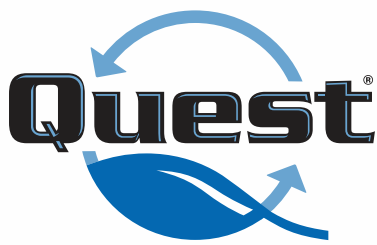


3 STEPS TO REDUCE RESTAURANT FOOD WASTE



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In a recent study, results showed that 72% of diners care about how food waste is handled. 47% said that they are concerned enough about it that they would be willing to spend more money to eat at a place that actively tries to reduce its food waste production. The purpose of this guide is help your restaurant appeal to an increasingly conscientious consumer base, while saving money and being more ecologically efficient.

The first step to managing and reducing your food waste starts just like any other aspect of a restaurant: with planning. Any good plan requires you to have all of the information available to you that you can gather. All those data points come together to get you a picture of what it is that you're up against, and therefore gives you the best idea of how to address the issues you want to handle. So how do you go about collecting these data points when it comes to food waste? Simple – you measure it.

STEP 1: HOW MUCH WASTE DO YOU GENERATE?

By measuring the food waste your operation produces, you can break down exactly WHERE food is being wasted and WHY. Running a food waste audit allows you to see your food waste numbers broken down by type, weight, and why it was wasted. A food waste audit gives you the exact insight you need to not only make the adjustments required to waste less, but it gives you the chance to collect data to compare your progress with. Those “progress reports” are what you can then turn around and show to your consumer base and say, “See? We waste less food.” The same data can also help you see the reduction in your food purchasing costs, which keeps your margins higher and helps you make better purchasing choices in the future.

Not All Food Waste is Created Equal

Food waste in a restaurant comes in two main categories. When you are measuring the food waste you produce, it is important to separate the two types of waste so that you can figure the best practices to reduce it.

Pre-Consumer:

This is the food waste that never leaves the kitchen.



Over-Production:

This is the most common form of pre-consumer food waste. Most commonly, it is a result of making too much of a bulk item, like lasagna or soups.



Expiration:

Perishable items that expire are a very basic form of food waste but are still avoidable if you track them.



Spoilage:

Spoilage pertains to fruits, vegetables, and meats that go unused, typically because of over-purchasing or untimely usage.



Trimming:

Trimming are an unavoidable aspect of food preparation - certain parts of foods just aren't edible. Understanding that, you can still see trends in trimming habits that can save you money.

Post-Consumer:

This is food that has been prepared and sold that is left over from the customer.

- Over-production in the form of left-overs that are not taken
- Returned food due to kitchen error

Measuring Food Waste

Below is a printable Food Waste Log you can use to accurately measure the food waste you produce on a daily basis. Print out several copies, take the time to train employees on the form, and let them know how important it is to be as accurate as possible with everything they log. For instance, when it comes to food trimmings, make sure they log what kind of trimmings are being disposed – a pound of vegetable trimmings does not cost the same as a pound of meat trimmings. Measuring portions of pre-prepped menu items is crucial as well. If a pan of lasagna is 12 portions, and you are throwing away ½ of a pan, the portion count (6 in this case) is what is important. Post-consumer food waste can be measured in bulk by utilizing an empty bus tray to collect left-overs and measuring it all at once, but keep in mind if the bus staff keeps an accurate log of the types of left-overs they are seeing – you’ll know what items on your menu are creating the most waste. The process of logging food waste is only as accurate as you make it, and it needs to be as accurate as possible.

FOOD WASTE LOG

Directions: Use the following form [download a separate copy](#) to measure the food waste created in a day. Keep a copy of this log anywhere where food is prepped or disposed of.

Weigh all food waste as it is disposed of. An empty bus tub can be used to collect waste in bulk for things like post-consumer waste that the bus staff throws away in preparation for dish washing. For items like trimmings, the more specific you are when recording waste, the more accurate the information will be. Record any food waste that goes into the trash can at the end of the day – this includes **TRIMMINGS** from food prep, **OVER-PRODUCTION** of food that is not eaten, **EXPIRED** food, and food that is thrown away due to **SPOILAGE**.

				CHOOSE ONE		
Date/Time	Recorded By	Food Type	Loss Reason <i>(trimmings, over-production, expired, spoilage)</i>	No. of Portions	No. of Quarts	No. of Pounds

STEP 2: FOOD WASTE EVALUATION AND REDUCTION

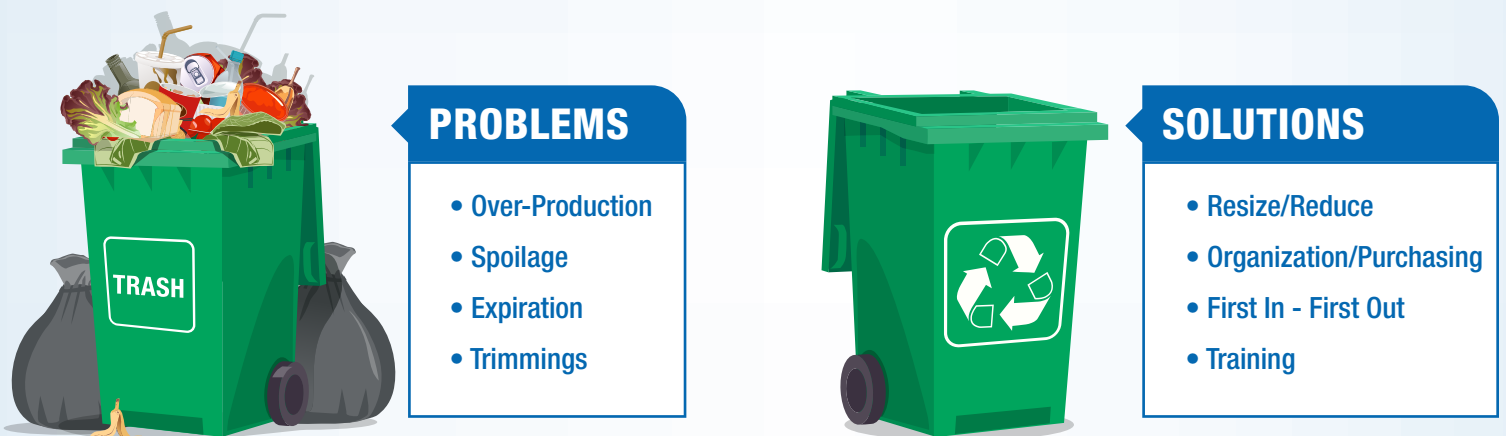
Now that you've taken the time to collect your food waste data, and evaluated the results, the second step is putting that information to use in your food production practices. By identifying the main sources of food waste, you can easily start making the changes required to save your restaurant money and proving to your customers that sustainability matters to you as much as it matters to them.

Is the Waste Generated Primarily Pre or Post-Consumer?

If you are seeing a high amount of post-consumer waste, you might want to adjust your portion size, or really encourage guests to take their left-overs with them. If you are seeing a lot of pre-consumer waste, you might want to evaluate your purchasing and your prepping practices. Taking the time to evaluate your biggest sources of food waste can lead to immediate changes from day one.

Addressing Food Waste by the Numbers

Just like all food waste is not created equally, the strategies for reducing it are specific to the type of waste generated. Based on the type of waste generated, here are strategies for reducing specific types of food waste in your operation:



Over-Production:

Over-production is a pre and post-consumer food waste that is easily the most common in restaurants. This can come from over-producing pre-made entries in bulk or by serving too large of a portion. If you are seeing high numbers of a certain entrée being thrown away at the end of the day, the easiest step is to make less of that entrée. By monitoring how much goes to waste, you can easily see how much of the entrée you actually need. Offering these bulk entrées as a daily special the following day and offering discounted staff meals are also ways that you can cut down on bulk entrée waste. If you are seeing high waste numbers for food coming back after it's been served to a customer, you might need to adjust your portion size. Also, training your wait staff to encourage customers to take leftovers home reduces the amount of food that ends up in your trashcans.

Spoilage:

In any situation involving produce, there is going to be spoilage. Just because it is an unavoidable situation doesn't mean that you can't reduce its impact. The first step is to make sure that all of your perishable food items are stored correctly. Using re-sealable packaging can extend the shelf life of perishable produce as well, so considering implementing your own options that work for you. Organization is a huge part of avoiding food spoilage, as well. Using produce in the order in which it purchased means you're not going to use up a newer product while another one goes to waste. Think "first in, first out". Using a product like DailyDots from Ecolabs is a great way to organize produce into the order in which it should be used. Train your employees to keep an eye out for the produce that needs to be used first before it spoils.

Expiration:

Just like spoilage is unavoidable, expiration dates on perishable items can lead to excessive food waste. This is another case where organization and training are the most important factors to reduce waste. Implementing “use first” labels can make it easier for your staff to use the right products in the right order. If you are consistently seeing high numbers of certain expired items, consider purchasing less of them. This is a perfect example of why monitoring and tracking food waste is so critical to reducing food waste.

Trimmings:

Trimmings are another type of food waste that is basically unavoidable. Some parts of your produce just aren't edible. On the same token, trimming waste information can still provide important insight on food waste in your kitchens. For instance, if you're seeing high waste numbers pertaining to meat trimmings, you might need to evaluate your employee's trimming practices. If they are over-trimming – especially meats, that can be costing you a lot of money you wouldn't even pay attention to. Simply making sure that employees are trimming meat and produce in the most efficient ways possible saves you money from day one.

STEP3: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

KEYS TO MAINTAINING AN IMPRESSIVE FOOD WASTE PROGRAM

At this point, if you've followed the steps of running a food waste audit, evaluating the results, and implementing changes based on the data you collected, you should be seeing a change in the food waste your restaurant produces. More importantly – you should be seeing the financial benefit of better purchasing decisions based on not wasting as much food. The next step in the process is just as important: maintaining those changes.

The main factors in maintaining food waste numbers you can brag about boil down to two things:

Running Regular Food Audits:

Food audits are not a “one and done” type of tool, they need to be run with some regularity. In the beginning you are going to need to run them more regularly to see immediate results, but as you get better at reducing waste you can spread them out. For instance, when you first start running food waste audits they will be needed once a month, with an average audit period lasting at least on week. As you put changes in place you can reduce the number of audits to maybe once a quarter, just to make sure you're still on track.

The other great benefit of running regular food waste audits? You can provide those results to your customers. Imagine having a flyer or table tent on every table showing your customers exactly how well you're doing at not wasting food. By taking all the data you collect in your food waste audits, Quest can put together a package of promotional material for you to show off your food waste program to entice new customers and build loyalty with existing ones.

Keeping Employees Trained:

You can put the greatest food waste reduction strategies in place that have ever been designed, but if you don't train your employees on them – they are useless. Training is not a process that should ever stop. Make sure that employees are actively looking for their own ways to reduce food waste, because those reductions begin with them. Keeping employees trained makes them more aware and more efficient when it comes to reducing standard food waste. Organization, efficient trimming, labeling, and evaluation of food waste are all training opportunities that will save your restaurant money and improve customer satisfaction.

ALTERNATIVES TO THROWING AWAY FOOD WASTE

No matter how much food waste you manage to reduce, you're always going to produce SOME waste. It's estimated that, on average, 84% of all food waste goes straight into the trash can. What good is reducing your food waste if you're just going to send the rest of it to a landfill? At Quest, landfill diversion is the main focus of what we do - no matter the industry. We have extensive experience in turning trash into a product that benefits your business. We have designed food waste programs that provide alternatives to simply trashing unused food that can improve your sustainability practices even further, which your customers love.

Re-purposing Food Waste:

Typically, when you think about food waste, "recycling" isn't a word that comes to mind, but there are ways to re-purpose food waste to keep it out of the landfill. For instance, you can use your edible vegetable trimmings as seasoning in other dishes or by making your own house-made vegetable broth. Adding "house-made" as a detail to any menu automatically makes it more appealing, and in this case - it's something you can make from scraps.

Donating Food Waste:

Food waste donation programs are gaining a lot of popularity as consumer awareness continues to grow. Initially many restaurants were wary about food donation programs because of the perceived liability they might face, but the passage of the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, relieves anyone who donates food responsibly to a non-profit organization from any liability of any illnesses from consumption of donated food. There are standards to be upheld to maintain coverage under the act, but any non-profit organization you work with will instruct you on how to properly handle any food for donation. Often times it is as simple as just keeping the food refrigerated prior to being picked up. This is also where Quest comes in: we will go out and find those donation centers and coordinate the logistics of those pick-ups so that all your kitchen staff has to do is set aside the donated items and go back to work.

Composting:

Food waste composting programs are becoming increasingly popular among restaurants the source fresh, local produce. There are "closed-loop" composting solutions in place where a restaurant that buys produce from specific farms donates their food waste as compost materials to those farms. This makes for reduced food waste and better produce. Similar programs exist where food scraps are used as animal feed on the farm where restaurants are sourcing their meat. Composting doesn't always work for all size restaurants simply because of availability, but at Quest we can find and design composting programs that can fit any size operation. For instance, we can put together a package where a group of small restaurants all in one area can combine their waste to make composting a more viable alternative.

Addressing the epidemic of food waste is not a "one-size-fits-all" endeavor. It requires time and effort to really analyze where you are generating the most waste, and how best to handle that waste. In the end, by reducing your food waste you are saving money and improving customer satisfaction. It's a true win/win for everyone involved. This document should serve to get you started on your food waste reduction journey and includes all the information you need to get started.

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