

Source: Green Hotelier, www.greenhotelier.org

1. Impact of food waste

Every time food is wasted, the water, energy, time, manpower, land, fertilizer, fuel, packaging and money put into growing, preparing, storing, transporting, cooking the food is wasted.

When food rots it creates methane (CH₄) which has 21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Here is an estimation of the carbon emissions created by common foods;

How much CO₂ is created by...



Estimated annual statistics show that UK hotels:

- Produce **289,700 tonnes** of waste each year, including **79,000 tonnes** of food waste
- Produce **9%** of the total food waste across the hospitality and food service sector in the UK
- Only **43%** of all waste is recycled.

Hotels often say they waste very little food as the plates generally come back clean. However, food waste comes from a variety of sources;

- Spoiled or out of date food
- Peelings & trimmings
- Inedible by-products, e.g. bones, coffee grounds, tea leaves
- Kitchen error

- Plate waste



2. How to reduce food waste?

Step 1: Measure your food waste

For a trial period, e.g. a week, start collecting food waste in three separate bins (one each for preparation, spoilage and plate waste), where appropriate, to understand where and why this waste arises. Weigh them daily to find out where the most food waste is being generated. This should include food that would otherwise have ended up in the sink disposal unit. Remember that this is going to present a challenge to staff to do things differently so preparation is key – make sure staff understand why you are doing this and get on board. You can record this on a **Food Waste Tracking Sheet**

Calculate the amount of food waste produced each year from the data collected. Multiply this figure by the cost per tonne to find out how much this could be costing your business each year. Use actual data from food wasted and disposal costs if you can collect this. Repeat this at least twice a year to measure your progress. This will enable the cost of food waste to be identified and for progress to be tracked over time.

Step 2: Develop an action plan to reduce food waste using the data collected, with targets, timescales and responsibilities.

Preventing spoilage

- **Review stock management and food delivery processes** for food items with a short shelf life. Ensure stock is rotated as new deliveries come in (first in, first out).
- **Store stock correctly** at the right temperature, in the right packaging, labelled and with dates

Ordering and menu planning

- Using some **pre-prepared, frozen or dried ingredients** can reduce wastage. And remember, you can freeze most foodstuffs – even eggs!

- **Be familiar with reservations forecasts** and do not over-order or over-prepare. Is 20% extra a good buffer on a busy day?
- **Be imaginative with your menus!** Consider what perishable ingredients or trimmings can be used in different ways, e.g. fish trimmings or bones for stock, bread for breadcrumbs or croutons, ingredients for pate & soups, etc., and plan menus accordingly to use these ingredients, e.g. by offering daily specials. And why not offer potatoes with skin on?

Offer customers choice. That could be different **portion sizes** - a consumer survey showed that 41% of those surveyed blamed oversized portions for leaving food. Good portion control using standard measures will also help you keep the cost consistent. For smaller portions, you could offer a refill/second helping – or **options for side dishes** or build their own dish so that they can order what they prefer and will not leave food on the plate. **Offer 'doggy bags'/boxes** for consumers to take home what they have not eaten, where appropriate – be careful to check local health and safety regulations. **“83% of the public would ask for a doggy box but don't think they can or are too embarrassed”** (Sustainable Restaurant Association).

Step 3: Review progress on the plan each month

Speak to staff and get their feedback on the progress being made. This will keep people involved and motivated. Measure the amount of waste produced regularly and work out how much money is being saved.

3. Solutions for treatment and disposal of waste

