

Food: *Too Good to Waste!*

The Easiest Way to Save: Source Reduction at Schools

What is Source Reduction?

Source Reduction starts in the cafeteria. ***It means putting practices into place so that food waste is prevented in the first place.*** Awareness is the first step. As much as we don't like to admit it, waste happens! Source reduction is the "lowest hanging fruit" on the food recovery hierarchy and delivers the biggest bang for the buck because it saves resources, time and money, and can be implemented with virtually no upfront costs.

Food Waste Tracking Tools

Food waste tracking systems can be helpful in documenting which foods are wasted and why. They can be as simple or as complex as staff time and budget allows. Proprietary software and scales can be purchased to weigh, categorize and monitor food waste.

A simple log sheet can also be used for staff to track how many servings of each type of food is wasted at the end of a meal or day (see page 2). The data can be used to track less popular items or to better match purchasing with demand.



Hierarchy of Best Options



- Prepare food on-demand or in smaller batches
- Use creative naming, presentation and pairing of menu items to entice consumption
- Use darker or shallower plates, bowls, and serving trays to give the image of abundance and reduce portions
- Provide students with smaller lunch trays with fewer compartments
- Slice fruit and vegetables into small pieces to entice kids to eat them
- Conduct regular nutrition staff meetings to discuss menu planning, review popular and unpopular menu items, and brainstorm new ideas
- Create new meals and recipes that incorporate leftovers, where feasible
- Participate in "Farm to School" and other collaboratives to expand educational opportunities on nutritious foods and consolidate purchasing power to purchase higher quality, tastier food

Sample of a Food Waste Tracking Form for Nutrition Staff

Food Waste Tracking Form					
Date	Staff Initials	Menu Item	# of Servings Disposed	Weight of Item Disposed	Reason
			Pick One		
May 1	KS	Canned tomatoes		4 x 102 oz cans (#10 cans)	Expired
"	"	Bananas	40 (whole box)	n/a	Not used in time, turning brown
"	"	Chicken Sandwiches	35	n/a	Unsold from lunch
"	"	Pizza	6	n/a	Unsold from lunch
May 2	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

Additional Resources

- [Toolkit for Reducing Food Waste and Packaging](#), available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, includes a downloadable spreadsheet and accompanying resource guide.
- [ReFED](#) is “A data-driven guide for businesses, government, funders, and nonprofits to collectively reduce food waste at scale,” and has many resources for reducing food waste on its website.
- Many other resources are available by searching for “food waste tracking.”



For additional information, visit us at R1Earth.org. To learn more about available assistance and to schedule a FREE consultation, email County Recycling Staff at Recycle@sdcounty.ca.gov. We're here to help!