

NATIONAL
RESTAURANT
ASSOCIATION



FOOD WASTE



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#86FOODWASTE

FALL 2019 • RESTAURANTKITCHEN.ORG

FIGHTING
FOOD WASTE
IN RESTAURANTS

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



How
SMALL STEPS
can have a
BIG IMPACT
on reducing
waste and
**PROTECTING
THE PLANET**

01. Menu Redesign Concepts
02. Donation Guidance
03. Customer Communication
04. Procurement Best Practices
- 05. Employee Engagement**
06. Diversion Resources
07. Food Waste Self Audit

WHITE PAPER
INFO SERIES

05

Engaging and training employees can be one of the most effective ways to reduce food waste.

Employee engagement can change the culture within your restaurant and have a profound effect on food waste generated in the kitchen and on plate waste from customers. This document outlines several methods for engaging employees and strategies for increasing your staff's food-waste awareness.

A combined effort with





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LAYING THE FOUNDATION

FOR ALL RESTAURANT TYPES

To develop an effective food-waste-reduction program and change the way food is planned, handled, and served at your restaurant, your staff must both feel empowered to take charge and clearly understand where responsibilities lie.

Depending on the size of your staff, **designating one or two people as “champions”** for reducing food waste can be an effective way to begin changing the culture.

- **Consistently raise awareness.**
Encourage the champions to spark conversation during staff meetings about the restaurant’s goals to prevent food from being wasted. Make food-waste awareness and the impacts of food waste on the environment part of employee onboarding. Remember repetition and reinforcement are critical. For example, WWF and the National Restaurant Association have jointly developed a [short video](#) to help raise awareness among staff, which might be appropriate for your brand to leverage and show to staff.
- **Understand staff desires and motivations.**
In surveying hospitality employees, WWF found employees overwhelmingly want to do more

to prevent food waste at work, but they lack clearly defined roles and responsibilities. WWF offers similar surveys to help you gain an understanding of your own staff’s level of awareness and desire to get involved with solving this challenge, and to help identify additional information needs.

- **Set goals together.**
Encourage your staff to set a reduction goal, such as a 10% reduction in organic waste over six months, since people are more likely to work toward a goal they help set. Consider setting a 10% food-waste-reduction goal for the year or check with your corporate sustainability team to find out if there is a corporate goal that could be adopted by your restaurant.
- **Communicate feedback.**
All information gathered during audits should be shared with foodservice teams in consistent feedback loops so that all staff can help track food-waste-reduction efforts against a shared goal.
- **Incentivize innovation.**
Studies have shown that while buy-in from management is essential, managers must also be open to ideas and comments from kitchen staff, who often have some of the most innovative solutions. Management should emphasize the importance of accurately tracking data, while assuring staff that wasted food will not be seen as a result of poor performance.*

*[The Business Case for Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Restaurants – Champions 12.3](#)

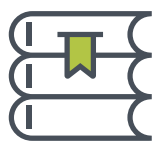


How SMALL STEPS can have a BIG IMPACT on reducing waste and PROTECTING THE PLANET

USE TRAINING MATERIALS

FOR INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS OR SMALL CHAINS WITH KITCHEN/STAFF FLEXIBILITY

Large chains can create their own self-branded resources (videos, employee handbooks, etc.)



Once you have identified champions and set a collective goal, it's time to arm your staff with the tools they need to succeed. WWF and the National Restaurant Association have created training materials specifically for restaurants including videos, best-practices sheets, and pre- and post-audit staff surveys. It's also important to encourage employees to brainstorm solutions together. Your staff knows your restaurant better than anyone, so adapt and change these materials to suit their preferences and your business needs. Here are some other resources to get you started:

- **Videos**
 - [Fighting food waste in restaurants](#)
 - [Empower and engage staff with eco-efforts](#)
 - [White Castle: How to motivate employees with sustainability](#)
- **Use the [Use Waste Not](#)**, the James Beard Foundation's cookbook and online recipes, or create your own full-use cookbook.
- **Join the [Chef Action Network](#)** and highlight your fight for food system change.
- **Take the James Beard Foundation's free ["Creating a Full-Use Kitchen"](#) course**, which offers 17 videos and dozens of interactive guides, from an intro to food safety to gastronomic and technical approaches to help your staff reduce food waste.

LEAVE AN IMPRESSION

FOR ALL RESTAURANT TYPES



Engaging staff in activities that bring the issue to life can leave a lasting impression. Tailor activities and messaging towards the audience: Owners and managers may be more interested in cost savings, while chefs or front-of-house staff might respond better to messaging around sustainability.

Communication should be consistent throughout daily staff meetings, formal training, and onboarding, and even in casual conversations. Here are a few ideas on how to take reducing food waste from theory to reality:

VOLUNTEER EVENTS

- **Volunteer at a local food pantry, or deliver rescued meals** from your restaurant to community feeding programs.
- **Get staff involved in onsite composting**; the compost can be donated to various local entities, or given to employees to use in their home gardens.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Visit a local food pantry or a meal-delivery nonprofit** to learn more about the challenges they face in processing donations and the community needs they see as priorities.
- **Plan a trip to a local farm or orchard** to show staff how much time, energy, and effort goes into growing the food used at the restaurant.
- **Hold a "Food Waste Week"** a few times a year to focus on raising awareness among staff and solicit ideas via a suggestion box or other mechanism.

FUN ACTIVITIES

- **"Leftover love" cookbook**: Ask staff to submit recipes that use commonly wasted items they see at their home or at the restaurant. Create a cookbook and offer it to customers for purchase.
- **Food waste trivia**: Develop a weekly question for staff to compete for a prize.
- **Bin decorating contest**: Teams can decorate all new landfill, compost, and recycling bins for use in the kitchens.

REMEMBER TO REWARD STAFF

FOR ALL RESTAURANT TYPES



There are numerous creative ways you can incentivize staff to help your business reduce food waste. Employees already want to help, so rewarding their efforts can help you meet your food-waste reduction goals. Incentive items for staff:

- Small compost bins for their home kitchens in areas where composting is available.
- Gift cards for community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions.
- Gift cards for compost subscriptions, if your area offers collection programs.
- Travel mugs, water bottles, and reusable food containers.