

The Business Case for Reducing Waste

According to ReFED, in 2019 U.S. businesses generated approximately 50 million tons of surplus food – the equivalent of 80 billion meals, representing a \$244 billion loss across the foodservice, retail, manufacturing, and farm sectors.

Reducing wasted food avoids several purchasing and disposal costs, can feed food insecure people in your community, and provides a tax benefit for your business. In addition, you'll have a positive environmental impact, reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that result from wasted food in landfills.

Below are a few stories from businesses that bring prevention to life. While some waste is unavoidable, there are endless creative strategies to repurpose food that otherwise would have been discarded. Implementing these practices has helped many businesses identify surplus food and improve their bottom line.



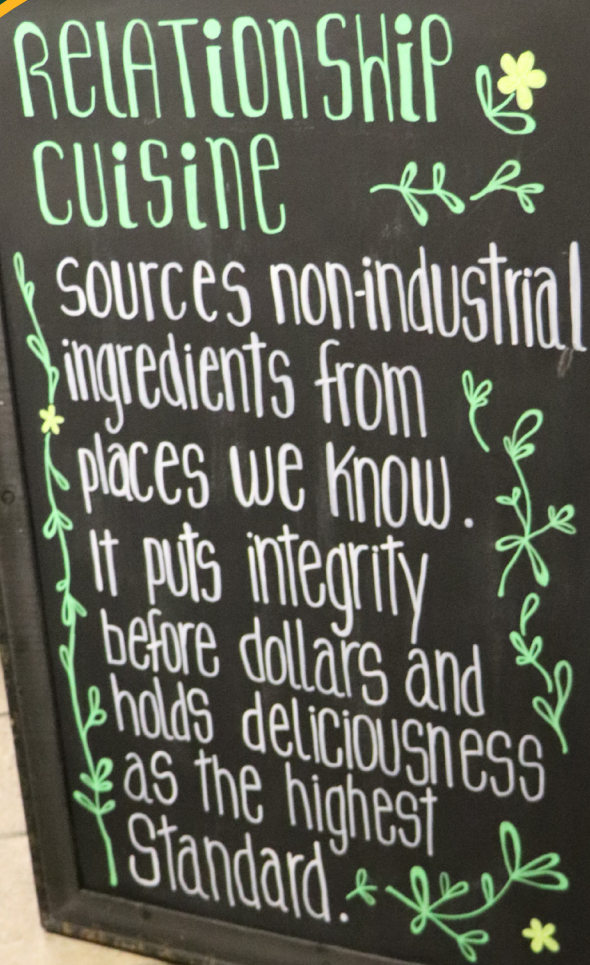
Repurposing Success Stories

Musi

Philadelphia, PA

“At Musi, we aim to throw away as little as possible, taking consideration to give each part of an ingredient a place to shine. Herb leaves, like parsley, are plucked and used throughout the menu. The stems are saved until we have enough to **make infinity oil**, which is our version of a green oil. The oily, fibrous byproduct of the infinity oil is used as a base for sauces or worked into pasta doughs. Citrus rinds, like lemons and oranges, are saved and frozen after being juiced. We make **marmalade with the citrus rinds**, which we use to fill hamantaschen, among other things. We also make a puree with the rinds, which we use in pasta fillings.”

- Nora Vaughan, Director of Operations at Musi



RELATIONSHIP
CUISINE
sources non-industrial
ingredients from
places we know.
It puts integrity
before dollars and
holds deliciousness
as the highest
Standard.



A photograph of a grocery store produce section. In the foreground, there are baskets of fresh green leafy vegetables, including lettuce and spinach. Behind them are bins of yellow lemons and red bell peppers. The produce is arranged on metal shelving units with price tags.

TBD Foods

Denver, CO

"The margins in the restaurant industry are already razor thin, so we want to focus on using the whole part of an animal and the entire vegetable to ensure we are getting the most out of our food. Not only is it beneficial to our environment and community but also to our bottom lines. **Saving mushroom stems**, which are typically discarded, to create a filling, sauce or risotto can quickly and easily stretch out the use of a typically expensive item."

- Terence Rodges, Owner/Chef at TBD Foods

Village Market

Wilton, CT

Village Market has an extensive program to reduce and prevent wasted food. The market utilizes a handful of strategies to repurpose their food items, such as using surplus veggies in stocks and soups, turning their surplus and/or stale bread into croutons, and using overripened bananas to make banana breads.



Understanding Your Waste

Tracking wasted food is a great first step to start or expand your reduction efforts. Separating and collecting wasted food can highlight volumes and types of foods that are often being discarded. Strategies like collecting data from wasted food audits can help identify those wasted items and guide reduction efforts.

There are several ways to track wasted food: pen and paper, spreadsheets, and comprehensive wasted food tracking systems. The [EPA offers a Food Waste Log](#) while [Leanpath](#), [Phood](#), and [Winnow](#) can take your tracking efforts even further. However you choose to track your waste, you'll want to include the weight of what's discarded, and the operational reason for the waste.

Waste Tracking Success Stories

Businesses can track waste in a variety of ways. Tracking waste can be as simple as looking at your bins and noticing what items are often not being consumed. Below are just a couple examples of how businesses have seen success implementing some of these strategies.





Apponaug Brewery

Warwick, RI

During the summer of 2021, the owner of Apponaug Brewery in Rhode Island, Tamara McKenney, began working more closely with the kitchen staff. Tamara was astounded by the amount of food being wasted and was eager to implement changes. After this realization, she launched an experiment to **track the quantity of French fries** that were returned as plate waste by sorting them into a large clear tub each shift. By separating this material, she highlighted the volume of fries that were uneaten and sparked an initiative to reduce wasted food by offering smaller portions.

Since this experiment, the business has focused on **portion control** to reduce the volume of fries that are wasted. Smaller portions have also led to a reduction in the number of take-out containers distributed. With a focus on offering what people will eat, the business strives to avoid oversized portions and excess items that were not requested.

The Ritz-Carlton

Pentagon City, VA

Leanpath research finds that foodservice operations waste between 4 and 10% of purchases. In a case study highlighting the partnership between Leanpath and the Ritz-Carlton in Arlington, Virginia, the hotel was able to **prevent 61,000 lbs of food waste**. These findings not only led to cost savings but to the purchase and development of new menu items.

The case study features statements from the hotel Executive Chef, Sriram Hariharan, "In every kitchen, food gets wasted. [But] we don't realize it until we actually see it in terms of data." Leanpath data showed a quick and profitable win for Hariharan and his team: they were overproducing and over-purchasing fish. "We went from eight cases to almost half of [that]. That was a big 'aha' moment." Leanpath analytics also revealed that breakfast pastries were wasted in large amounts. In response, the staff upcycled the pastries into a bread pudding recipe.

"It reduces waste and we also come up with a good, delicious product."

- Patrice Moat, Line Cook at RCPC



Resources

Source Reduction Guidance

- The Source Reduction Guidance document includes information on the source reduction of wasted food at institutional foodservice operations. Guidance includes strategies such as waste tracking, meal planning, food purchasing, and dining hall design.

Hamilton County - Let's Stop Waste at Work

- The Let's Stop Waste at Work program provides technical assistance to foodservice operators in Hamilton County looking to reduce waste and/or donate prepared foods.



The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. CET acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development of a vibrant marketplace to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors. We have been a leader in the wasted food reduction and diversion movement for more than 20 years, implementing some of the first wasted food composting programs in the country, and contributing to effective public policy.

We believe that better managing wasted food is critical in order to address climate change, feed more hungry people, and grow our economy. If you are a city, state or federal agency, industry group or foundation, and want to tackle the issue of wasted food, please contact us!

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