

NYS: Wasted Food Resource for Custodial Service Staff



READY TO REDUCE WASTED FOOD?

By taking steps to reduce wasted food, schools contribute to a more sustainable future. This fosters a culture of environmental stewardship among students and their school community.

Key elements to successfully reduce wasted food include:

- strategic purchasing
- right-sizing portions
- donating excess edible food
- food scrap diversion

Success depends on the cooperation between 4 key stakeholder groups:



Administrators



Compost
Champion



Custodial Staff



Dining Services
Supervisor

Custodians are the front line to operation of the school's physical space, since handling waste and resources are key to a safe and sanitary learning environment. If programs are simple and easy to participate in, teachers, administration, and students will follow the lead. Everyone plays a part in program success!

Custodial Staff are critical to:

- Managing waste streams
- Maintaining sorting stations
- Promoting efficiency

GET SET TO START YOUR PROGRAM

• **Let's get familiar with wasted food:**

- What does the hauler accept? (Food scraps only, or compostable items also?)
- How much contamination is too much?
 - Where does it go? Compost facility, anaerobic digester?
- What size are the food scraps carts or containers?
- Where will they be placed? (Typically, near the trash and recycling for ease of use)
- Frequency of pickup? (Typically, weekly or twice weekly in warmer months)
- Are compostable bags or liners accepted?
 - If bags are not allowed, the food scrap containers will need to be rinsed (or bags used for collection, then discarded)

• **Collaborate with the Compost Champion:**

- What is the most collaborative way to train sorting station monitors (students or volunteers)?

• **Set up and storage of sorting stations:**

- Centrally locate waste sorting stations to be easily accessible by all students in the cafeteria. Edible food (Share Table): Identify a "point person" in the main office/nurse's office who will be responsible for the collection of usable/unserved food.
- Stations:
 - Liquids:
 - Develop a pour-off system
 - Strainer-top buckets remove weight and mess from recycling and/or trash (cleaner recycling, bags that don't leak, reduced milk odor in dumpsters)
 - Bucket or cart and grease trap sink or floor drain can also be used to pour off liquids

- Recycling:
 - Empty milk cartons (check that your local program will accept)
 - Water, juice, and soda bottles, cardboard, paper, plastic, glass, and metal containers, and empty yogurt and fruit cups can also be included if clean
 - Resources like the [RecycleRightNY](https://www.recycle-right.org/) website are available to clarify what materials are included in mixed recycling
- *Note: Tiny items (smaller than a credit card) fall through the system at the recycling sorting facility. These items must be put into trash.*
- Trash:
 - To remove any contamination such as condiment packets and plastic utensils
- Food scraps:
 - Separate from the trash
 - Reduces odor
 - Reduces weight and volume of trash
 - Containers have tight fitting lids to keep out critters

LAUNCH YOUR PROGRAM

- **Provide feedback** to Administration, Compost Champion, and Dining Services Staff on successes and challenges for continuous program improvement
- **Correct contamination** to avoid “copycat users,” which reinforces the wrong message about proper sorting
 - Tongs or trash grabbers and gloves are useful for this
- **Perform daily set-up and breakdown** of the cafeteria sorting station:
 - Coordinate with the Compost Champion and sorting station monitors for maintenance of the station
- **Review and revise** as necessary:
 - Sorting station placement
 - Configuration of bins
 - Custodial successes or challenges
 - Observed contamination in food scrap or recycling streams
 - Other program considerations that will make it easier for everyone to participate
 - Double-sided station is most preferred if space allows
- **Tips and hints:**
 - If utilizing compostableware, place (stacked) the BPI certified trays at the bottom of the collection containers to save space and for easier food scrap removal when tipping into truck
 - Ask your hauler if they rinse each cart after dumping or swap full carts with clean replacements. If they do not offer either service, plan to rinse the carts regularly to keep them clean.
 - Total trash volume may be reduced, as edible food will be diverted and trays stacked, which conserves space in bins and dumpsters. This might lead to reducing the size of the dumpster or frequency of pickup.



Source: [Recycling Guide from RecycleSmart.org](https://recycle-smart.org/)

In New York State, CET works with schools to develop or expand their best practices for wasted food reduction and diversion of usable resources.



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