

Prevent wasted food

Restaurant tips and tricks

We have suggestions on ways to prevent wasted food at your restaurant. Here are some ideas to help you be successful.

Track your waste

- **Track your waste:** Monitor your waste. You can use our food waste log.
- **Establish goals:** Set specific targets for reducing food waste.

Manage your inventory

Use your oldest foods first.

- **Optimize stock rotation:** Properly rotate stock within and across different food storage areas and coolers to prevent waste.
- **Incorporate line checks:** Use line checks to identify end-of-life items. Designate them for immediate use.
- **Clearly label food with an expiration date:** Develop an effective and consistent date-marking system for all foods to identify older products for immediate use.
- **Cross-section communication:** Communicate across stations on the line to align production with demand and prioritize older ingredients.

Other ideas:

- **Check deliveries:** Inspect incoming deliveries to make sure the food is in good condition.
- **Befriend your freezer:** Properly freeze excess portions of food to extend shelf life.
- **Understand sales trends:** Analyze your customers' ordering habits. Use that information to reduce batch sizes where appropriate.

Avoid equipment malfunction

- **Prevent equipment malfunctions:** Work with your HVAC company to create a preventative refrigeration maintenance plan.
- **Store food effectively:** Don't overcrowd coolers or freezers.
- **Keep coils clean:** Keep cooler and freezer coils clean and free of dust.
- **Maintain gaskets:** Make sure refrigeration and freezer gaskets are in working condition.

Temperature control

- **Cool foods rapidly:** Avoid throwing away improperly cooled foods by using effective cooling methods. The most effective cooling method is to fill food 2 inches or less in an uncovered pan within a working cooler.
- **Monitor coolers:** Check your coolers regularly to make sure cold foods are held at or below 41 degrees F.

Trim waste

- **Monitor bins:** Observe what fills your trash and compost bins. See what could have been repurposed into something else.
- **Effectively trim waste:** Monitor trim waste to make sure your cooks are breaking down meats and produce to get the highest possible yield.
- **Make stock:** Most trim waste can be transformed into stock.
- **Divert:** Unusable trim waste should be diverted to a compost bin or donated for animal feed production.

Communicate with staff

- **Inform staff:** Use pre-shifts and staff meetings to share progress about wasted food.
- **Staff buy-in:** Get staff excited about your food waste reduction plan by appointing a passionate staff member as a “Food Waste Reduction Champion”.
- **Celebrate creativity:** Empower staff to generate ideas to prevent wasted food and maintain a wasted food ideas logbook.

Promote your efforts

- **Promotion:** Place signage in your windows, at the host stand, on tables and social media to show community members how your restaurant prevents wasted food.
- **Tell your story:** Use your menu to tell the story of how you are preventing wasted food.
- **Menu planning:** Build flexibility into your menu to allow for substituting ingredients.

Preventing wasted food is ideal. However, there will always be some food waste that will occur within your restaurant. Better alternatives to throwing your food in the trash are:

- Donating safe food to humans
- Partnering with an animal feed farmer
- Composting

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