor by Nation's Restaurant News for its seasonal Braised Short Rib Omelet, and it was recognized with ADP's coveted Culture at Work Award. In 2021, First Watch was recognized as FSR Magazine's Best Menu and as the fastest-growing full-service restaurant chain based on unit growth. There are more than 440 First Watch restaurants in 28 states, and the restaurant concept is majority owned by Advent International, one of the world's largest private-equity firms. For more information, visit www.firstwatch.com.

About WinCup, Inc.

WinCup, Inc. is headquartered in Stone Mountain, Georgia. WinCup is a leading manufacturer of traditional and sustainable disposable cups, bowls, containers, lids, and straws. The company's eight manufacturing locations are committed to high-quality products and superior customer service. WinCup's focus on sustainable solutions was bolstered in September 2020 when Los Angeles-based global private investment firm Atar Capital acquired the company. Among Atar's core principles is a commitment to sustainability and investing in companies that work toward protecting the environment. To learn more, please visit www.wincup.com and www.phadeproducts.com.

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A photo accompanying this announcement is available at <https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/10486a38-bc17-45fd-b574-b4993989164a>

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