

86 FOOD WASTE



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#86FOODWASTE

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

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

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FIGHTING FOOD WASTE
IN RESTAURANTS:

FOOD WASTE SELF AUDIT

DETERMINE YOUR FOOD-WASTE BASELINE

Before you start on a food-waste reduction plan, you should first establish a baseline measure of waste at your restaurant so that you can measure which reduction methods are most effective. Begin to separate, weigh and record your food waste regularly or through periodic audits before you try out waste-reduction solutions. Simply separating food waste from other waste streams provides insight into what's driving it and can reduce it by 5%-10%, as demonstrated by Leanpath and the 2017 American Hotel and Lodging Association Hospitality Study, which can be found at [HotelKitchen.org](https://www.hotelkitchen.org).



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SEPARATE AND MEASURE

Separating food waste from your overall waste stream can provide surprising insight into the volume and types of food waste being generated in your kitchen. Knowing what food is left over regularly or that's past the point of sale by your organization's standards will first help identify what you're overproducing or over-buying. Next, you'll have an idea of what you have to divert to a compost or other food-waste diversion destination. You also will know what you have available to set up a donation partnership.

When separating and measuring food waste, either regularly or during scheduled audits, there are progressively deeper levels of data you can capture. Increasing the level of separation and measurement increases the value of collected data, but also takes more resources to implement. Options include:

- separating all food waste into its own bin.
- separating waste by front- and back-of-house origin.
- separating food waste by food type or cause.

Using measurement technologies such as systems from Leanpath and Winnow can equip employees to measure and record accurately and yield improved results. Collecting more information about food waste – where it was generated or what items were wasted – provides strategic direction to help you prioritize new behaviors and practices to reduce the volume.



If you don't have the capacity to separate and measure food waste on a regular, frequent basis, schedule periodic audits throughout the year to gather insights into the amount and contents of your food waste stream. You can perform waste audits yourself, or you can contract with your waste hauler, recycling vendor or a consultant.

STEP 1: DEVELOP GOALS FOR YOUR AUDIT

This will help guide your classification system and the type of audit you should perform. Goals could include:

- Determine the largest driver of food waste FOH and BOH.
- Understand what products are contaminating food waste diversion efforts (e.g., finding metal forks or plastics in the mix of organic waste).

STEP 2: GATHER AUDIT MATERIALS

- A **large space** or table for sorting
- **Buckets** for each category of waste
- A **scale**
- **Gloves and clothes** that can get dirty

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard](#)
- [A Guide to Conducting and Analyzing a Food Waste Assessment](#), Environmental Protection Agency
- [Reducing Wasted Food & Packaging: A Guide for Food Services and Restaurants](#), EPA
- [Waste Audit Worksheet](#), EPA
- [Waste Log](#), EPA

- **Samples** (bags of food waste) to measure from each area of your operation being audited. Samples can include food waste collected from storage areas, scraps from meal-prep areas, buffet leftovers, plate waste from the dining room, any other food waste that can be collected.

STEP 3: SORT AND SEPARATE

Use the goals you outlined in Step 1 to determine the categories you would like to sort the food waste into. Examples of categories for sorting include:

- Waste from guest plates
- Waste from employee dining areas
- Food scraps from meal preparation
- Spoiled food (e.g., over-seasoned or burned food, moldy produce and dairy, expired items)
- Edible food that can't be sold but that is food safe and would be suitable to donate to hunger-relief efforts or for animal feed (e.g., ingredients and leftovers)
- Inedible parts of food (e.g., pits, bones, rinds)

STEP 4: WEIGH AND RECORD

Gather all bags or bins of food waste by category. Weigh each category and record the result. Take detailed notes and photos of the piles to help you remember what was in each category and why it likely ended up there. Consider surveying employees, especially your bussers and dishroom staff, to find out what they see being thrown out regularly that they feel is wasteful.

STEP 5: ANALYZE

Use the recorded results to analyze how standard operating procedures – along with all stages of food production and consumption – are contributing to waste and take steps to update these procedures to minimize overproduction.

Here is a [sample table](#) that can be used to track food waste during an audit.