

# DON'T LET YOUR **PROFIT GO TO WASTE.**



A useful guide to  
reduce food waste in  
your catering business,  
to save food, money  
and the environment.

Developed by End Food Waste  
Australia in collaboration  
with industry and NSW EPA.

# STEPS TO TACKLE FOOD WASTE.

**SIMPLY SEPARATING  
AND MEASURING  
CAN REDUCE FOOD  
WASTE BY 30%.<sup>1</sup>**

When we waste food, we're also wasting natural resources, like water and energy, used to grow, pack, transport, sell and prepare it.

Food that ends up in landfill breaks down to release methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>.

Getting started doesn't have to be complicated - small actions can make a big impact.

**1**

**Get everyone onboard: talk about food waste and your reduction goals.**

**2**

**Measure and monitor food waste: understand the problem and the cost.**

**3**

**Take action to reduce food waste.**

1. GET EVERYONE  
ONBOARD

2. MEASURE  
AND MONITOR

3. TAKE  
ACTION

## HOW MUCH IS FOOD WASTE REALLY COSTING YOUR BUSINESS?

We worked with catering businesses and found:



**299G**

The average amount of food wasted per cover served.

**The most wasted foods, based on cost are:**

Prepared food.  
Fruit & vegetables.  
Bakery items.

=



**\$4.20**

The average \$ amount thrown away per cover served.

**Food Waste sources:**

Front of House - **58%**  
Back of House - **42%**

=



**2 CHEF  
SHIFTS**

What could be funded if ingredient waste was eliminated at a 120-cover event.



# GET **EVERYONE** ONBOARD.

Reducing food waste is a team effort and needs change in business-as-usual. Tell staff why the change needs to happen and what they need to do.



1. GET EVERYONE  
ONBOARD

**Involve** as many people as possible - everyone has a part to play.

**Give clear directions** so people know what to do and why.

**Appoint Champions** - staff who are willing to take ownership and drive your food waste initiatives.

**Empower staff** with meetings to discuss food waste – focus on the positives of solving the problem, avoid blame.

**Offer support and recognition** from management.

**Listen to feedback and ideas** from staff, customers and suppliers.

**Set goals**, track your progress and celebrate success.

**Let your customers know** what you have achieved.

“

Separating food waste into transparent bins enables you to visually keep a check on what isn't being eaten, so you can see it in real time. Weighing it lets us set targets so we can work towards a common goal of reducing it. It really allows us to take ownership and responsibility for the challenge.

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Lee Hardy, Executive Manager,  
Client Services Food & Beverage

Throwing away

**ONE  
BURGER**

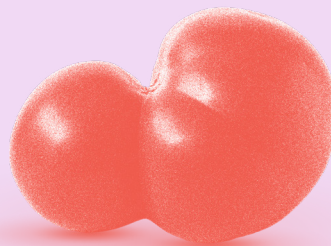
wastes the same  
amount of water  
as running a

**90-MINUTE  
SHOWER.**<sup>2</sup>



# MEASURE AND MONITOR FOOD WASTE.

Not sure where to start,  
or if your team has the time?



## Start by **SEPARATING YOUR FOOD WASTE.**

- Set up extra bins dedicated to food waste.
- Contact your council or waste contractor to help set up a collection service.
- Divert this food waste from landfill - reduce your carbon footprint and turn food waste into compost.

### YOU'LL START TO SEE

- What you are commonly throwing away.
- How much of your waste is food.
- Opportunities to save costs on food and sending waste to landfill.



## Understand **WHERE THE FOOD WASTE IS HAPPENING.**

- Separate back-of-house and front-of-house food that is being thrown away.

### YOU'LL START TO SEE

- Where your food waste occurs.
- Do you need to target kitchen operations or what you are serving to customers?



## Ready to **DELVE DEEPER.**

### SEPARATE FOOD WASTE BY CATEGORY

- **Spoilage:** Food that is damaged, has gone off or is out of date.
- **Preparation waste:** Food thrown out during preparation e.g. offcuts and trimmings.
- **Serving waste:** Food that has been prepared for the customer and not used or has been offered but not taken.
- **Plate waste:** Food left on the customer's plate.

### YOU'LL START TO SEE

- A detailed picture of where food waste happens.
- More focused opportunities to save food.



## Make the most **OF YOUR EFFORTS.**

- Measure and record your food waste.
- Make some changes.

### YOU'LL START TO SEE

- Less food in the bin and healthier profits.

# TIPS ON MEASURING FOOD WASTE.

All food going to waste should be measured, both what you think is edible and inedible. Start measuring in a way that is achievable in your business.

## STARTER KIT:



Containers for food waste

Scales

Recording sheets

## HOW TO MEASURE:

### 1. HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU MEASURE?

One week's data can provide a lot of information. Try to select a typical week to get the best picture.

You may be able to use reports from your waste contractor or get more detail by separating back-of-house and front-of-house or even separate categories.

Weighing at intervals can help track changes over time. Start once every 6 months and as you begin to see benefits you can increase the frequency.

Whatever you decide works best for you, it is also important to look at what is actually going into the bin to identify frequently wasted food.

### 2. WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU NEED?

To get started you simply need designated containers or bins labeled for food waste, and scales. Clear containers or bags can help you see what is being thrown away.

Want to delve deeper? There are several technology solutions on the market which automate waste tracking.

### 3. RECORD YOUR DATA:

It is essential that you record your food waste, so you can track it and understand when you have high or low amounts of food waste. Make recording simple and easy to complete to get staff on board. This also helps avoid errors. Also note the number of covers or revenue during that period. Use [this template](#) to get started.

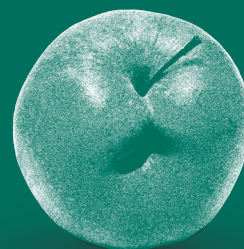
### 4. COMPARING MEASURING PERIODS:

Once you are tracking your food waste, you can then compare food waste between measuring periods. You can use number of covers to calculate "food waste per guest" or "food waste per meal served", or revenue to calculate "waste costs per dollar earned".

NOW YOU KNOW HOW MUCH FOOD YOU ARE WASTING,  
IT IS TIME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

# TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE.

First step for success: Train your staff on how and why reducing food waste is important.



**Front-of-house staff** are key to communicating with your customers.

Train your staff to let customers know about changes you have made to reduce food waste, what you have achieved and to receive feedback.

**Back-of-house staff** should see reducing food waste as an everyday part of the job. Training could include skills like how to use all parts of an ingredient or how to adapt recipes to use up surplus, correct food storage and handling practices including stock rotation and FIFO, and ensuring they are plating up the right amounts.

Food waste can happen at all stages. Using the table below, pick what will work for your venue based on where your food waste happens.



Action	Spoilage	Prep	Service	Plate
Build food waste into contracts		✓	✓	✓
Fewer menu choices	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve forecasting systems	✓	✓	✓	
Sharpen your ordering	✓			
Optimise your kitchen	✓	✓		
Standardise recipes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use all parts of ingredients	✓	✓		
Consider your portion sizes			✓	✓
Use smaller plates				✓
Use smaller serving utensils			✓	✓
Consolidate near end of service			✓	

For more details, see next page.



# TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE.



<b>Build food waste into contracts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss ways of minimising food waste right from the start of interactions with the client.</li> </ul>
<b>Fewer menu choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fewer menu items means carrying less stock, preparing and serving fewer items.</li> <li>● Too many dietary options can lead to waste, check that they are essential.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve forecasting systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check if your buffers are driving excess production.</li> <li>● Having accurate numbers means that you will buy, prepare and serve the correct amount.</li> </ul>
<b>Sharpen your ordering</b>	<p>Overordering can lead to spoilage waste:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check stock levels and forecast before ordering.</li> <li>● Order the right pack size. Partly used packets can lead to waste.</li> <li>● If possible, order perishable goods more frequently so they don't go off.</li> </ul>
<b>Optimise your kitchen</b>	<p>Running an efficient kitchen means less waste:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Train staff to store food promptly and correctly.</li> <li>● Use first in, first out (FIFO) stock rotation and check use-by dates.</li> <li>● Standardise procedures so everyone understands what is expected.</li> </ul>
<b>Standardise recipes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Including yields and pictures in recipes can help reduce preparation waste.</li> <li>● Standardised portion sizes can reduce waste from plated servings.</li> <li>● Ensures quality so consumers are less likely to leave food behind.</li> </ul>
<b>Use all parts of ingredients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider if offcuts from one ingredient can be used elsewhere – let your chef's creativity loose.</li> <li>● Using one ingredient across several menu items also reduces the amount of stock carried.</li> </ul>
<b>Consider your portion sizes</b>	<p>Portion size is the biggest contributor to plate waste:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Try reducing your portion sizes.</li> <li>● Offering choice of portion size or choice of sides.</li> </ul>
<b>Use smaller plates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Using smaller plates can nudge consumers to take less. Portions appear bigger on small plates, so consumers still perceive value for money.</li> <li>● Communicate that consumers can come back for seconds.</li> </ul>
<b>Use smaller serving utensils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consumers' eyes are often bigger than their stomachs.</li> <li>● Using smaller serving utensils on buffets or self-service areas can help regulate how much food is taken by the consumer.</li> </ul>
<b>Consolidate near end of service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Avoid putting out too much food towards end of service allowing excess to be used.</li> <li>● Communicate to consumers that food is still available on request.</li> </ul>

# "I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT." OVERCOMING HURDLES IN FOOD WASTE ACTION.

Acknowledging you have food waste, starting to measure and act on food waste is a change for a lot of businesses. As with all change, it is likely there will be some resistance to begin with.

Here are some suggestions on what to say to colleagues and managers who think reducing food waste is too hard.

COLLEAGUE

We don't let any food go to waste.

RESPONSE

Let's measure and see what we find.

COLLEAGUE

If I acknowledge there is waste food, I might get myself or others into trouble.

RESPONSE

We rely on everyone to help us reduce our food waste.

COLLEAGUE

I value food and I am already as efficient as possible.

RESPONSE

Let's look at the efficiencies you have found and share them with colleagues.

COLLEAGUE

I don't understand why you are prying into my work.

RESPONSE

If we can save money by reducing food waste, we can buy better ingredients.

COLLEAGUE

The amount of food we waste is too small to matter.

RESPONSE

Even a small amount of waste can add up to significant costs over time.

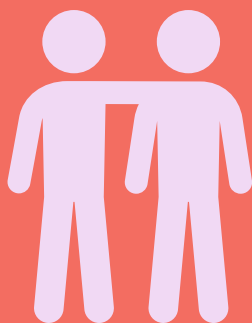
A **landmass the size of Victoria** is used to grow food that ultimately **goes to waste in Australia**.<sup>3</sup>



# FIGHTING FOOD WASTE HELPS FIGHT HUNGER.

**3.7 MILLION**  
**AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES**

struggle to put food on the table, that's more than the number of households in Sydney and Melbourne combined.<sup>4</sup>



The equivalent of

**4.6**  
**MILLION**

meals are wasted by the hospitality sector every day.<sup>5</sup>



## DONATION TO FOOD RESCUE.

**IF FOOD WASTE CANNOT  
BE PREVENTED,  
THINK ABOUT DONATION  
OR RECYCLING.**

Donation to food rescue charities is often more possible than foodservice businesses believe. Food donation is an action to reduce food waste. Consider donating to food rescue if health and food safety standards allow.

The Civil Liability Amendment (Food Donations) Act 2005, known as the Good Samaritan Act, protects food donors by limiting liability, provided certain food safety conditions are met. According to NSW Food Authority advice, food donors must ensure:

- The food is donated in good faith for a charitable purpose.
- The recipient does not pay for the food.
- The food is safe to eat when donated.
- The donor provides necessary information to ensure the food's ongoing safety.

See this [fact sheet](#) for more information.



# RECYCLING FOOD WASTE ADVICE FROM NSW EPA.

Reducing and recycling food waste supports the NSW Government's goals to achieve net zero emissions from landfill and halve organic waste sent to landfill by 2030.

When we waste food, we're also wasting all the natural resources, like water and energy, that went into growing, packaging, transporting, selling and preparing it.

When food breaks down in landfill it generates methane – a greenhouse gas that's 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide and a major cause of climate change.

Reducing and recycling food waste supports the NSW Government's goals to achieve net zero emissions from landfill and halve organics waste sent to landfill by 2030.

## Having a separate food waste collection can help businesses:

1. Identify how much food waste they generate and motivate them to reduce it.
2. Save costs on food bills and sending waste to landfill.
3. Reduce their carbon footprint.
4. Improve their sustainability by recovering food waste for higher value reuse.

Separating food waste from general waste to be recycled is beneficial (separating it alone is not beneficial) for businesses from both an environmental and economic perspective. It helps reduce operational costs including landfill fees, reduces your carbon footprint and diverts food waste for recycling.

For further incentives to reduce waste see [NSW EPA Bin Trim Equipment Rebates Program](#).

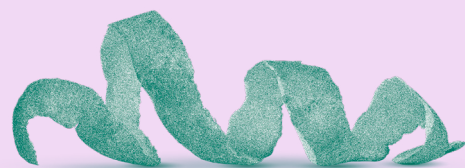
Businesses are encouraged to first reduce food waste by better practices or donating to people in need. What's left can be managed on site or collected for recycling at a commercial composting facility, used to generate energy through Anaerobic Digestion or upcycled into animal feed or other products.

## OFF-SITE FOOD WASTE DISPOSAL

Unlike home composting, commercial food waste collections take all food scraps including meat, bones, fish, bakery and dairy products. Check with your collection company what are acceptable materials for the food organics bins. In NSW only food waste is allowed in food only (FO) bins and only food and garden waste is allowed in food organics and garden organics (FOGO) bins. The only exceptions are fibre or compostable plastic kitchen caddy liners AS 4736-2006 (for commercial composting). To find out more about food packaging's impact on FOGO please visit: [Research on FOGO \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/research-on-fogo).

## SEPARATING FOOD WASTE AT YOUR VENUE

To make collection of food waste easy, set up small food waste bins near kitchen benches or dishwashers where food waste is generated.



Contact your council or waste contractor to find out more about setting up a food waste collection service.

# ENDING FOOD WASTE STARTS WITH US ALL.

If you want to know more, visit:

- [End Food Waste Australia](#)
- [Catering Sector Action Plan](#)
- [Your Business is Food \(NSW EPA\)](#)
- [Foodservice Food Waste Action Guide \(ReFed\)](#)
- [Guardians of Grub \(WRAP\)](#)
- [Food Waste Measurement Methodology \(International Food Waste Coalition\)](#)



## REFERENCES.

1. Scottish Government. Food waste: review of 2019 waste reduction action plan. 2024. [Food waste: review of 2019 waste reduction action plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
2. Water Footprint Network. Water Footprint Network. [Online] 2024. [Resources – Water Footprint Network](#)
3. FIAL. (2021) [National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study](#).
4. Foodbank. Foodbank Hunger Report 2023. [Foodbank Hunger Report 2023 - Foodbank Reports](#)
5. FIAL. Reducing Australia's Food Waste by half by 2030. [Online] 2021. [Reducing Australia's Food Waste by half by 2030 \(fial.com.au\)](http://fial.com.au)

This project was funded by New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority and developed with industry partners.

End Food Waste Australia, established to deliver the National Food Waste Strategy, aims to halve Australia's food waste by 2030. The organisation implements initiatives from farm to fork, including the Australian Food Pact, Sector Action Plans, supply chain collaboration, and research and progress monitoring. Partnering with various organisations and engaging with all government levels, End Food Waste Australia supports the National Waste Policy Action Plan and Australia's transition to a circular economy.

The project was an extension to the EFWA [Catering Sector Action Plan](#).

# REDUCING FOOD WASTE, IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS.

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The system we use to track and measure food waste allows us to identify where waste occurs and provides a focus for weekly team meetings. Each team has their own targets and goals to work towards. It is also used as an educational piece to understand the impacts on our environment and the business.

**Alex Vilches, Executive Chef,**  
**Compass at Google ANZ**

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Separating and weighing food waste allows it to be quantified and then costed. It enables a clear business case to be presented to management to outline the financial implications of not taking action to target food waste reduction.

**Elise Ballantine,**  
**Sustainability Officer, The Star**

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“

Quantifying our food waste is an important aspect of our dedication to sustainability and we're committed to deepening our understanding of production kitchen and customer food waste. By separating the production kitchen and customer waste, both from the plate and what has been offered, and looking at what it contains, we will arm ourselves with the data to best elevate our impact.

**Lynell Peck,**  
**Director of Culinary Services, ICC Sydney**

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“

Simply tracking organic waste volumes has motivated our hospitality team to reduce food waste in our lounge.

**Hannah Barnes,**  
**Customer & Product Strategy**  
**Manager, Virgin Australia**

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