



RESTAURANT FOOD LOSS PREVENTION TIPS



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
HEALTH SYSTEM

The EPA created this list of ideas and activities for restaurants to implement to help prevent food loss and waste.

- Perform a food waste audit
 - Monitor waste bins and record what is being thrown out, how much is being discarded, and the reason the food is being disposed
 - In the kitchen, have only one food waste trash can and provide each staff member a small container to fill with food waste at their station. Before they empty their container, have staff weigh it and record the amount, type, and reason the waste is being discarded on a log sheet
 - Use this information to adjust menus, purchasing, and portion size
- Call a meeting to brainstorm and discuss food waste prevention

PREP AND STORAGE TIPS

- Reduce batch sizes: Prepare meals ahead of time and store them for future use
- Use cook-to-order instead of bulk-cooking all day or toward the end of the day
- Incorporate leftovers: Steak can be used for beef stew the next day
- Train staff on knife skills to make more efficient knife cuts to prevent waste
- Use as much of the food as possible: Cook up carrot greens and don't peel cucumbers or potatoes
- Reconstitute starchy vegetables that have wilted by immersing them in warm water (100 °F) for 15 minutes
- Freeze surplus and fresh fruits and veggies near the end of peak freshness for later use instead of throwing them away
- Marinate meats to extend their shelf life for a few more days
- Finish preparation at the line: Do not finish the food item until it's ready to go on the line so you can more easily use leftover ingredients in different recipes later
- Refresh staff on storage techniques for different foods (e.g., don't store tomatoes and lettuce in the same container or near each other)
- Use see-through storage containers to allow staff to see what is available and to keep an eye on freshness
- Eliminate garnishes that typically don't get eaten

PURCHASING TIPS

- Use reusable bottles instead of single use condiment packets
- Buy bruised or odd shaped/sized produce at a discount
- Ask for your suppliers' policies for food waste: Simply inquiring will show suppliers it's a priority
- Reach out to other businesses to exchange ideas for source reduction methods
- Do regular inventory checks or increase their frequency to reduce spoilage
- Buy local foods to minimize environmental impacts through reduced storage time and transportation

SERVING TIPS

- If you're a buffet restaurant
 - Go trayless: This will limit customers to take only what can fit on a plate and to make a conscious decision to go back for more
 - Consider a "pay-per-item" system instead of "all-you-can-eat" system
- Use smaller plates, bowls and serving scoops to discourage over-plating
- Offer different meal sizes and portions: Don't limit small portions to just children
- Don't automatically put bread or chips and salsa on the table Ask them if they would like these items
- Ask if a customer wants a side item, instead of automatically providing sides

ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMERS

- Provide taste samples: Allow customers to try foods before they buy them
- Educate customers on how to minimize food waste and why they should care
- Encourage customers to take home their leftover food

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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