



10 WAYS TO SAVE MONEY

— BY —

MANAGING FOOD WASTE

> differently <

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LeanPath 

introduction:

How Managing Food Waste Differently Can Save You Money

Most foodservice operations throw away 4-10% of the food they purchase as pre-consumer food waste. That's \$40,000 to \$100,000 for every \$1 million in food purchases, finding its way to a trash bin before it ever sees a customer's plate.

Fortunately, there's are ways to reduce this number—significantly. In every foodservice operation, everyone from front-line staff to management plays an important part in minimizing food waste.

If you're looking for some ideas on how you can kick-start your food waste reduction efforts, read on to get 10 easy-to-implement methods to start seeing results in your kitchen.



1

Foster a positive culture centered around solving food waste together.

In many operations, employees are afraid to talk about food waste—scared that they may get reprimanded on account of it or even worse, fired.

As a manager, it's your job to set the tone. Food waste needs to be a topic your staff can talk about openly—sharing ideas and perspectives on why it's happening and what you can do differently to minimize it.

Food waste needs to be positive, never punitive.

2

Start tracking.

You manage the things that you measure. To save money on food waste, you have to know what you're wasting and why so you can make changes to minimize that waste in the future.

Start tracking your food waste with a manual waste tracking sheet or an automated system. Just by putting an automated system in place, many operations experience an immediate 20% decline in waste, because it raises employee awareness and gets them to start thinking differently about waste.





3

Create a Stop Waste Action Team (SWAT).

Create a small internal SWAT comprised of staff members with various roles—for example, the dishwasher, executive chef, line cook, and a front-of-the-house staffer. This is the group responsible for meeting weekly and discussing findings from your food waste tracking.

They'll brainstorm ideas for changes to production, purchasing, menus or staff training, and bring those back to the management team for discussion.

4

Set a weekly waste reduction goal.

Every person in your kitchen should know what your weekly waste goal is for the week. Is it to drive down soup waste by 50%? Reduce veggie prep waste by 25%?

Whatever the goal, it should be specific, measurable and data-driven. Report back often on your progress towards your goal, and emphasize how every person plays a role in driving down food waste.



5

Use team recognition and rewards.

If you've set a positive tone and encouraged openness about solving food waste, give yourself a pat on the back. Now your job is to keep your team members engaged and motivated on an ongoing basis.

Make sure you're talking about food waste and your goals every day in your daily stand-up meetings. Recognize team members for taking ownership, suggesting ideas or helping to monitor waste—a “kudos” in front of peers can go a long way. Additionally, consider using small rewards to keep team members motivated to monitor waste, like a \$5 gift card to the person with the most creative waste reduction idea.

6

Watch for “sneaky waste.”

Many operations keep a close eye on meats and seafood to ensure that these high-cost items aren't getting trashed, but many times the side dishes fly under the radar and add up quickly.

Pastas, rice, soup and the like are often the most wasted items in foodservice operations. Although their portions are relatively inexpensive, the total amount wasted adds up quickly. Tracking all your food waste will help you keep these items under control.





7

Keep a close eye on overproduction.

You plan your work very carefully with systems and production sheets, but are your team members working the plan? Often times, staff members will pad the production numbers for fear of running out of something. Or perhaps they are prepping to the plan, but at the end of every shift there's still half a tray of casserole getting tossed.

In college/university and hospital dining, overproduction is usually the top waste culprit. But it can be easily solved if you know what's being wasted, when it's being wasted and why it's being wasted.

8

Monitor trimmings—inefficiencies add up.

At first blush, it may sound like monitoring trim waste is a waste of time. After all, you can't do anything with onion peels and melon rinds, right?

But what if you had a team member that was leaving an inch of edible melon on every rind, or a line cook who was peeling back edible onion and discarding it? More impactful to your bottom line is a similar example with meat or expensive fruits and vegetables.

Inefficient trimming is not uncommon—consider focusing on knife skills training for your staff to drive down waste.





9

Keep an eye on plate waste.

We've been focusing mainly on pre-consumer food waste, or "kitchen waste," since that's where operators have the most control. But don't forget to examine what's coming back on the customer's plates. There may be a side dish that's constantly getting discarded or a portion size that needs to be adjusted based on customer behavior.

Periodic waste audits examining customer plate waste will drive you to make adjustments that positively impact the bottom line.

10

Share your commitment with your customers.

While this is more about top-line growth than bottom-line savings, most operations are always looking for ways to drive more business.

[Research from the Sustainable Restaurant Association](#) shows that diners place food waste among the top three issues they want restaurants to focus on—and 56% of those surveyed would pay a premium for their meal if they knew the restaurant was investing in environmental sustainability.

So don't keep your initiatives to reduce food waste under wraps from customers—make sure they know about it so you get credit for all the great things you're doing in the back-of-the-house to be more waste conscious.



Through a combination of technology and behavioral science, LeanPath's food waste prevention systems are helping hundreds of foodservice operations prevent food waste every day.

Get in touch with us—we'd love to hear from you.

