



## Practices Food and Drink Based Businesses Can Use To Increase Their Sustainability Footprint!



Food and drink based businesses are an important part of their communities cultural, economic, and often neglected environmental landscape! It is estimated that 40% of the food in the United States goes uneaten<sup>1</sup>, and four to ten percent of the food never makes it onto a plate<sup>2</sup>. According to EPA analysts<sup>3</sup>, 15% of all the food that ends up in landfills comes from restaurants. Not only does restaurant waste contribute to landfills reaching their capacity, this is also problematic as food waste emits methane gas, a green house gas 20x more potent than carbon dioxide! Recycling and waste prevention can minimize environmental impacts to the planet, and can reduce trash collection costs. Food waste reduction, local food sourcing and sustainability were identified by chefs as being among the hottest trends in restaurants when surveyed by the National Restaurant Association<sup>4</sup>, a selling point your establishment can use to reach new customers! This checklist is meant to provide some ideas your business can use to increase your “green footprint”. While it may not be feasible to incorporate all of these ideas, a few may be gradually incorporated into day to day operations, saving your business money, and decreasing the amount of waste being diverted to landfills!

### ENERGY AND EFFICIENCY

- Use energy efficient appliances
- Check walk-in fridge for seal integrity
- Install flow regulators for faucets
- Use touchless faucets/water efficient toilets
- Use solar panels to heat water/electricity
- Collect water from rain barrels to water yard, gardens, or centerpieces/flower displays

### FOOD SOURCE

- Use local and seasonal ingredients (e.g. honey, milk, eggs, meat) to minimize transportation
- Buy in bulk, and then can or freeze food
- Grow your own herbs/produce (e.g. on roof top garden, window boxes etc..)
- Downsize menu (limited options minimizes waste from food preparation and un-used ingredients)
- Increase vegetarian/vegan options

### MENU/OFFICE

- Print menus on recycled paper
- Utilize chalk/dry erase boards for food, seasonal beer and drink specials
- Use recycling bins for paper/cardboard
- Online billing/ordering system
- Online customer point/reward cards

### FOOD WASTE

- Rotate/label food in the fridge/pantry so that older food gets used up first
- Compost or divert waste to animal feed
- Use food scraps in soups, sauces, relishes or garnish
- Up-cycle fryer oil, coffee grounds....
- Do a food waste audit to determine source of food waste (over-preparation, spoilage, improper handling, and plate return)

#### Sources

1. K.D. Hall, J. Guo, M. Dore, and C.C. Chow. 2009. The Progressive Increase of Food Waste in America and Its Environmental Impact. PLoS ONE 4(11):e7940
2. LeanPath Food Waste Systems
3. Jean Schwab, Policy Analyst (Waste Division), Environmental Protection Agency
4. National Restaurant Association. 2017. What's hot, 2018 culinary forecast

## TABLE /COUNTER SERVICE

- Implement a “bring your own cup” discount (e.g. 10¢ off)
- Use wooden stir sticks
- Provide straws only when asked
- Only put cutlery/napkins when food arrives
- One napkin per place setting
- Use soft cloth/linen table cloths and napkins
- Provide drinking water upon request

## PACKAGING

- Request recyclable/reusable containers from supplier, and no Styrofoam
- Recycle as much as you can (e.g. glass bottles, cardboard, paper, plastic)
- Use biodegradable/vegetable based takeout or bakery containers
- Allow diners to use their own containers for leftovers
- Use re-usable coffee/tea filters
- Ask if a bag is needed to carry home leftovers

## CLEANING/LAUNDRY

- Use biodegradable cleaning materials and non-toxic pest control options
- Use garbage bags that are compostable or made from recycled materials
- Use non-white towels to avoid using bleach

## EMPLOYEE TRAINING/SERVICES

- Train employees on sustainable/recycling practices
- Designate an employee in charge of sustainability



## Create Community Partnerships!

*Community organizations, partners and schools can help you up-cycle some of your items. Worn out or stained towels and table clothes can be washed and donated to local animal shelters. Egg cartons, pails and buckets used for brining can be donated to art classes, daycares or given/sold to customers, wooden tables and pallets can be re-purposed into chicken litter, mulch or given to schools with shop classes! Local farms or community gardens may also be willing to take your organic compost. Not only do partnerships increase your visibility within the community, but collaborative projects such as working with your local municipality to install solar electric charging stations for cars, electronics etc... can benefit your community and draw in more customers! For more information, or to share how **your** business has “gone green”, please feel free to contact program manager Dr. Shikha Singh at the Jackson County Conservation District via email at [shikha.singh@macd.org](mailto:shikha.singh@macd.org) or by phone (517) 395 - 2089.*



*This checklist is printed on paper manufactured from 100% bagasse (recycled sugarcane waste fiber), a by-product of sugar cane !*