

Wasted Food Solutions: Spotlights from Washington, D.C.

Nearly [40% of all food in America is wasted](#). Some is food scraps (think carrot tops, bones, and peels) that could instead be converted to carbon-rich compost to restore soil health, or energy through anaerobic digestion. It also includes edible food that could be consumed by people. Diverting food waste from landfills helps to save businesses money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and tackle food insecurity—which impacts [1 out of 3 people](#) in the Washington, D.C. region.

Wasted food prevention, donation, and recycling are priorities in Washington, and are integral to improving public health and achieving climate action goals. With funding from the [DC Department of Small and Local Business Development](#) and the [Latino Economic Development Center \(LEDC\)](#), the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) has helped restaurants and food-permitted businesses throughout implement strategies to reduce wasted food.

Shibuya Eatery

Sometimes preventing food waste means showing off your culinary skills. This is true of Chef James from [Shibuya Eatery](#). Shibuya is in a unique position in that the only significant source of compostable food scraps the restaurant produces is from customers' plates. To take care of those scraps, Shibuya is planning to hire a compost hauler in the near future.

How does this restaurant prevent so much waste from being produced? Chef James and the rest of the culinary team make sure to use every part

possible of their locally sourced ingredients. Take a chicken: while the meat makes classic dishes like ramen and charcoal grilled chicken wings, other parts that are often discarded like the feet, neck, and bones can be used to cook up a delicious confit or collagen soup. Instead of tossing out surplus fruits and vegetables, Chef James turns them into fun culinary creations like spicy apple topping made of bruised apples and surplus chili peppers. And late-harvest asparagus, too mealy to serve on its own, makes the perfect miso soup. An added bonus to the repurposing program was cost savings: in the fifteen months since the restaurant started repurposing, food purchasing went down from 44 to 33 percent!

Shibuya Eatery is planning on using their grant money from LEDC and technical assistance from CET to expand restaurant projects aimed at preventing waste. Their story shows that with a little creativity, restaurants can turn what once would have been waste into a delicious, unique culinary experience.



The Queen Vic

This iconic British pub on Capitol Hill might seem very traditional at first glance, but [The Queen Vic](#) is leading the way when it comes to the future of food waste reduction.

As part of their grant from LEDC and with technical assistance from CET, The Queen Vic installed a vertical trash compactor to reduce garbage pickups and started working with the [Compost Cab](#) to divert their food scraps. These two changes have led to a much cleaner and lighter trash stream for the restaurant, all while preventing rodents, which is a familiar challenge for any urban restaurant. To make sure each stream was not contaminated, CET and LEDC shared bilingual signage in English and Spanish to teach staff members where to toss their waste.

Just like Shibuya Eatery, The Queen Vic has also turned their surplus food into a new experience at the restaurant. Visit the pub late at night and you'll find a menu that restaurant staff lovingly call "the dumpster." This menu is full of hearty, easy-to-make recipes like shepherd's pie, all crafted to use up surplus ingredients. The Queen Vic's co-owner, Ryan Gordon, had this to say to business owners considering food rescue initiatives: "Just do it!" The Queen Vic serves as a role model for other restaurants when it comes to reducing waste.

Each Peach Market

[Each Peach Market](#) is committed to donating food and uplifting the community. While Each Peach already had an established relationship with a local meal site—[Francis on the Hill](#)—LEDC and CET's food waste experts connected them with the food rescue organization, [Food Rescue US](#). Now, in addition to Each Peach self-hauling food donations, volunteers from around the city pick up surplus meals from the Market, allowing Each Peach to distribute even more food to Washingtonians in need.

In addition to food donation, preventing food waste has become one of Each Peach Market's most important priorities. Using grant money from LEDC, they purchased a vacuum sealer, which helps extend the life of meats and cheeses. This is especially helpful in the summer months when customer ordering habits can be unpredictable. The vacuum sealer also allows Market staff to preserve food scraps, which can be used as ingredients for menu offerings in the future.

For food scraps that cannot be saved, Each Peach conducts a weekly collection with the Compost Cab. Not only have staff not had any problems with storing the scraps in sealed containers for the week, they actually report that their trash is generally cleaner now that they've started diverting food scraps. Additionally, staff use the [EPA's Food Waste Recovery Log](#) to identify where food is currently being wasted. Another added bonus is that employees get to take home any surplus food for free!

As the Market staff note, "Waste is a cost," and Each Peach is working hard to eliminate this waste.



Mimi's Convenience

A D.C. favorite known for its tasty sandwiches, [Mimi's Convenience](#) started a food waste prevention initiative as part of their involvement with LEDC. With grant money from LEDC and expertise from CET, the deli has installed new coolers to expand their cold storage capacity and in turn, extended the life of their refrigerated goods.

To divert existing food scraps from their sandwich line and grocery department, Mimi's is now working with a local hauler the Compost Cab. They are also working with Republic Services to expand their recycling system for bottles and cans.

The deli's efforts don't stop there. With help from CET and LEDC, Mimi's Convenience was connected to Food Rescue US. In the future, the organization will partner with Mimi's to launch a food donation program for times when the convenience store has surplus items. Mimi's Convenience has already come a long way, but this small business has big plans to continue combatting food waste in the coming years.



Ready to get started?

Start with prevention: Check out CET's [Source Reduction Guidance](#) to learn how your business can start reducing surplus food.

Donate surplus edible food: Work with the food rescue organization, [Food Rescue US](#), to donate unserved, edible food to organizations who can use it.

Feeling moved to act?

Visit [CET's Wasted Food Solutions website](#) for more information.

