

# Wisconsin Union Restaurant Cup Usage and Coffee Refills, 2007-2009

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### Partial data, 11/4/2009

This data was collected as a part of a program which encourages students to reduce their personal waste by using refillable containers instead of disposable cups. Given the Wisconsin Union's unique position in campus food service, we looked at current usage at Lakefront on Langdon and The Rathskeller in order to set goals and evaluate progress for the program.

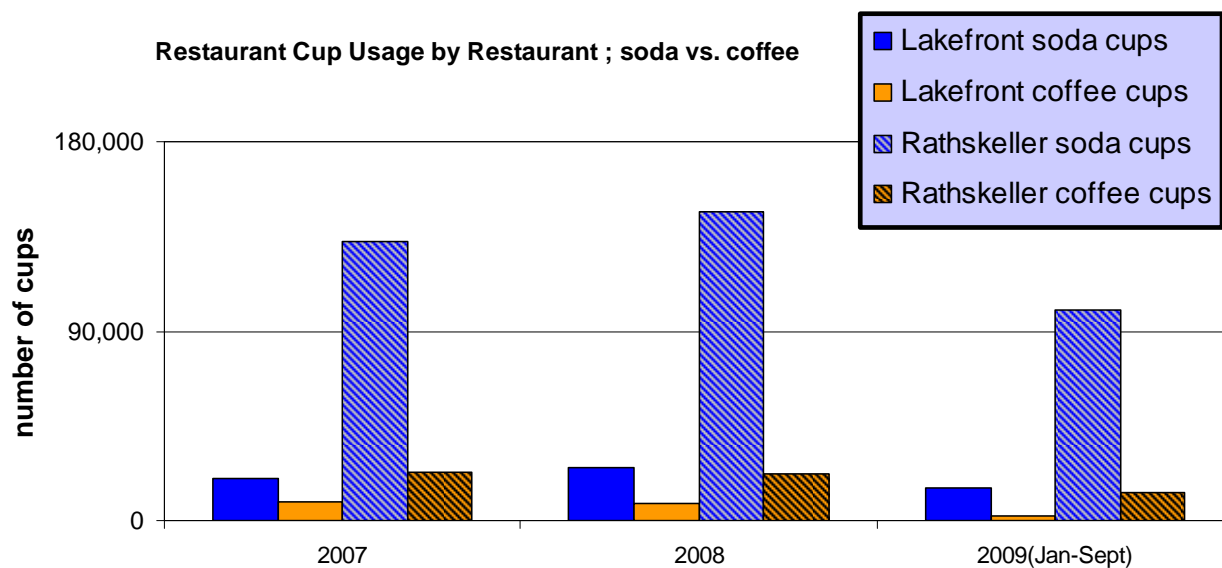
### Quick Summary

- Rathskeller sells many more cups than Lakefront
- 12% of Rathskeller coffee customers currently refill, Lakefront only 2%
- Future steps involve setting concrete goals for increased refilling in 2010

### Cup Usage

The Rathskeller uses far more cups, particularly for soda, selling about 6.5 cups for every 1 sold at Lakefront. In the area of coffee cups the difference is smaller but seems to be growing. In 2007 the Rathskeller sold about twice as many coffee cups as Lakefront, in 2008 it sold three times as many, and in 2009 the Rathskeller is on pace to sell 5 times as many coffee cups as Lakefront.

Absolute numbers for coffee cups decreased slightly at both restaurants from 2007 to 2008. Soda cups sales increased at both restaurants from 2007 to 2008. At present it is uncertain how total cup sales will change from 2008 to 2009, however it is clear that soda sales will continue to far outnumber coffee sales in both restaurants.



The same data is shown in the graph and table. Refills are not plotted in the above graph but are discussed on the following page.

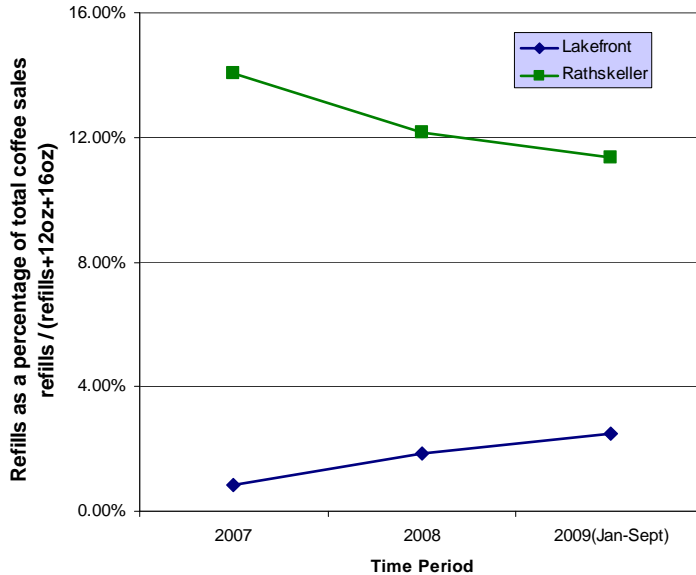
	Lakefront on Langdon			The Rathskeller		
	2007	2008	2009 (Jan-Sept)	2007	2008	2009 (Jan-Sept)
soda cups	20,212	25,011	15,707	132,943	146,988	100,219
coffee cups	9,124	8,428	2,572	22,933	22,434	13,094
refills	78	158	66	3,745	3,106	1,675

## Refills

Current levels of refilling are best described as a percentage of total coffee sales. Data on soda refills are not currently available.

On average about 12% of Rathskeller customers currently bring their own container when purchasing coffee. By comparison only about 2% of Lakefront customers do. However there seems to be a trend over time, such that the percentage of Rathskeller refills is decreasing while the percentage of Lakefront refills is increasing.

While the changes are small enough to give caution before reading too deeply into these trends, it may be worthwhile to identify any obvious changes in the restaurants that may be contributing to them.



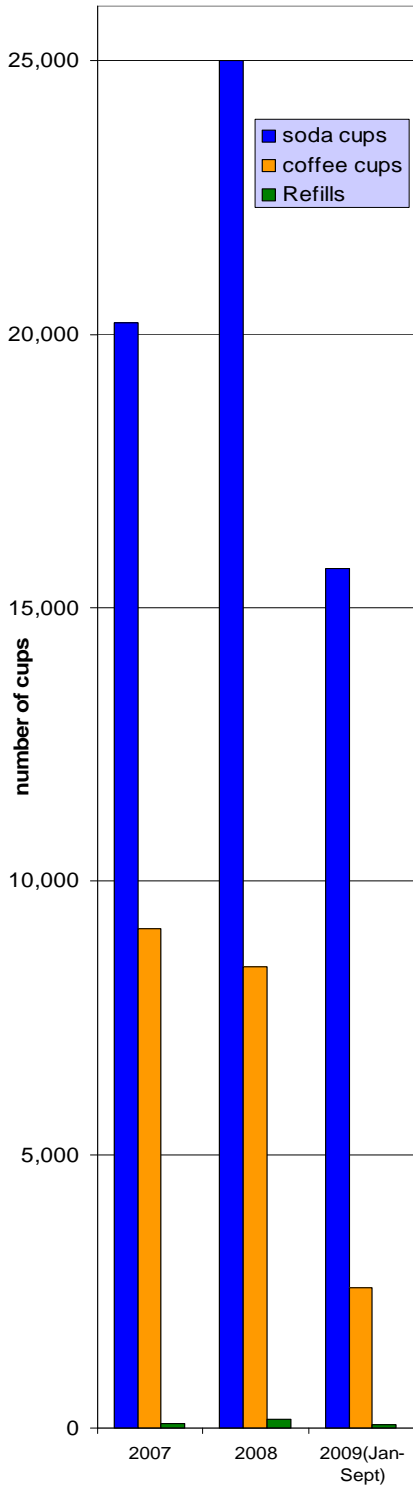
The graph at left shows refills as a percentage of total coffee sales at the 3 timepoints for which data are available. Additional graphs displaying numbers of refills are included at the end of this document.

## Recommendations

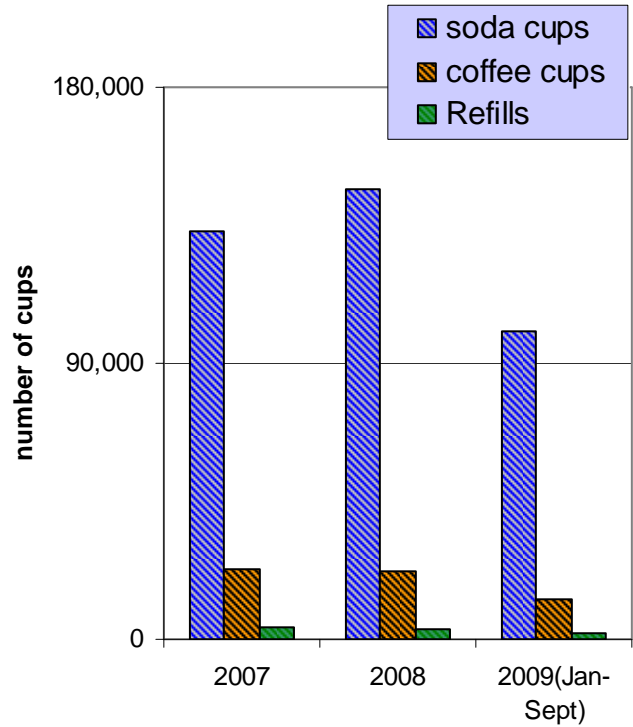
1. Efforts should be made to learn why refilling is so much more prevalent at the Rathskeller than at Lakefront. If the difference is due to different business practices, the practices responsible should be considered for implementation at other units where practical. If the difference is due to different customers, differences in those populations should be considered when planning the program to encourage refilling.
2. The difficulty of obtaining soda refill data should be evaluated. As a refill program will target both coffee and soda it would be good to be able to measure our progress in both areas, particularly because soda sales so greatly outnumber coffee sales. However if the data is prohibitively difficult to acquire, other methods for tracking progress with soda refills can be considered.
3. Data for refilling at deli units should be obtained, as a campus-wide refill program will need to include those units as well as the restaurants.
3. Realistic goals should be set for increases in the rates of refilling in 2010. More information and discussion are first necessary. However, this investigation demonstrates the feasibility of tracking this type of data, which will be critical in moving forward in this effort to continue the University of Wisconsin at Madison's role as a leader in environmental responsibility.

**Appendix: Cup usage with refilling, displayed by restaurant.**

**Lakefront Cup Use**



**Rathskeller Cup Use**



Note that even though the scale for The Rathskeller's graph is much larger than the scale for Lakefront's graph (0-180,000 vs. 0-25,000), Lakefront's graph must be stretched the length of the entire page for the refill bars to become visible.

Refilling at the Rathskeller, in absolute numbers as well as a percentage of total coffee sales, far outpaces refilling at Lakefront.