

Kneads Bakery, Café, and Mill's Perfect Recipe for Waste Reduction

Right off Interstate 95, moments from the Saugatuck River, in Westport, Connecticut, sits [Kneads Bakery, Café, and Mill](#). Kneads is all about local ingredients, quality food, and community. They began their own recycling efforts to reduce and divert waste wherever possible, but knew they wanted to do more. [Sustainable Westport](#) connected Kneads with the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) to receive technical assistance, with the goal of creating even more sustainable practices and utilizing donation networks.

As a result, the café was able to partner with a local food bank and divert 90 lbs of food waste weekly from disposal.



Kneads serves breakfast, lunch, and baked goods, all while using local ingredients. The owners are passionate about quality food for all their customers and have curated a specialized menu offering pastries, bread, soups, coffee, and more. Their baked goods are created with locally produced flour from their own [New American Stone Mill](#).

The café isn't just passionate about the quality of its food but also the environmental impact of its production. After implementing methods on their own, the business turned to Sustainable Westport, a community-run organization that advocates for local sustainability initiatives. They connected Kneads with CET and one of our Environmental Specialists scheduled a visit to the café to evaluate their current waste practices. They looked at where, when, and how waste streams are generated at the café, as well as the recycling and disposal procedures already in place. After the site visit, CET proposed solutions for donating surplus food, options for recycling pre- and post-consumer food scraps, and innovative solutions for Kneads' hard-to-recycle materials. With the support of CET, Kneads was able to take the next steps to achieve their sustainability goals.



Photo courtesy of Kneads Bakery, Café, and Mill



Existing Waste Reduction and Recycling Programs at Kneads

CET recognized the café's existing efforts in sustainability, such as collecting cardboard and containers for recycling, maintaining a color-coded bag system for waste, and sharing recycling and trash dumpsters with another nearby restaurant. These practices are great for recycling efforts and waste reduction and are typically manageable for the average business to implement.

Additionally, the business employs several sustainable food waste reduction practices. In the back of house they reuse food scraps to make stocks and broths for their menu items, and the front of house features a self-service bus station, where guests are encouraged to separate trash, recyclables, and reusable dishware. These methods offer a great introduction to food waste management throughout the restaurant. It was a logical next step to elevate their food waste efforts and gain additional insight from CET.



Food Donation Program

Many bakeries face the issue of surplus baked goods at the end of the day or week. Kneads identified the opportunity to donate surplus food and together with CET they were able to find a solution. This collaborative effort was fostered by their staff and led to a connection with Food Rescue US - Fairfield County.

[Food Rescue US](#) is a food donation network with **35+ locations in the US, 3 of which are located in Connecticut.** [The app](#) allows volunteers in the community to work together to collect food from donors, which is then delivered to participating social service agencies. Many food rescue organizations use apps to widen their reach and engage in action in their community. Anyone in the community can sign up to volunteer.

After connecting with Food Rescue US - Fairfield County, Kneads came up with easy-to-follow steps for food donation. Organizing a food donation plan is an achievable and sustainable next step for most businesses. Not only is it easy and safe, but food donation is protected by federal and state legislation.

Now the café donates food within two days of making it to ensure the donated food is still fresh. Bread and pastry donations are wrapped in plastic, which this business hopes to eliminate in the future. Using the Food Rescue US app, the bakery registers the available, fresh food one hour before pick-up. From there, a volunteer accepts the rescued food on the app and delivers it to the matched social service agency. Currently, Kneads registers three pick-ups per week.

"In general, businesses that prepare and serve food for public consumption are already practicing the measures necessary to easily adopt safe food donation."

- Abbey Massaro, Waste Reduction Consultant, CET



Photo courtesy of Kneads Bakery, Café, and Mill

Evolving Environmental Efforts Even Further

While Kneads is already working towards ambitious sustainability goals in an accessible way, they want to explore more options. CET proposed solutions such as compostable ware and reusable takeback programs. The proposal included referrals to organizations that are committed to making sustainability easy to achieve for businesses similar to Kneads. One consideration CET offered was a case study on [Grainmaker](#), a restaurant in Boston that successfully implemented a container take-back program. CET also recommended Kneads consider working with [ReThink Disposable](#), an organization that works with businesses and governments to help transition away from disposable containers.

The Successful Sustainability of Kneads

Recycling and waste reduction efforts are top of mind for many businesses around the world. As a family business with links to their community and the environment, it made sense for Kneads to connect with CET. There are a number of changes that the café is implementing as a result of their work with CET. Across the business they donate over 90 pounds of delicious baked goods per week through Food Rescue US, representing a quarter of their total unused food. When picking up produce from farms they have started bringing their own crates to reduce waste. At the mill, they pack orders of milled flour in reused grain bags, sending them to markets and other locations. In the café, they changed their trash location and utilize bus tubs that are later organized by staff. Going forward, Kneads is looking to further divert food scraps by implementing a composting program.



Helpful Resources

Food donations in Connecticut aren't just sustainable, they're safe for businesses too. A donation made through Food Rescue US or any other organization is protected at the federal and state levels. [Here is a legal fact sheet](#) developed by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic that contains more information on liability protections for food donation in Connecticut. On top of federal liability protections, Connecticut has [state liability protections](#) for businesses that donate wholesome food in good faith to non-profit organizations. CET's [Food Donation Guidance Document](#) includes best practices for labeling, storing, and transporting donated food, as well as for establishing partnerships with receiving organizations.

You can also check out these resources from CET on food waste and donation:

[Wasted Food Reduction and Recovery in Connecticut](#)

[How to Donate Food to the Connecticut Food Bank](#)

Photo courtesy of Kneads Bakery, Café, and Mill

Start Your Own Sustainable Initiatives at Your Business

If your business is looking to evolve its sustainability efforts just like Kneads, [contact us](#).

If you've worked with CET before and want to be featured in a case study just like this one, let us know.

centerforecotechnology.org/ctwasteassistance

(888) 813-8552

ReduceWasteCT@cetonline.org

