



Clean plates and healthy rates

A guide to reducing food waste
in Cumbria's hospitality industry



The true cost of wasting food

Did you know that almost half of the rubbish your organisation throws away is food? A staggering 3.3 million tonnes of food waste from hotels, restaurants and bars goes into landfill sites every year. Of course, some of this is peelings, cores and bones, but most of it is, or at least was, perfectly good food.

And this cost is bound to add up. The real cost of waste can be much higher than simply what you get billed for disposal, 20 times higher in fact. When you add to the cost of ingredients, labour, gas and electric, you get much closer to the true cost of wasted food.

Let's say 1kg of food ingredients costs £1. If it becomes waste that's £1 off the bottom line and 5p on the waste bill. Add to this a further £1 incurred for the cost of handling and preparing that food before it is thrown in the bin. So a wasted pounds worth of food can end up costing you over two.

So really the key to reducing your food cost is not really through waste management but through waste prevention. While a great contract with a collector will no doubt help your bottom line, preventing that food from being binned in the first instance reduces all of the costs associated with it.

Wasted food is not just a waste of your profit but also has a huge cost on the environment too. Most of it will end up in Landfill sites where it rots and releases harmful methane - a gas over 20 times more powerful than carbon-dioxide as a greenhouse gas.

The good news is that much of this costly food waste can be avoided through some quite basic waste prevention techniques. Over the next few pages we will be suggesting some easy ways to make the most of your businesses food.

It's all about the bread



Be better than the rest

It is not just your bottom line costs that could be healthier through waste prevention - your business image could even become more appealing to your customers.

It is estimated that some 14 million tourists visit Cumbria each year. With our reputation of being a clean and green location it is not hard to see why many of the people who visit us are very aware of their own carbon footprint.

A recent survey revealed that 3 per cent of British holidaymakers are 'very willing' to pay a premium for a sustainable holiday and a further 25% 'quite willing' to pay more. This equates to over 3.6 million of our tourists who would pay for the privilege of an ethical holiday.

Show off your green credentials

It's all too easy to jump on the sustainability band wagon with a few token gestures. The big wins come from a genuine commitment to waste prevention. For those that make this commitment the rewards are great. Not only will you have healthier profits but you will have a new tool with which to market your business.

Increasingly consumers demand real substance to the claims of sustainability. If your commitment is real then your claim can be validated. The Green Tourism Business Scheme is the largest green accreditation scheme in the UK.

Find out more at green-business.co.uk.



3 step guide to a leaner, greener kitchen

Step 1

Access the situation

The first step towards becoming a more sustainable kitchen would be to assess the situation. Calculating the cost of your food waste may be the best means of spurring yourself into action.

A simple way to do this would be to calculate the cost of your ingredients as a percentage from a sample of your invoices. Monitor food waste over a period of time by multiplying the bins you send to landfill by the weight per bin. Then, multiply the cost per kg of the waste collection by the percentage cost of your food waste.

QUICK WIN

It's always worth delving into your bins to see if there are any themes. If you throw away a lot of lettuce perhaps it is rotting before you can use it. Cut back on the amount you buy.

Step 2

Control your portions

Careful control of the amount of food served to every customer is key to ensuring your food waste - and your profit margins - stay intact. Sound portion control could save you hundreds, maybe even thousands, of pounds each year. If you have an extra penny worth of food on a plate and are serving 100 meals a day, that alone could cost you over £350 over the year.

Everybody is different

There is not a one size fits all approach to portion control. Look at your business type and indeed your customers to see what is right for you. Are you a cafe required to serve man-sized portions for your largely manual worker customer based or a sophisticated urban eatery specialising in light lunches for that mid shopping break? Your customers too will tell you what is appropriate. How many clean plates do you collect? If the answer is 'not many' then you are probably serving too much.

It's all in the quality

Higher quality food will yield more portions than lower quality food. For example, low quality stewing beef is likely to require so much trimming that it may be difficult to get six portions to the kilo. The time and labour involved on preparing the meat also loses money.

Marketing of your menus

Clever marketing of your meals can help avoid needless expectations of an oversized portion and can actually help direct your customers to dishes and indeed portions you are comfortable with. Dishes entitled grand, mega, light or petite can help you manage expectation and even help your customers choose a dish which suits their hunger. In addition to this children specific and lunch menus are a great addition to any establishment.

Step 3

Be creative with leftovers

Make sure that the bin is the absolute last option for your leftovers.

- Turn leftover toast from breakfast into croutons for the lunchtime soup or breadcrumbs for the evening meals fish cakes.
- Use your vegetable peelings to make a tasty and hearty soup.
- Make delicious home made pate from leftover meats and fish.
- Turn leftover fruits and vegetables into pickles, chutneys and jams. Or dehydrate them to create intensely flavoured powders. Season a sauce with a mushroom powder made by drying out fungi in a low oven and whizzing in a processor, or sprinkle a similarly made raspberry powder over sorbets and ice-creams.

QUICK WIN

Keep an eye what is left on your plates when they are cleared away. If there is too much salad perhaps reduce the size of your side salads

QUICK WIN

Remember all of these tips can and should be used in promotions. 'Rustic' 'home-made' and 'organic' are all very popular and extremely marketable.

Think global,

buy local

There are lots of very real benefits to buying and using Cumbrian produce in your business.

Having a good relationship with a local supplier can really help with your stock control and ultimately your food waste. The ideal scenario would be to order on a daily basis so you can truly meet the demands of your business. In reality this is not often possible but flexibility and frequency are really the key to a successful supplier relationship.

Trading in Cumbria you are perfectly placed to tap into the millions of tourists we welcome each year. Many of these tourists have travelled from all over the globe to see what Cumbria has to offer - that includes the local produce. Use your local suppliers and promote that you do so. Cumbrian food, grown locally on Cumbrian farms, prepared and served by Cumbrian chefs. You can really close the loop on your customers experience of our county.

By buying locally you are helping to boost the local economy. Keeping the Cumbrian pound within Cumbria, while bringing in as much money from outside as possible, helps keep our county flourishing.

Better buying tips

When buying food it is important to consider quality. The cost for high quality produce will of course be higher but it should always result in a greater yield and so less wastage. Buying lower quality foods can often be false economy as they may turn out to cost you more in the long run.

A sound knowledge of the food you buy will help with your portion control as you will know exactly how many portions can be obtained from it.

- Keep up to dates lists of prices and be aware of the different types and qualities of all products - knowledge is power.
- Consider part or ready prepared items as they can really save on labour costs and wastage.
- Order by number and weight to help with portion control.
- To help with the buying of the correct quantities, compile a purchasing chart of 10, 50 or 100 covers – depending on the size of the restaurant – from which items can be easily divided or multiplied according to requirements.
- Be aware of the best time to buy products at the best price and make these your weekly specials.

Rot the lot

A great way of disposing of a large amount of your kitchen scraps is by composting. A compost bin is not only a free way of getting rid of all of your fruit and vegetable peelings but it even provides you with nutritious compost to use on your gardens and front approach adding to your kerb appeal and making you look even more welcoming.

Most people think that it is just garden waste that can go into a compost bin but you can compost a whole range of everyday items that would have otherwise cost in disposal. Items such as:

- ✓ Fruit scraps and vegetable peelings
- ✓ Egg shells
- ✓ Coffee grounds and filter paper
- ✓ Tea bags
- ✓ Newspapers
- ✓ Cereal boxes and other cardboard containers
- ✓ Newspaper
- ✓ Toilet roll tubes

QUICK WIN

Why couple your composting with growing your own vegetables? This is really easy to do and 'home grown' looks great on the menu.



Resource Cumbria is the waste partnership between the county's seven local authorities. To find out more about waste reduction and recycling in Cumbria visit recycleforcumbria.org

