

WASTE MINIMIZATION

RESTAURANTS



BACKGROUND

Food wastes comprise the second largest component of wastes generated in Alberta, second only to paper and cardboard. Restaurants are major contributors to both of these waste streams.

The majority of restaurant-generated wastes in Alberta are currently being landfilled. As

much of these wastes are totally biodegradable, excellent options exist for the diversion of this waste from landfills.

This sheet is intended to help restaurant owners and managers minimize waste, and to help identify credible options for the diversion of waste streams from landfills.

WASTE MINIMIZATION OPPORTUNITIES

Waste can be minimized by using the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Reduce refers to a change in procedures or operations that results in less waste produced, or eliminating waste by avoiding single-use or disposable items. Reuse refers to utilizing materials a second or third time before treating them as waste. Recycle refers to converting a waste back into a usable material.

This section summarizes various options that can be used to minimize waste produced at restaurants. Because of the increasing costs associated with landfill disposal of waste, many of these options not only provide for ecologically correct management, but also prove cost effective.

REDUCE

- Reduce domestic garbage volumes through reduced package purchasing policies. Purchasing food and other supplies in bulk will greatly reduce the number of containers requiring disposal.

- Avoid using single-use or disposable items such as plastic, paper or polystyrene cups and plates, and plastic flatware. If offering take-out service, ensure that only minimal amounts of packaging are used, and that all materials are recyclable.
- Keep items such as bags, plastic flatware, napkins, condiment packages and straws optional for customers rather than including these items with every order. Many items given to patrons are never used.
- Serve beverages directly in the can or bottle instead of using disposable cups.
- Replace incandescent lighting with low-energy-use fluorescent lighting. Fluorescent lights can last up to ten times longer than incandescent lighting, and use 70-80% less energy.
- Use washable napkins and table coverings rather than paper.
- Replace paper towel dispensers in washrooms with towel dispensers or electric hand dryers.
- Install water saving devices such as reduced flow faucets and toilet dams.

- Repair leaking faucets and toilets immediately. Leaking faucets and toilets may waste as much as 36,000 litres of water a year.

REUSE

- Eliminate the use of single-serve packaged items such as sugar packets, creamers, condiments, jams, cereals, crackers, etc. As an alternative, use refillable serving containers and bulk food supplies.
- Return items such as cardboard boxes, wooden pallets and plastic containers to suppliers, use them in-house or give them to employees and patrons.
- Send surplus prepared foods to food banks and soup kitchens.
- Send collected kitchen grease to processors for use in animal feeds, and food scraps to local ranchers and farmers for livestock feed.
- Offer plastic refillable car mugs as an alternative to polystyrene or paper cups for take-out orders.
- Use cloth rags for clean-up rather than paper towels. Rags can be cleaned and used numerous times before disposal is necessary.
- Purchase reusable items in favour of disposable or single-use items.

RECYCLE

- Compost all vegetative food wastes. On-site composters are available from a number of suppliers in Alberta. Composting can transform food wastes into an excellent planting medium which may be used for flower beds, or offered to employees and patrons. Municipalities may offer large scale compost sites where food scraps may also be recycled.
- Recycle all aluminum cans and bottles. Establishing collection bins specifically for cans and bottles reduces the need to separate prior to recycling, and ensures all cans and bottles are recycled.
- Segregate other recyclable plastics and glass. One recycled glass bottle can save enough energy to power a 100 watt fluorescent light for 40 hours!
- Segregate and recycle paper, cardboard, magazines and newspaper wastes (see Waste Minimization Sheet on Offices & Institutions for further details).
- Purchase recycled or recyclable items such as fine paper and toilet paper whenever possible.

