

WASTE REDUCTION TIP SHEET • RESTAURANTS

Restaurants, fast food establishments, and cafeterias may be able to reduce potential cost increases by incorporating simple waste prevention and recycling programs that will eliminate much of the waste that is thrown away. With proper purchasing, as well as careful preparation and storage, food service establishments may help reduce waste and thus reduce waste disposal costs.

Your restaurant may already be using many of these ideas to reduce costs as well as waste. Try a few new suggestions, see how they work, and then continue to expand your waste reduction program.

In addition to potentially saving money, the public appreciates restaurants and bars that make the effort to reduce waste at the table, in the kitchen and at the bar.

Bar

- ☐ Serve beverages from a beverage gun or dispenser, buy bar mixes in concentrate form, and buy milk in 5-gallon dispenser boxes.
- ☐ Buy bar mixes in concentrated form, then reconstitute and portion them into reusable serving containers.
- ☐ Collect plastic, glass and aluminum cans for recycling.

Produce Handling and Storage

- ☐ Check your produce deliveries carefully for rotten or damaged product, and return any substandard product.
- ☐ Rotate perishable stock at every delivery to minimize waste due to spoilage.
- ☐ Clean coolers and freezers regularly to ensure that food has not fallen behind the shelving and spoiled.
- ☐ Arrange your refrigerated and dry storage areas to facilitate easy product access and rotation.
- ☐ Store raw vegetables and other perishables in reusable airtight containers to prevent unnecessary dehydration and spoilage.
- ☐ Rehydrate vegetables (e.g., celery, lettuce, carrots, broccoli, etc.) that have wilted by trimming off the very bottom part of the stalk and immersing in warm water (100°F.) for 15 to 20 minutes.

Grocery Items

- ☐ Use health department-approved, refillable condiment dispensers instead of individual packets. Buy shelf-stable food supplies and condiments in bulk when sales volume and storage space allows.
- ☐ Consider buying your lettuce pre-cut during those times of the year when the pre-cut cost is equal to (or less than) the cost of the bulk product.
- ☐ Buy meats in bulk or uncut form and cut to size.
- ☐ Consider buying shelled eggs, in bulk, if your egg usage for general cooking or baking is three or more cases per week.
- ☐ Ask your suppliers to take back shipping boxes for reuse or recycling and to keep you informed about new and existing products that are packaged in ways that can reduce waste.

Food Preparation and Storage

- ☐ Adjust inventory levels on perishables to reduce waste due to spoilage or dehydration.
- ☐ Use hourly or daily production charts to minimize over prepping and unnecessary waste.
- ☐ Whenever possible, prepare foods to order.
- ☐ When prepping food, only trim off what is not needed.
- ☐ Use vegetable and meat trimmings for soup stock.
- ☐ Adjust the size of meal portions if you find they are consistently being returned unfinished.
- ☐ Pre-cool hot foods (in an ice bath) before refrigerating.
- ☐ Use reusable coffee filters rather than disposable ones.
- ☐ Collect cardboard and steel cans for recycling.
- ☐ Identify charitable organizations that can use excess edible food.



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Back-of-the-House

- ☐ Create incentives for staff to reduce breakage of china and glass.
- ☐ Place rubber mats around bus and dish washing stations to reduce china and glass breakage.
- ☐ Have employees use permanent-ware mugs or cups for their drinks.
- ☐ Check for discarded trays and flatware before throwing out dining room trash.
- ☐ Collect mixed paper from office for recycling.
- ☐ Recycle cartridges from printers and facsimile machines.

Janitorial and Restaurant Supplies

- ☐ Use reusable table linen and dinnerware.
- ☐ Use cloth towels for cleaning, rather than the paper equivalents.
- ☐ Use plastic trash can liners made of recycled HDPE instead of ones made of LDPE or LLDPE. They contain fewer raw materials, work equally well for most uses, and generally cost less.
- ☐ Purchase cleaning supplies in concentrate form.
- ☐ Use multipurpose cleaners that can be used for all types of surfaces rather than cleaners that are job specific. Whenever possible, use cleaning agents that are less hazardous or non-hazardous.
- ☐ Use reusable hats for kitchen employees instead of disposable paper ones.

Production and Service Areas

- ☐ Implement a monthly cleaning and maintenance program for all your equipment.
- ☐ Keep refrigeration in good running order to prevent unnecessary spoilage and reduce energy costs.
- ☐ Check the syrup-to-water calibration on beverage dispensers regularly.
- ☐ Keep oven equipment calibrated to prevent over baking and maximize efficiency.
- ☐ Clean fryers and filter the oil daily. Use a test kit to determine when to change fryer oil.
- ☐ Recycle grease and cooking oil.
- ☐ Ensure that grease traps are properly maintained.

Front-of-the-House

- ☐ Distribute condiments from behind the counter instead of offering self-service.
- ☐ Use straw-style stir sticks for bar beverages instead of the solid style.
- ☐ Serve straws from health department-approved dispensers rather than pre-wrapped, and offer only one straw per drink.
- ☐ Use serving containers in sizes that meet the packaging needs of your menu items without having excess packaging material.
- ☐ Minimize the use of unnecessary extra packaging of take-out foods. Use less packaging for eat-in foods than for food being taken out, or use none at all.

Paper Supplies

- ☐ Purchase paper products made from recycled materials.
- ☐ Use reusable coasters (or nothing at all) instead of paper napkins when serving beverages from the bar.
- ☐ Store and handle unwrapped paper supplies to prevent the products from inadvertently falling on the floor.

Your Employees

- ☐ Don't forget to ask your staff for their input and assistance on what can be done to reduce waste. Reward them for good ideas. Including employees in the decision-making process will help ensure participation in your efforts to reduce waste, and will result in higher productivity, better morale, and lower costs.
- ☐ Post a chart of your waste reduction progress so employees can see how well you are doing.

Tell Your Customers

- ☐ Educate customers and advertise your waste reduction program by posting signs or including the information on the menu highlighting your efforts.
- ☐ Offer customers a discount if they bring their own mugs, containers, or bags.
- ☐ If your menu is printed on recycled paper, be sure it says so.

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