



## White Paper

# How to reduce and avoid food waste in your catering operations

Reducing the amount of food waste is one of the major challenges in both commercial and industrial catering.

Caterers are increasingly aware of the ethical reasons to reduce food waste during preparation and service. Economic factors also play a role because reducing food waste also reduces costs. The potential for improvement is huge and the methods of harnessing that potential are numerous.

It is worthwhile taking a closer look at your catering operations: how much food waste is currently generated? What is your catering provider doing to avoid waste? This white paper provides a summary of what can be done at each stage of the process chain to minimize waste and save costs.

Food is valuable and should not be thrown away but according to the United Nations, around a third of foods produced worldwide for human consumption is discarded. This is 1.3 billion tons each year. In Germany alone, around eleven million tons of food land in the bin instead of on plates. The food service sector is responsible for 17 % of that waste which translates as 1.9 million tons of food which are thrown away every year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: Study: Zu gut für die Tonne (too good for the bin) initiated by the Federal Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, carried out in 2011 by the University of Stuttgart.

In more detail

## What types of food waste are there?

Food waste is generated at a number of points in the catering process chain: during purchasing, storage, preparation and service. Some of this waste could easily be prevented, some is inevitable. Some food groups have a larger improvement potential than others. And the environmental impact of the waste differs too. Meat, for example, has a substantially higher impact than fruit and vegetables.

### Avoidable food waste

Sometimes, food is discarded although there has been no loss in quality. Examples are a slice of bread or half a pear which are still perfectly edible when they are thrown away.

### Partly avoidable food waste

Food is discarded out of habit, for example carrot and apple peelings or bread crusts. The method of food preparation plays a role in whether a food could have been consumed; potato peel, for example, is edible together with potatoes which have been boiled or fried. It cannot be eaten raw. Partly avoidable food waste includes the leftovers on plates when diners have been served portions which are too large.

### Inevitable food waste

Inedible food and food components inevitably end in the waste bin. These are usually removed during preparation or directly before consumption e. g. bones, banana skins, pineapple peel, egg shell.

### Important: Packing should also be reduced

Packaging generates waste too. When ordering food, it is helpful to assess what sort of packaging is most appropriate (protection against spoilage) and what is superfluous. This saves resources and reduces costs. It can also save time because removing packaging requires time and effort.

Source: Guidelines on preventing food waste in catering operations by DEHOGA and the Federal Office of the Environment

## Check List

### Prepared by the association United Against Waste e. V.

Asking the following questions will help you to plan and to reduce the amount of food waste in individual process phases.

#### Planning

- Is a meal plan produced regularly?
- Are the lessons learned from previous operations applied?
- Are holiday times and seasonal fluctuation of diners taken into consideration?
- Is an eye kept on what is going on around catering operations e. g. conferences and events?

#### Purchasing

- Is there a main contact responsible for purchasing?
- Is a structured shopping list or software used for food cost calculation?
- Are the ingredients meticulously calculated when planning meals?
- Is it possible to ascertain the status of food storage and movement at any time?

#### Delivery

- Can suppliers vary delivery amounts as required?
- Is delivery flexible, at short notice and just-in-time?
- Are regional products included?
- Are goods always delivered fresh with a long shelf life?

#### Storage

- Is there a cool chain for foods? Is its integrity monitored?
- Is date labeling reliable? Are use-by dates checked regularly?
- Is the first-in/first-out principle applied to ensure that older goods are used first?
- Is there a structured storage system which categorizes food according to use and shelf life?



## Kitchen

- Are raw materials used with care?
- Is the mise en place adjusted for diner requests, forecasts and storage life?
- Is preparation based on what can definitely be used according to the meal plan?
- Is kitchen equipment well deployed?

## Controlling

- Is there an upper limit for the food cost of individual dishes?
- Are food costs monitored?
- Are there separate waste systems for storage, mise en place und leftovers?
- Is food waste documented?

## Personnel

- Have members of staff been made aware of the issues concerning food waste?
- Do they recognize the advantages of good waste management?
- Are they asked to make suggestions for improvement and are these followed up?

## Sales Range

- Do you offer diners varying portion sizes?
- Are your service personnel well-trained in communication with diners?
- Do you adjust mise en place for external factors (e. g. weather, public holidays, weekends)
- Do you use innovative production techniques to be able to react to fluctuations in demand?

## Meal Plan

- Do you include seasonal ingredients and do you observe seasonal tastes?
- Do you use ingredients with a short shelf life in as many dishes as possible?
- Do you remove unpopular dishes from the meal plan?
- Do you use standard recipes?

## Recycling and Disposal

- Do you try to use edible waste products such as vegetable cuttings?
- Do you draw conclusions from your leftovers?
- Do you use sustainable methods of food waste disposal e. g. recycling as power, biodiesel or fertilizer?

## Do you want to know more?

You can learn more about ways of reducing food waste on the website of the association “United Against Waste”. The campaign is aimed at the food service market and was founded in 2012 to raise the awareness of cooks and other key personnel in the industry for ways of reducing food waste and saving costs.

[www.united-against-waste.de](http://www.united-against-waste.de)

