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## **Restaurant employment heats up for the summer**

Massachusetts is among the top six states projected to add the most jobs in the restaurant sector this summer.

The Bay State is slated to add 22,700 jobs this summer, according to employment projections released by the **National Restaurant Association** Thursday. That number is up slightly from last summer when the state added 22,500 summer jobs in the sector.

"I think we're going to have a very strong summer," said Peter Christie, president of the **Massachusetts Restaurant Association**. "Summer vacation places like Cape Cod -- bookings are up. I also think the weak dollar is going to be very good for international tourism. And I think (high gas prices) will keep people closer to home."

Wendy Northcross, CEO of the **Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce**, confirmed that advanced summer bookings on the Cape are up from last summer, though she could not quantify it. "It's robust in the face of the economy," said Northcross.

While jobs on the Cape are plentiful, there is a shortage of workers there caused by the lack of H2B visas. The visas allow for temporary, legal alien workers to fill seasonal jobs then return home. An estimated 12,000 jobs will go unfulfilled due to the lack of visas.

Cape restaurants have adjusted, said Northcross, by opening later this season, curbing their hours and/or their menus.

Nationwide, eating and drinking places are projected to add 402,900 jobs during the 2008 summer season, representing a 4.2 percent increase over their March 2008 employment level.

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