

FOOD SERVICE CONTRACT ROADMAP

WRITING CONTRACTS THAT INTEGRATE FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

Selecting a new or negotiating with an existing food service provider to work within your organization's sustainability goals can be a tricky process. This roadmap delineates waste reduction recommendations and requirements to consider including in contracts with food service providers. Language can and will vary, but these basic themes should be present, as appropriate for your organization.

PROCUREMENT / PURCHASING

FOOD

- Prioritize local foods and products wherever possible and purchase seasonally.
- Consider setting a sustainable food purchase percentage goal. Commonly-used tools that can help you assess the percentage of your food purchases that are sustainable include the [Real Food Challenge](#), and the Center for [Good Food Purchasing](#).
- Purchase novelty or seasonal items conservatively or in test quantities to gauge consumer taste.
- Inventory food stores monthly. Identify items in large quantities nearing expiration dates and adjust future orders to reduce or eliminate under-utilized ingredients.
- Employ menu planning to purchase only what is needed.
- Utilize historic sales data (e.g. “slower seasons” or upcoming large events) to improve demand forecasting.

PACKAGING

- Prioritize procurement of food and products with little to minimal packaging or packaging that is reusable, recyclable, or compostable.
- Avoid single use plastics, disposables, and individually packaged items. Find durable alternatives to as many disposables as possible.
- All packaging must be recyclable locally or [certified compostable](#) (look for BPI, OK COMPOST, or ASTM – D6400 labels).

BACK OF HOUSE

FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PRACTICES

- Implement a [food waste tracking system](#) (e.g. Winnow, Leanpath, EPA Food Recovery Challenge, or other trademarked system from parent company).
- To assess missed diversion opportunities, conduct periodic waste audits or comply with organization-wide waste audits.
- Periodically verify refrigeration and freezer units are holding temperature to prevent food spoilage.
- Ensure product is properly labeled and stored according to when it should be used.



- Train staff on proper food prep techniques to reduce prep waste (refine knife skills to avoid cutting too deeply, ensure staff understands proper cook times for proteins to prevent overcooking). Reinforce first in, first out practices.

FRONT OF HOUSE

MENU DESIGN

- Redesign menu/meal plan so the same ingredients are used throughout the day such that surplus ingredients from earlier in the day can be utilized in prepping the next meal.
- Reconsider portion sizing for meals to avoid overserving – offer small and half sizes of popular plates.
- Consider meatless Mondays. Offer regular vegan and vegetarian dishes.
- Keep watch on what meals are consistently underconsumed and offer that meal less frequently.
- Avoid free refill or free bread policies.
- For serviced food counters, use the “ask first” policy for sides and garnishes (for example, ask if a pickle or side salad is desired with a sandwich order).



SERVING TECHNIQUES

- In buffet settings
 - Ditch all disposables - offer only reusable/durable dishes, flatware, cups, and fabric napkins.
 - Consider charging users for leftover food on plate.
 - Keep condiments in containers with pumps or in very small dishes with serving spoons; use small dishes as any unserved condiments will have to be thrown away if they are served this way.
 - Use smaller pans and creative displays to make buffets appear full without overproducing. Refresh food only when needed, not to make the buffet appear full.
 - Place signs on the buffet explaining your food waste philosophy to guests.
- In retail/grab and go settings
 - All grab and go/to-go packaging must be recyclable or compostable (as compatible with organizational waste stream); offering a reusable to-go program is feasible in settings with guests who frequently return (ie: university dining halls, hospital cafeterias, etc.)
 - Hold all disposables – straws, napkins, cutlery – behind the counter so users must ask for them instead of taking them freely.
 - National companies and consumer brands will have a presence in many retail sites, so consider adding language in an RFP that ensures national companies must adhere to waste limits set forth by the hosting organization. Use corporate sustainability goals of national companies as leverage to encourage packaging changes. When navigating packaging discussions, remain cognizant that larger companies may ultimately not be able to meet organizational needs.



CATERING SERVICES

- Clarify quantity needs with the food recipient - do not over-prepare or over-serve. Let them know once food is served, it cannot be donated.
- Do not automatically refill serving dishes as food runs low.
- Ensure everything is properly labeled to avoid consumer's accidental or partial consumption of undesired food.
- For full-service catering, offer zero waste service with no disposables:
 - Reusable/durable dishes, flatware, cups, mugs, fabric napkins
 - Sugar or honey in dishes with spoons
 - Creamer in pitchers
 - Spoons as coffee/drink stirrs
 - Condiments in containers with pumps or in very small dishes with serving spoons (use small dishes as any unserved condiments will have to be thrown away if they are served this way)
- For drop-off catering services, offer minimal packaging that can be recycled or composted (based on organization waste infrastructure). Avoid boxed lunches due to excess packaging and food.



FOOD RESCUE & RECOVERY POLICY

- Know and understand the [federal policy](#) on what food can be donated.
- Food deemed [appropriate](#) for recovery should be donated to a local food pantry or unit within your organization. Find a list of [food recovery organizations](#) here.
- Incorporate unsold food into other dishes (salads, soups, stocks, etc.). Freeze fresh fruits and veggies near the end of peak freshness for later use.



FOOD WASTE COMPOSTING

- Review local options for composting onsite or offsite. As feasible, require food service provider to compost food scraps. This will likely require organization to subscribe to compost collection services. Indiana-specific information on food scrap composting [here](#).
- Require usage of three bin system in kitchen space: trash, recycle, compost.
- Display signage indicating what items go where; consider language of kitchen staff; include words & images – see [this guide](#) for best practices on bin color, placement, and signage.
- Host an annual staff training on proper waste management techniques and audit performance periodically throughout the year. Offer an incentive for proper sortation. Consider electing a “waste watcher” for every shift.
- Require food service provider pay compost contamination fees to incentivize correct sorting behavior.
- Share compost information with food service provider on a monthly/quarterly basis to engage them in the results of their efforts - numbers, issues, updates, etc.



COMMUNICATION

- Encourage food service provider to include food waste reduction initiatives in reports to corporate/parent companies.
- Adhere to schedule of regular check ins with food service providers to ensure sustainable practices are being maintained, issues are addressed in a timely manner, trainings and re-trainings occur as needed, and goals are mutually beneficial and achievable.

