

NYS: Wasted Food Resource for Dining Services Supervisors



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

As a Dining Services Supervisor, your main goal is to have students eat food for their nutritional needs; however, students may still put food in the trash. This program helps keep it out of the trash!

GET SET TO START YOUR PROGRAM

- **Review offer vs. serve (OVS)** [USDA Offer vs. Serve](#) and [NYS Education Department Share Table Guidance](#) resources. Make sure all staff and students are aware of their food options.
 - Preloading trays can contribute to wasted food if the items are not what students would choose
 - Identify opportunities to reduce wait-times, letting students sit and eat for longer
 - Can you: Fully staff serving lines? Use efficient point-of-sale systems? Clear signage of daily food options? Organize multiple lines for different options (grab-and-go, salad bar, etc.)?
 - Support the use of a share table, with a small fridge, a cooler with ice packs, or a restaurant pan with ice for safe collection and storage. Best practices are compiled in [CET's Food Donation Guidance](#) resource.
- **Communicate with the custodial team** and the point-person responsible for connecting with a local food rescue organization to take edible items from the share table and unserved items from the kitchen at the end of the day
 - Ensure that common items available from the cafeteria are accepted by the donation organization
 - Coordinate an on-call pick-up procedure with the organization
- **Adapt kitchen staff training** to reduce waste in meal preparation
 - Knife skill techniques for maximizing produce use
 - Have new hires collect food scraps in their own bins so trainers can observe and assess cutting techniques
 - Empty cans or tubs with a rubber spatula to maximize ingredients for meals and make cleaning easier before recycling
- **Create a decision tree for employees** to show what can be donated versus placed in the food scraps collection bin
- **Implement strategic purchasing** to minimize the amount of wasted food

- **Reduce single-use**

- Consider using bulk condiments and salad dressing to reduce student sorting time at the waste sorting stations and potential contamination from single-use packets in the food scrap collection bin
- Utensils can be dispensed one at a time instead of pre-wrapped in plastic
- Consider installing dishwashers and using washable trays. Benefits include:
 - Reduced waste
 - Reduced purchasing and storage of single-use trays
 - Easier diversion of food scraps



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

LAUNCH YOUR PROGRAM

- **Train lunchroom staff or volunteers** to monitor the sorting stations
 - A sample job description is available upon request
 - Volunteers can be older students to encourage peer-to-peer learning, teachers, or parents
- **Post clear, simple signs** customized to show typical items collected for each stream
- **Consolidate kitchen food scraps containers** into the external food scrap cart for pickup
- **Measure and track** excess food generation
- **Separate prep or unserved food** that cannot be donated or repurposed for collection and diversion
 - Be familiar with the food scrap separation program available at the school. (Example: are all food scraps collected, and do liners need to be utilized in bins/carts?)
- Have dishwashing and/or custodial staff provide input on items observed in the trash. This could influence menu choices.
- **Survey students for input** on their favorite meal options:
 - Gather feedback on recipes
 - Design a QR code with a survey for students to fill out
 - Have taste test days to try new recipes
- **Don't forget about recycling:** Mixed recycling includes cardboard, paper, plastic, glass, and metal containers. Resources like the [RecycleRightNY](https://www.recycle-right.com/) website are available to clarify what materials are included in mixed recycling.

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



cetonline.org | 886.306.0911 | wastedfood@cetonline.org

This document has been produced through grant funding received by the NYSDEC's Rethink Food Waste program. Some resources were developed through other programs but contain relevant information for this project.