Top 10 Ways to Reduce Restaurant Food Waste

Wasting food isn't just about throwing more bags in the trash—it's about throwing away money. Every time you don't sell all the food you buy, it cuts into your bottom line.

On average, 5% of a restaurant's food costs end up in the garbage. That's tens of thousands of dollars each year, money you could be reinvesting in your business or putting in your pocket.

The good news? **There are simple steps you can take to cut nearly all of that waste.** And for the extra you can't avoid, we've included contacts for local food donation programs and compost pickup services to make sure nothing goes to waste.

1. *Have staff sign a food waste policy and post it on the wall.* Demonstrating your commitment to minimizing waste inspires FOH and BOH to take action in production and with customers.

2. *Measure your food waste/cover daily.* Using pen and paper, track how much food is going into the trash and why so you can begin to understand what changes are necessary.

3. *Train your staff on why food waste is an issue and ask them to share ideas.* Your staff are your eyes and ears. Encourage them to flag reasons food is not being eaten and incorporate their ideas.

4. *Reinforce FIFO (first in, first out) system.* Managing your inventory well will help make sure you're catching food before it goes out of date.

5. *Conduct a maintenance checkup on refrigerators and freezers.* Making sure your coolers and freezers are in good shape can prevent them from going down and you losing a lot of product.

6. *Engage and inspire customers to reduce plate waste.* More and more, customers want to know what businesses are doing for the environment. Sharing your successes with them can promote customer loyalty and repeat business.

7. *Have a plan for what doesn't sell.* Knowing ahead of time how you can repurpose, donate, or compost items that weren't purchased can help make sure it doesn't end up in the trash.

8. *Use the app "Too Good To Go" to sell end of shift goods.* This simple app allows you to move unsold items, recouping your costs while marketing to new customers. Learn more at www.toogoodtogo.com.

9. *Donate excess food to people.* The federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act protects food businesses donating food from liability. If you have extra food (prepared or unprepared) to donate, contact Metro Food Rescue at brandon@metrofoodrescue.com.

10. *Use a composting service to close the loop.* The food scraps that end up landfills give off powerful greenhouse gasses. You can make a big impact on the environment by sending these scraps to be composted instead. For more information, contact My Green Michigan at carinne@mygreenmi.com.

To learn more ways to save money and reduce the amount of food that goes to waste, contact:

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