



PRACTICAL WAYS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

AS YOU PLAN YOUR NEW MENUS THIS YEAR, **AMANDA KANE** URGES ALL BUSINESSES AND COMMERCIAL KITCHENS TO KEEP COSTS DOWN BY KEEPING IN MIND THE ENVIRONMENT.



The Love Food Hate Waste team can provide expertise and support. To find out more, visit lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au.



Food waste is a not top priority for most food businesses because they think it is unavoidable and the cost of food waste has been factored into the cost and paid by consumers. So, you may ask, why bother?

How about earning a 14-fold financial return when you invest in food loss and waste reduction? The UK's Waste & Resource Action Program (WRAP) and World Resource Institute (WRI) analysed 1,200 business sites across 17 countries and 700 companies. The subsequent *The Business Case for Reducing Food Loss and Waste Report* found that,

Your Business is Food involves a simple three step process for food businesses to reduce food waste. First measure your waste, then identify actions based on where the most food is wasted and finally implement just two or three of those actions to get things started.

on average, for every \$1 you spend on food loss and waste actions, a medium-sized company earned a realised financial return of \$14. The highest return is in restaurants and hotels, with food service companies and food retailers tending towards ratios of between 5:1 and 10:1.

So, what is the first step you can take to earn your 14-times investment return? The answer is simple, involve your staff in the food waste reduction and you'll get the best results. Staff can be involved from measuring the food waste, to sharing solutions, implementing them and then broadcasting your achievements to others.

According to the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) Love Food Hate Waste Your Business is Food program, staff engagement is important because:

1. The more staff buy-in to your new plan, the less resistance and higher motivation they have to help you make it work
2. It raises work satisfaction, so you get happier employees and higher productivity; and
3. Happy staff improve the customer dining experience and it creates a synergy within the team.

Launched last year, Your Business is Food involves a simple three step process for food businesses to reduce food waste. First measure your waste, then identify actions based on where the most food is wasted and finally implement just two or three of those actions to get things started.

Actions to reduce food waste might include offering smaller portion sizes if plate waste is your problem or offering specials to use up stock if the waste is happening in the storage stage. Through the program, businesses achieved an average 21 per cent reduction in food waste. Some, like the Rose & Crown Hotel in Parramatta recorded a 52 per cent cut.

The EPA's food waste expert Sarah Chen said staff engagement was the key to success at the Rose and Crown. "From the outset, the pub engaged staff about what they were doing and immediately got traction because the staff really hated to see good food going to waste.

"Kitchen and bar staff came up with ideas and really embraced the process,"

she continued, "with the result being a significant reduction in food waste and improved employee performance and satisfaction."

TOP FOUR TIPS FOR STAFF ENGAGEMENT FOR FOOD WASTE ACTION:

1. **Awareness:** Get staff involved from the beginning. Talk to them about your plans in advance and explain why you are doing it to get them motivated and prepared for change. Making the business more profitable and helping the environment are good reasons for you and your staff.
2. **Delegation:** Assign tasks to specific staff so they can take ownership of these food waste reduction actions. Chefs often don't see what is left on the customer plate and knowing what's happening there can give them ideas when they plan the menu. Front of house staff can collect customers feedback when food doesn't get eaten.
3. **Brainstorming:** Your staff know your business and customers well. Share the food waste review data with them and work out 1-2 simple food waste reduction actions together. You may be surprised by their ideas and what they are willing to do.
4. **Celebrate success:** Update staff on the progress of the food waste reduction actions. Celebrate your achievement or even reward their effort and share it with your customers. Nothing is more motivating to know their contribution is recognised and making a difference to our environment. (f)