

FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT

a guide for restaurants



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UNDERSTAND YOUR FOOD WASTE

Every thrown-out scrap, expired ingredient, or uneaten plate represents lost potential profit. By conducting a food waste audit and implementing targeted strategies, restaurants can slash unnecessary costs; boost operational efficiency and improve sustainability



Spoilage

Expired or spoiled food due to improper storage, over-ordering, or inaccurate forecasting of customer demand



Preparation Waste

This includes vegetable trimmings, meat scraps, bones, and peels leftover from prepping ingredients



Overproduction

Excessive quantities of food that doesn't get sold, often due to miscalculations or anticipating higher demand



Plate Waste

Uneaten food left on customers' plates. This can be influenced by portion size, menu design, and customer preferences

Where does the most food waste occur in your restaurant?

A recent study of 700 companies across 17 countries revealed that nearly every business saw a positive return on investment after implementing food loss and waste reduction strategies.

In fact, half of these companies enjoyed a 14-fold or greater return, proving that

Why should you care?

\$1 invested = \$14+ saved

Cutting food waste is not just good for the planet, but also for the bottom line!

BOOST YOUR MARGINS, NOT YOUR WASTE!

You can't fix what you don't measure! A food waste audit acts as your restaurant's waste-reduction roadmap. There are several ways to conduct a food waste audit. The following are a few ways to establish a baseline and calculate the costs of food waste.



Ingredient-wise food waste cost calculator

One way to track food waste manually, is to sort through the waste and record waste in weight. (Check out the food waste tracker worksheet!). Another way, is to focus on specific ingredients and the dishes they are used in the most.

STEP 1 - Calculate Your Ingredient Usage
To calculate food waste generated from a main ingredient used across dishes, begin with the amount of the ingredient used.

Starting Inventory (50 lbs of tomatoes) + Purchased units (40 lbs of tomatoes) - Ending Inventory (40 lbs of tomatoes) = 50 lbs of tomatoes (per day)

STEP 2 - Compare Usage to Sales numbers
Calculate ingredient usage per dish by multiplying amount in recipe by dishes sold. Add these values to find the amount of the ingredient used in the final dish

Margherita Pizza (3 oz of tomatoes) x 30 plates + Tomato soup (10 oz of tomatoes) x 40 plates = 30.4 lbs of tomatoes (per day)

STEP 3 - Calculate Wastage
Subtract your result in Step 2 from Step 1 to calculate total food waste

50 lbs - 30.4 lbs = 19.6 lbs of tomatoes wasted! That's nearly \$40 down the drain!

FOOD WASTE TRACKER WORKSHEET

How to conduct a food waste audit

1

SCHEDULE DATES

Schedule dates for the audit. One week of data is a good baseline. Appoint a champion to oversee and manage the audit.

2

SORT THROUGH WASTE

Wear gloves and sort waste into separate, labelled bins (spoilage, prep etc). You can have separate stations in the front and back of the house.

4

ANALYZE THE DATA

Analyze the data to identify food waste hotspots (such as trimmings or plate waste) and document your observations.

3

RECORD WASTE

Weigh the bins on the scale (remember to tare!) and add the total amount of waste at the end of the shift. Use the tracker below to write it down.

Things you will need:
to track kitchen and prep waste

- Five gallon clear bins
- Gloves
- Weighing scale
- Proper signage
- Waste tracker sheet
- Clipboards and pens
- Napkins/ cloths for cleanup
- Label Stickers

DAY	SPOILAGE	PREP WASTE	PLATE WASTE	MISCELLANEOUS
1				
2				
3	<input type="checkbox"/>			
4				
5				
6				
7				
TOTAL				

THE DISH ON PLATE WASTE

According to the NRDC, around 20 percent of food waste is estimated to be post-consumer waste, such as plate waste. Plate waste cannot be donated, making it an important source of waste to manage.

1

Insufficient Information

"Quick question! Did you know this dish includes sides? Also, are there any ingredients you'd like to check before giving your order?"



2

Too many sides

Sides like fries often end up in the trash. Track wasted fries (and other sides) to see if they're secretly hurting your profits. You might be surprised by the hidden cost

3

Large Portions

A WRAP study says that large portions lead to waste. Fix this by checking staff portioning and following set size standards

Solutions to reduce plate waste

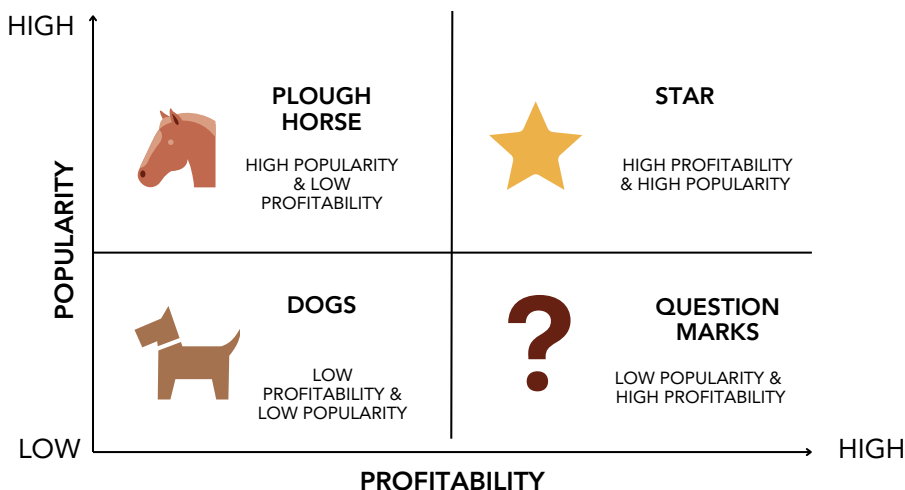
- **Reduce default portion sizes, provide customers with the option to refill on sides.** If you notice that some of your meals are consistently in the garbage - reducing portions may be key. For sides, such as fries and salads offer refills.
- **Offer different sizes of portions.** If you find a lot of inconsistency in the plate waste of certain meals, offer it in different sizes to cater to different appetites. Price accordingly and save on ingredient costs.
- **Provide a more detailed menu.** Give customers visual cues, plate sizes and/or quantity estimates to enable them to make better choices! This is a simple and effective tactic.
- **Measured utensils.** If your restaurant offers a buffet option, consider serving pre-portioned options (for starters and dessert) and keep measured utensils for self-service.
- **Educate and empower your staff.** Train your staff to ask questions about the customer's dietary needs and invite customers to ask doubts about the menu.

EFFECTIVE MENU PLANNING

Menus are essential to a restaurant's identity and making changes can pose difficulties. However, small changes to menu planning can make a tremendous impact on food waste and improve profits.

1

Analyze your best selling dishes in terms of their **popularity** and **profitability** - which dishes are popular? which dishes are profitable? Categorize them into 'stars'; 'plough horse'; 'dogs' or 'question marks'. Once you have analyzed these, try to



These dishes are **popular** but may need to be reviewed to see if they can return higher margins



These dishes are your **best sellers**, highlight them and understand why they work



These dishes are **profitable but unpopular**, why are they unpopular? what can you do to increase their popularity and visibility?



These are the **poorest performers**, it may be time to review these dishes, change the recipe or removed from the menu. Seek ample feedback.

2

Be open to including dishes that make use of **'ugly' produce** and even **scraps**. Most foods across cultures, have recipes that use food scraps - include labels such as 'No Waste Dishes' or 'Sustainable Salads' to educate customers!

3

Include **visual cues** in your menu, include **'half'** and **'full'** size options for dishes. Another industry standard is to offer refills of sides instead of pre-determined portions. Provide customers with different options for sides.

4

Consider highlighting **seasonal** produce and taking out certain off-season dishes if you notice a drop in their popularity. This will help you manage your inventory at the back of the house. Alternatively you may reduce demand for seasonal food if you anticipate lower demand.

5

Instead of offering unlimited free bread or chips, a more mindful approach could be to ask the customer first if they want these. Consider even adding it to the menu for a **nominal fee**.

6

Consider **meal stacking** to offer flexibility and cater to diverse dietary preferences. For example, having a vegan salad as the base and then an option to add meat or dairy.



Scan this QR code for food waste recipes to add to your menu

PROCUREMENT BEST PRACTICES

Procurement is key to cutting food waste. By carefully choosing and ordering ingredients, minimizing packaging, and prioritizing seasonal items, restaurants can reduce spoilage and save money.



Plan and forecast requirements

- Track food usage and waste.
- Analyze sales, customer preferences, and seasonal trends.
- Negotiate minimum order quantities with suppliers.
- Adjust orders based on data to prevent spoilage and overstock

Build better supplier relationships

- Partner with suppliers who have more sustainable sourcing practices
- Embrace imperfect produce for cost savings and creativity
- Monitor supplier performance and collaborate on storage and shelf life best practices



Storage and Inventory Management

- Implement robust inventory control
- Track stock levels closely, organize prep, and use flexible ordering
- Prioritize proper refrigeration: practice FIFO and check temperatures regularly.



Inventory Management & Packaging Solution Providers*



FOOD DIVERSION & DONATION

While preventing food waste is ideal, effective diversion of excess food to those in need is crucial for restaurants aiming to minimize their environmental impact and support their community.

Implement a food diversion pipeline

Make food diversion a part of your regular operations and establish standards

Follow food safety & keep a record of diverted food

Ensure proper handling and safety, maintain a record of your donations.

Identify recipients and donate / divert excess food

Partner with different organizations and solution providers

What can you donate?

- Canned beans, fruit, fish, veggies**
- Peanut butter, Other nut butters**
- Dry pasta, oats, rice, noodles**
- Powdered milk, granola, cereal**
- Baby Formula (check expiry date)**
- Sugar, cooking oil, flour, salt**
-

What about liability?

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects food donors from liability when donating to qualified organizations, ensuring safe food distribution to those in need while meeting all food safety standards.

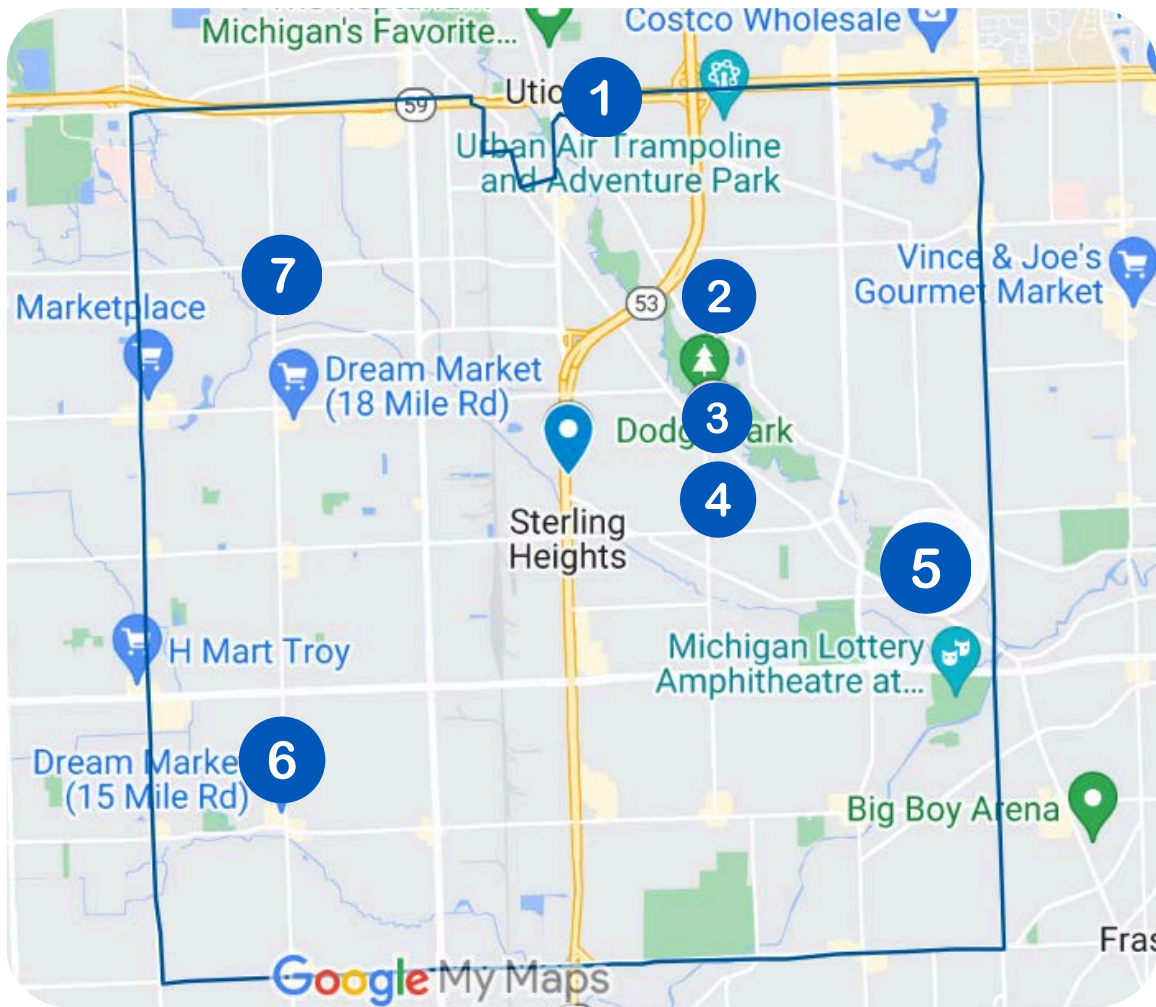
Michigan mandates date labels on pre-packaged perishable foods, dairy, and meat, prohibiting sales after the labeled date. While shellfish requires date labels, sales are not restricted post-expiration.

What about incentives?

According to Federal law, Since 2015, all businesses (C-corporations, S-corporations, limited liability corporations (LLCs), partnerships, and sole proprietorships) can claim enhanced tax deductions for qualifying food donations. A standard deduction can also be claimed for donations that do not meet eligibility criteria.

- For perishable produce, meat & dairy check with food bank
- Avoid donating food that is expired, open, damaged, or in glass containers (due to breakage concerns)
- To earn money while diverting food, check out resale apps such as TooGoodtoGo and FlashFood for selling surplus food at a discount!

Sterling Heights Food Pantries & Donation Centers



1 Utica United Methodist Church
8650 Canal Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48314

2 Riverwood Church
12000 Clinton River Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48314

3 Metro Church of Christ
40100 Dodge Park Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48313

4 Saint Ephrem Church
38900 Dodge Park Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48312

5 New Apostolic Church
37800 Utica Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48312

6 Fellowship Lutheran Church
35537 Ryan Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48310

7 Community Christian Church
42400 Ryan Rd, Sterling Heights, MI
48314

Food Rescuers and County-wide Food Banks

Forgotten Harvest
15000 W. Eight Mile Rd.
Oak Park, MI 48237
248.967.1500

Macomb Food Program
51194 Romeo Plank #622
Macomb MI 48042
586.991.1899

Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan
2131 Beaufait Street, Detroit
MI 48207
313.923.3535

Macomb County Community Services Agency - Food Distribution Center
Robert A. ver kuilen building,
21885 Dunham Rd, Clinton Twp, MI 48036
586.469.6999



PLATE WASTE ONLY

SCRAPS FROM CUSTOMER'S
PLATES



PREP WASTE ONLY

TRIMMINGS, SCRAPS AND
OFFCUTS



SPOILAGE WASTE ONLY

ROTTEN, SPOILED FOOD, INEDIBLE
FOOD



MISCELLANEOUS FOOD WASTE