

Restaurant Food Waste Management

Reducing waste make good business sense! Starting on the Zero Waste Path – adopting the commitment and discipline to integrate Zero Waste practices in the early stages of your business is so much easier and less expensive than have to make changes to your operations and implement new procedures later.

To organize your waste reduction plan of action, do the following:

1. Create a Zero Waste team – employees who are enthusiastic about reducing waste, an HSU intern, at least one person in management dedicated to reducing waste.
2. Track and analyze the waste in your restaurant. Weigh and record. Photograph.
3. Review and record the documentation on supplies and goods purchased.
4. Review and record the quantity of waste hauled away – for reuse, recycling, composting, and landfill disposal.
5. Conduct inventory frequently in order to compare purchases and quantity, and material types/categories of garbage.
6. Change menu in order to minimize quantity of leftovers.
7. Create options for smaller portions.
8. Create and institutionalize the Zero Waste ethic and rules in job descriptions, employee training, employee performance reviews and recognition.
9. Track your numbers over time to monitor progress.

The benefits for implementing Zero Waste practices are:

- Reducing food costs and generate revenue
- Improving food service practices
- Improving your equipment
- Positive impact on employee morale
- Positive impact on the environment – translate your reduced waste into reduced energy consumption and reduced GHG emissions.
- Once you have committed to work toward Zero Waste, you publicize your progress and promote your business ethic.

Create a Team Responsible for Managing the Garbage

You can hire a professional team to do a waste audit or you can do it in-house. Depending on the restaurant capacity and scope of the operations performed in the restaurant team may consist of one or more persons. It would be best if these persons are involved in the preparation of meals, because they are familiar with the amount of specific ingredients that are used when preparing certain dishes. Staff responsible for cleaning and washing dishes are familiar with the type and quantity of garbage from plates.

When selecting staff for this responsibility, choose people who are good at consistency, accuracy and attention to detail. Most workplaces have a couple of employees who are up for the challenge to see how close to Zero the business can get. They champion the cause and report or post the progress to others. It can become a valuable form of leadership development within the business. It is important to educate every member of the team about methods of monitoring, storage and recycling.

Restaurant Waste Audit – Monitoring and Analysis of Your Garbage

Restaurant food and packaging waste can be roughly divided into two major categories: Waste before consuming food, and waste after your guests finish with dining.

(1)Preconsumer Waste: Restaurant waste before your customers consumed food occurs during food preparation, like raw foods such as potato peel, roots from leafy vegetables or bones, improperly prepared food, fluids and food accidentally spilled on the kitchen floor etc. Statistical data suggest that as many as 4-10% of raw food in the restaurants ends up being this kind of garbage. Assess how much and develop recommendations about how to reduce this waste in purchasing, prep equipment, prep work flow in the kitchen, etc.

(2)Postconsumer Waste: Waste after dining is everything that guests have not eaten, and the paper and plastic food service packaging, utensils, paper napkins, single use containers for condiments, etc., and glass, plastic, paper, and aluminum beverage containers that are not washable/reusable. Promotion of “All You Can Eat” to attract customers in the U.S. has contributed to the food waste problem.

Your Waste Audit will provide the details of how much and what type of waste you are generating for the team to report and prepare recommendations for reducing this waste.

Identifying Quantity of Different Types of Waste

You will Identify your garbage easily through the following actions :

- Interview employees with different jobs at different shifts, mid-week, and weekends.
Size and Types of Dumpsters for your garbage hauling service. “RIGHT-SIZING” will become an important part of your Zero Waste Plan.
- Inventory reports
- Record of purchasing invoices
- Recording of types and quantities of waste
- A review of invoices and other documentation
- Track all weights of different waste materials on a spread sheet.

Unless your restaurant has significant seasonal differences, one month is likely sufficient for this waste audit monitoring.

Sorting and Weighing Restaurant Waste

The simplest way to sort waste is by using different containers – buckets for certain types of waste. Sort food packaging, glass, paper, plastic bottles or organic waste from the kitchen, food scraps that your guests did not eat, all green food that can go to composting. These main categories can be furthered divided into subcategories such as meat, fresh fruit and vegetables, types of plastics, glass, metal, paper. A large number of categories and subcategories provides a clearer picture of the type and quantity of waste and helps you to assess options.

Tip: The rules about how to manage waste in restaurant should be an integral part of the employee handbook. All employees [must be trained how to work with waste](#), no matter if they work in the kitchen, bar or serving room.

The sorted waste can be easily measured by weighing. First, it is necessary to weigh the empty container. Then weight container with the waste. To get weight of waste subtract the weight of empty container from the value that you get. Record everything in provided sheet for waste tracking. This process should be performed at the end of each working shift. In this way you will make the best comparison how much food you sell and how much waste you get, of course after you finished inventory for that shift you might use.

Be sure that your employees using adequate protective clothes and equipment when working with garbage. This includes protective masks, gloves, goggles and special uniforms for this purpose. All rules about used equipment, waste weighing and disposal must be specified in the regulations for the restaurant operation in the employees handbook.

Restaurant Food Waste Reduction Ideas

How to reduce the restaurant waste? After you complete the waste audit and determine the type and quantity, you need to take concrete steps to reduce it. Below are some of the proven and effective methods that will certainly help you to reach your goals:

- **Change your menu.** After identify the restaurant menu items that usually have the most leftovers consider reducing the portion size of these menu items. In this way not only that you reduce the quantity of restaurant waste but also reducing the food cost of cooking and automatically increase profit.
- [Make a purchase wisely.](#) If some of the ingredients that you use to prepare meals often goes to waste because you can not use it all before the end of its period of validity, consider the purchase of that ingredients in smaller containers.
- **Educate your staff** with adequate practical training. Each of them must understand and follow the rules of movement in the bar or kitchen while preparing meals or drinks. For example, workers in the bar must learn to move circularly, to respect the sequence of actions in the bar in order to avoid

- unnecessary bumping that resulting with slower service and frequent spilling of drinks.
- **Invest in high-quality kitchen equipment** for your staff to use for the preparation and processing of foods. Use specialized knives for peeling of fruits and vegetables or knives for filleting and cutting meat or fish. These seemingly small differences can have a major impact on reducing waste and increasing your profit.
 - **Change your plates.** Reduce portions of food and serve on smaller size plates. Invest money in a new dinner service. Provide the option for smaller and larger portions on your menu.
 - **[Store fruits and vegetables properly.](#)** With proper storage of food you extend the time of use. Proper storage includes cleaning fruits and vegetables, storage in a suitable container and in the appropriate place with storage date labels.
 - **Regularly rotate the food in the fridge and warehouse.** Set the foods that should be used first in front of the food that is stored newly. A very convenient way of storing food in the refrigerator is the rule “right to left”. New foods always store on the right side of the fridge while existing food you move further to the left. When you taking the food for preparation you are of course using the reverse order “from left to right.” In this way your food will be always fresh and you reducing food waste.
 - **Conduct inventory in the restaurant regularly.** With the help of [restaurant software that has the ability to work with multiple warehouses](#) and you will able to conduct inventory quickly. In this way, you will know the daily consumed goods, and accordingly identify the need for new purchases in a proper time, not too soon nor too late. Also your restaurant software should give you the ability to do correction in your stocks and to record expenses in cases where the goods have to be disposed of as a waste due to improper storage, expiration date and so on. If you do inventory often enough, you avoid unnecessary goods that often result in spoilage of foods and financial losses.

Restaurant Waste Recycling

Build a system that will ensure the recycling of all recyclable types of restaurant waste. Recycling of restaurant waste is part of daily work for 65% of restaurants in the USA.

[\(Source\)](#)

Plastic bottles, cans, cardboard boxes, wooden pallets and paper materials can be either reused or recycled.

1. Contract with Recology, Humboldt Sanitation or your local hauler for recycling collection services.
2. Finally buy products made from recycled materials. In this way you support the circular economy and environmental sustainability.

