

# How Do Restaurants Prevent Food Waste?



Become a Food Waste Champion!  
Managing food scraps isn't just about waste — it's the law in many places in Washington. **It's also about savings, sustainability, and smart operations.**

Use these practices to save money, reduce food waste, improve efficiency, and follow the law.

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## Smart Purchasing and Inventory

**First In, First Out (FIFO):** Items that will go bad soonest should be used first. Usually that means pulling items from stock and using them with the “First In, First Out” method.

**Inventory Checks:** Check inventory regularly to avoid ordering too much.

**Tracking Tools:** If possible, use inventory management software for accuracy. For some restaurants, a spreadsheet may be enough – free templates are available online!

## An Efficient Kitchen

**Staff Roles:** Make the most of your top-notch team! Assign shift “Waste Champions” and reward ideas that prevent food waste.

**Track Waste in Different Areas:** Front of house staff can monitor plate waste, and kitchen staff can track food scraps. Knowing the amounts and types of food waste helps you to see patterns and order smarter. Check out the Use Food Well Tracking Log to get started!

**Smart Storage:** Keep dry goods cool and dry. Use airtight containers. Store food at proper temperatures and don't overfill freezers.

**Re-think Scraps and Leftovers:** Use vegetable peels and trimmings for stocks or garnishes. Create daily specials with leftover items.

**Batch Cooking:** Design the menu and make food in batches as it is ordered to avoid cooking too much.



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## Make the Most of Menus and Portions

**Flexible Portions:** Offer different size portions and shareable options, especially if plate waste is high.

**Use Ingredients Across Dishes:** Design menus that use the same ingredients across multiple dishes. Focus on buying what your customers love and move away from less popular items.

**Change with the Seasons:** Use seasonal foods as they tend to last longer.



## Staff Training and Engagement

**Make it your Culture:** Talk with staff regularly about reducing food waste. Tell them about food waste trends in the restaurant or areas that can be improved.

**Shift Champions:** Have a designated team member monitor and encourage waste reduction efforts during each shift.

**Incentives:** Invite ideas from staff, and reward ones that lead to less waste.

## Tracking and Disposal

**Check the Waste:** Have someone look through waste generation logs to see how much waste is being created, what kind of waste, and if staff are using the correct bins.

**Separate Bins:** Use clear labels on bins for food waste, recyclables, and trash. Be clear that food waste does not go in the trash and vice versa.

**Donation and Composting:** Look for a local partner that can help prevent waste by accepting it as a food donation or taking it to a compost facility instead of the landfill. Go to [WA211](#) to find a local hunger relief organization to ask them what you can donate. Check out the [Food Scraps Guide](#) for more information on curbside composting.