

TENNESSEE SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

Food Waste Reduction

It is no secret that a major portion of the hospitality industry's services revolves around food. Restaurants, snack-bars, events, breakfast buffets, and room service all meet the needs of hungry guests, but with that service comes a large volume of food waste. The U.S. wastes roughly 63 million tons of food each year, with approximately 40% of that volume generated by consumer-facing businesses – including hotels. Not only does this loss of food equate to a major financial loss, it is also one of the largest contributors to a business or individual's environmental footprint. Food production is the single biggest contributor to global deforestation, biodiversity loss, and water extraction. So, if the food that was produced through these methods goes uneaten or is wasted somewhere in the supply chain, that means that we've wasted a significant amount of land and resources too. Fortunately, this provides a large opportunity for improvement in food management practices.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Financial savings. Monetary savings will be seen through eliminating over-purchasing methods and avoided disposal fees from reducing waste from less packaging and less pre- and post-consumer food waste.

Reduce environmental impacts. Due to improved food management practices, the natural resources utilized in food production will not be wasted and any remaining food waste will not give off harmful greenhouse gases from breaking down anaerobically in a landfill.

Tax benefits. There is no state tax incentive for food donation in Tennessee, however Tennessee businesses are all eligible for the general and enhanced federal tax deductions for food donations.

Support efforts to reduce hunger. 1 in 7 Tennesseans are food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to nutritious food. The Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and Tennessee Liability of Free Food Distributors law provide liability protection to individuals, businesses, non-profits, and gleaners who safely donate food.

THIS GUIDE IS APPLICABLE...

FOR

- ✓ Food & Beverage
- ✓ Travel & Tourism
- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Recreation

TO

- ✓ Management
- ✓ Event Planning
- ✓ Food Operations
- ✓ Housekeeping
- ✓ Maintenance & Operations
- ✓ Front of the House



BEST PRACTICES

- 1 Conduct a Food Waste Audit.** It is important to get a baseline measurement of the food waste that is currently being generated to understand where opportunities for implementing prevention, recovery, and diversions exist and to be able to track progress.
- 2 Track and measure.** You can't manage what you don't measure. It is important to record all data possible in your food waste reduction journey such as food purchasing savings, volume of food waste diverted, donated, or composted, and avoided disposal fee costs. This way you can share the success and progress of the program with stakeholders, management, and guests.
- 3 Adjust food purchasing policies to reduce food waste.** This can include implementing a "just in time" purchasing policy or using software to identify over-purchasing and reduce unnecessary purchasing. The idea is to eliminate items that are rarely ordered, purchase from local providers as much as possible to extend shelf-life and create guidelines to reduce spoilage and waste.
- 4 Train staff in efficient and waste-free food prep.** Teach cooks and kitchen staff to most effectively and efficiently use the entire fruit or vegetable in their cooking techniques. Leftover greens, stalks, and stems can be sautéed, shaved into salads or slaws, or mixed into veggie burgers. Many fine-cuisine options use less-common edible items such as squash blossoms as sides and carrot tops for pesto, so don't be afraid to branch out.
- 5 Revise Menus.** Adjusting all service menus can have a major impact on food waste generated – both pre- and post-consumer. When assessing the menus for modifications, look to remove rarely-ordered items, reduce serving sizes of frequently uneaten items, identify buffet items which are regularly wasted and reduce the volume of those items that are prepared, and identify grab and go items that are not regularly purchased and reduce the quantity of those items prepared. Another effective method is to synchronize menu options to incorporate similar ingredients or incorporate leftover items from one meal into another. For example: leftover salad veggies can be used as pizza toppings, day-old bread or rolls for homemade croutons, and produce scraps from kitchen prep for homemade stock for soups.

BEST PRACTICES

- 6 Implement better storage techniques.** Implement the “First-In First-Out” stocking method which places newly purchased items behind older items and uses the stock at the front or on top first. Appropriately store produce at the temperature conducive to the longest shelf-life and avoid washing berries or other produce until ready to use.
- 7 Find a donation organization.** Look for a local food bank, food rescue, or non-profit organization that meets your needs for a successful partnership. Things to consider are transportation methods and schedule, storage space and type, length of time storage space is needed, and disposal vs. reusable storage containers.
- 8 Determine a landfill diversion method.** Even with each of these best practices implemented, it is impossible to eliminate food waste. This is where determining an on-site composting location or identifying a local service provider – like The Compost Fairy in Memphis, The Compost Company, or Compost Nashville in Nashville – to accept and compost the leftover organics is necessary. Many compost providers have annual or bi-annual compost give-backs to their guests. The facility could use this compost to reduce landscaping expenses, or donate their compost to a local charity, non-profit, or school.

RESOURCES

The Rockefeller Foundation, AHLA, and WWF

- [Fighting Food Waste in Hotels](#)

Environmental Protection Agency

- [Reducing Wasted Food and Packaging: A Guide for Food Services and Restaurants](#)
- [A Guide to Conducting and Analyzing a Food Waste Assessment](#)