

FOOD SERVICE WASTE REDUCTION



Thurston County Solid Waste

Waste reduction, the combination of waste prevention and recycling efforts, makes good financial sense. In addition to financial advantages, waste prevention benefits the environment, benefits society, and your company establishes itself as a good community citizen, providing immeasurable, lasting rewards.

Food Service Waste Reduction

TIPS FROM THURSTON COUNTY SOLID WASTE

Waste reduction begins by understanding what is being purchased, how goods are used, and then is put to use by finding ways to eliminate, reduce, reuse, and recycle materials. A good strategy is to target the largest components in the waste stream, and implement the easy waste reduction steps first. Below are some ideas to help you identify waste reduction opportunities at your business.

WASTE PREVENTION

General

- Use cloth towels for cleaning, rather than the single-use equivalents.
- Use reusable coasters (or nothing at all) instead of paper napkins when serving beverages from the bar.
- Use reusable table linen and dinnerware.

Food Preparation and Storage

- Reuse excess unserved foods that have been stored at proper temperature within two days of preparation to prevent waste due to spoilage.
- Consider buying your lettuce precut during those times of the year when the precut cost is equal to (or less than) the cost of bulk product to cut down on employee waste during handling, washing, and prepping.
- Donate unserved food to a local food bank.
- Rotate perishable stock at every delivery to minimize waste due to spoilage.
- Clean cooker and freezers regularly to ensure that food has not fallen behind the shelving and spoiled.
- Cover refrigerated foods with reusable plastic covers rather than plastic wrap or aluminum foil.
- Use vegetable and meat trimming for soup stock.

- Adjust the size of meal portions if you find that they are consistently being returned unfinished.
- Date frozen items and use the oldest first to prevent freezer burn.
- Keep refrigeration in good running order to prevent unnecessary spoilage and reduce energy costs.
- Use health department approved, refillable condiment dispensers instead of individual packets.
- Buy shelf-stable food supplies in bulk when sales volume and storage space allows.
- Consider buying shelled eggs in bulk if your egg usage for general cooking or baking is three or more cases per week.
- Buy meat in bulk, or in uncut form, and cut to size.
- Check your produce deliveries carefully for rotten or damaged products, and return any substandard items.
- Whenever possible, prepare foods to order.
- Store raw vegetables and other perishables in reusable airtight containers to prevent unnecessary dehydration and spoilage.
- Re-hydrated vegetables (e.g. celery, carrots, broccoli) that have wilted by trimming off the very bottom of the stalk and placing in warm water (100° F) for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Serve beverages from a beverage gun or dispenser, buy bar mixes in concentrate form, and buy milk in 5 gallon dispenser boxes.
- Improve purchasing and inventory management to prevent overstocking supplies that will not be used within one month, or may have limited shelf life.
- Return strawberry baskets and other fruit baskets to the distributors or institutions which give them back to produce farmers for reuse.
- Ask produce delivery vendors to pick up boxes for reuse.

Dishwashing & Cleaning

- Place rubber mats around bus and dishwashing stations to reduce china and glass breakage.

- Filter the fryer oil daily to extend the life of the oil; clean as needed. Use a test kit to determine when to change fryer oil.

Catering

- Offer snacks, food and condiments that can be bought in bulk without individual wrappers like vegetables, fruit, bread, nuts, ketchup, and mustard.
- Offer a vegetarian alternative plate to minimize the waste of meat.
- Offer reusable plates, flatware, cloth napkins, and table linens whenever possible, and discuss the importance of not creating vast amounts of waste by using non-disposable items with your clients.
- When possible, use reusable decorations like silk table arrangement and candles instead of items especially made and dated for the event. When a client is arranging fresh flowers or other type of temporary decoration, ask them to encourage other guests or employees to take them home to enjoy before disposing of them. Also suggest clients use potted plants that can be planted later and grown.
- Discuss methods to reduce waste with your clients, such as a table for collecting name tags at the end of the event that will be reused.

RECYCLING

General

- Ask your suppliers to take back shipping boxes for reuse or recycling and keep you informed about new and existing products that are packaged in ways which can reduce waste.
- Set up a rendering service for your waste grease, fat, and used cooking oil.
- Provide recycling bins in a centrally located area for your customers and employees, create instructional signs, laminate, and hang in clear view to tell staff or patrons the exact destination of every item. Contact Thurston County Solid Waste if you need assistance with signage.
- Join forces with business neighbors to cooperatively haul trash, recyclables, and organics (compostables). Sharing the same trash, recycling, and organics bins and disposal costs saves everybody money and promotes cooperation.

Catering

- Set up an in-house recycling program and explain to your clients how to choose products that can be easily accommodated.
- Arrange for recycling bins to be displayed prominently with clearly marked signs to encourage event attendees to participate.

COMPOSTING

Food Service

- Contact your waste hauler about collection service for food scraps, food-solid paper, and yard debris that can be commercially composted.
- Provide organics collection containers, with clear signage, for guests.
- Consider using compostable flatware and food containers if you cannot use durable dishware.

OUTREACH

Internal

- Keep employees informed and involved – provide regular updates to employees and management about waste reduction efforts. Everyone likes to hear a good word, and employees need to know that their commitments help achieve program goals. Positive communication and employee recognition (via newsletters, email announcements, recognition events) are critical to long-term success of waste reduction programs.
- Allow people involved with your business a chance to suggest ways to reduce waste. Consider operating a suggestion system that offers recognition for good waste reduction ideas.
- Have an annual employee training workshop to keep employees informed about reuse and recycling policies and procedures.
- Train new employees. Let them know they are expected to use resources carefully and to fully participate in waste reduction programs. Explain how to prevent waste and how to recycle materials.

External

- Let the public know about your waste reduction efforts. Send news releases about your efforts to local papers, and trade and environmental publications.

- Join the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WasteWise program. The WasteWise program is a free program open to businesses, schools, local governments, and non-profit organizations of all sizes and from all industry sectors. WasteWise helps to meet goals to reduce and recycle municipal solid waste and selected industrial wastes. By participating in WasteWise your business can:
 - Reduce purchasing and disposal costs.
 - Access a toll-free helpline for technical assistance.
 - Receive an Annual Climate Profile describing greenhouse gas reduction.
 - Obtain public recognition in WasteWise publications, case studies, and meetings.
 - Network in member and regional forums.
 - Receive WasteWise Awards that recognize outstanding achievements.
 - Acquire outreach and educational materials.

For more waste reduction ideas and assistance visit the “Business Waste Reduction” link of www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org or call (360) 867-2491.