

Top 10 Waste-Busting Tips for restaurants and caterers

The more your business can reduce, reuse and recycle its waste, the less you spend on disposal and purchasing unnecessary items. Below are 10 tips on how to cut back your waste, save the environment and save you some money:

Reduce

1. Packaging

Be aware of the amount of packaging coming into your business from your suppliers. Consider buying products with less packaging, those with more packaging are ultimately more expensive as you are also paying for the disposal of that packaging.

2. Food waste

Food waste is more than likely one of the heaviest and largest items in your bin and costs a lot to dispose of. A lot of waste can be avoided by reviewing your:

- purchasing practices (only buy what you need)
- portion sizes (reduce sizes, offer portion sizes, doggy bags, employ nose to tail eating)
- storage methods (check temperatures, use air-tight containers, use first in first out system)
- food preparation practices (do not over trim, use carcasses, bones and trimmings etc to prepare stock for sauces or soups)

3. Disposables

Cut down on disposable items eg. plastic cutlery, plates and napkins. The more you have to dispose of the more you have to pay the waste company to take it away.

Reuse

4. Reusable packaging

Ask your supplier to deliver in reusable packaging or to take back the packaging. Try and include this in the contract with the supplier. This not only reduces your disposal costs but also saves your supplier money.

5. Use left overs

Use surplus food to make new meals. Identify what types of food you waste the most, then come up with ideas for new recipes using the most common leftovers. Use the internet to search for new recipes eg. www.leftoverchef.com

6. Reusable containers

Reuse containers, for example plastic bottles and ice cream boxes to store produce or for other purposes such as internal food waste bins. Use refillable condiment dispensers instead of single portion size packets (sachets) of sugar, salt, pepper, milk, sauces etc.

Recycle

7. Set up a recycling scheme

Recycling is often cheaper when compared with general waste disposal. Carry out a visual waste audit (contact Ethical Eats for more info on how to do this) to determine the main waste materials and match those materials up with a suitable, reliable and cost effective waste/recycling collection company. See the WRAP website for further information: <http://recycleatwork.wrap.org.uk/>

8. Compact it

A compactor will help to reduce the physical volume of the recyclables which is particularly useful for many of the bigger items such as cardboard. If you are charged per bin lift this will reduce the number of lifts and help save money.

9. Recycle used cooking oil

Used cooking oil can be collected and turned into bio-diesel. Shop around for a collection company; some companies collect for free and many suppliers offer a take back service on used oil.

10. Close the Loop – buy recycled

Try and close the recycling loop and buy products with a recycled content eg. hand towels, menus printed on 100% recycled paper, food grade recycled plastic containers. This will help drive demand for the products, increase their value and stabilise markets.