

# A GUIDE TO REDUCING FOOD WASTE



wrap



GUARDIANS  
— OF GRUB —



**UK** FOOD  
BUSINESSES  
**THROW AWAY**

**£3.2BN**

## WORTH OF FOOD EVERY YEAR

This Guardians of Grub guide is designed to cut waste and help your business save money and boost profits.

These simple steps and resources will help you reduce the amount of food thrown away by engaging staff and customers.

### GOOD TO KNOW:

As well as saving you money, this guide helps towards meeting your business' legal obligations. Check out the [Waste \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2012](#) and the [Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) for further information.



# A BIT ABOUT FOOD THAT'S THROWN AWAY

Food waste can be generated across your business. It can occur at purchasing, storage and preparation, through to leftovers on customers' plates. What's thrown away is not just food, but also staff time and disposal costs.

Here's what you gain by throwing away less food:

- You'll **save money** on purchasing and waste disposal costs.
- Less food thrown away means **more profit** and reduced operating costs.
- Reducing the amount of food you throw away helps **the environment**.

## REDUCING WASTE IS EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

### STEP 1

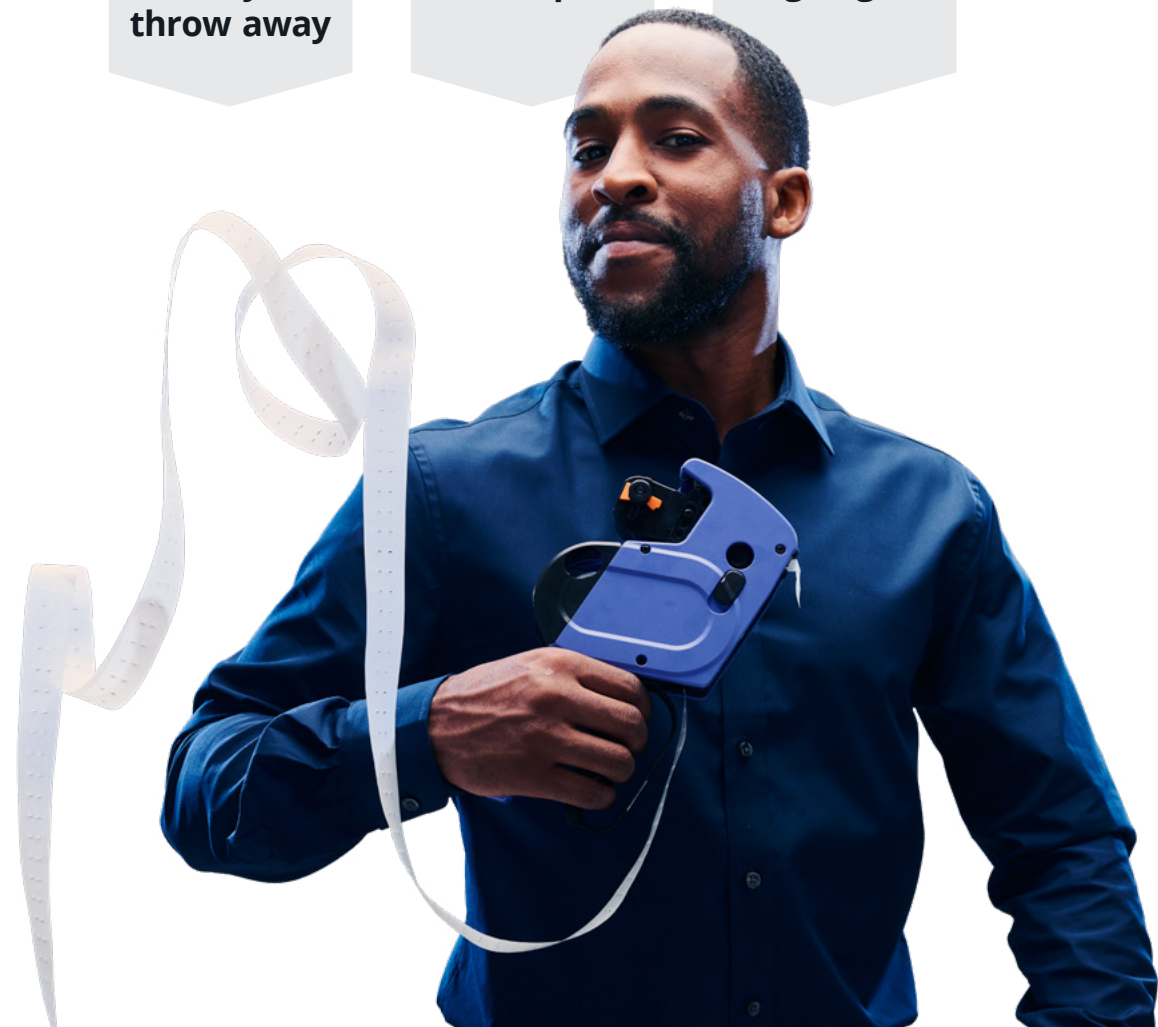
Review the food you throw away

### STEP 2

Make an action plan

### STEP 3

Keep it going!



# REVIEW THE FOOD YOU THROW AWAY

## WHY DO A REVIEW?

It's an easy way to find out where food is being thrown away in your business. It will give you some clear ideas on how to throw away less food and start saving money.

### What are the types of food thrown away?

#### SPOILAGE



Food that is damaged or out of date such as vegetable spoilage

#### PREPARATION



Food that is thrown away during preparation, such as offcuts, and food that is prepared but not served

#### PLATE



Food that is left on customers' plates such as chips and garnishes

## I'M READY. WHERE DO I START?

- **Get staff on board** by explaining why you are reducing food waste.
- **Choose days** to run the review which are typical for your business; a mix of days when you're busy and when you're quiet.
- Find a **Guardian of Grub Champion** to drive the process.
- To capture the food thrown away, set out **separate containers** for Spoilage, Preparation and Plate. Label the containers so that staff know where to put the food.
- **Weigh** the containers and record against each day for each type of food thrown away on the **7 day tracking sheet**.
- **Find out** how much you could be saving over a year with our simple **calculator tool**.

### ? TIP

Make sure that staff don't make any changes to what is normally thrown away while you are carrying out the review. This will give you a good starting point or "baseline" which you can use to track progress.

### ! REMINDER:

You may want to add in another area where you want to track food thrown away, e.g. food from breakfasts, food left on buffets or from events.

## HOW LONG SHOULD THE REVIEW LAST?

The length of the review will depend on how long you need to get a clear picture of where food is being thrown away, during times when your business is busy and when it is quieter, or you may feel that you need 7 days, or perhaps a month. Use our calculator tool to see at what stage your food is being thrown away. The tool includes handy graphs to show you the savings that can be made to help focus on the actions for your business.

### ! REMINDER

Use the **calculator tool** to find out how much your business is throwing away. The tool includes handy graphs to show you the savings that can be made. It will help you to focus on the actions that will make the biggest difference to your business.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Based on the results of your review you can:

- Work out how much the food thrown away is costing your business.
- Get staff involved in thinking about where your waste comes from, and why.
- Plan actions to reduce the amount of food your business throws away.

### 1 Smart ordering

Smart ordering reduces the amount of food thrown away



### 2 Smart menu design

Reduces food thrown away from preparation and saves money



### 3 Surplus food

Find out if your surplus food can be sent safely for others to eat in the local community.

And for food waste you can't avoid, find out if you can send it for recycling into compost through your local waste contractor.



# MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

## ORDER AND STORE YOUR FOOD SMARTER

If you find that spoilage is a big part of the food you throw away in your business, then changing the way you order and or store food can make a big difference.

### SAVVY STORAGE

Well organised storage increases efficiency and avoids unnecessary food waste.

Some good tips for storing:



First in, first out! Store new items at the back to ensure older items are used first.

Store food as soon as it is delivered. Avoid overloading the fridge or freezer.

Use airtight containers or vacuum packing to keep already prepared food fresh for longer.

## A FEW HANDY TIPS TO GET YOU ORDERING SMARTER

- Check your stock and **purchase only what you need.**
- **Order less but more often** to save on storage space and keep food fresh.
- Order meat and fish **cut to specifications** – to save preparation time and leave less food to throw away.



**CLEVER  
STORAGE =  
LOWER RUNNING  
COSTS AND  
HIGHER  
PROFITS**

## REDUCE LEFTOVERS

Common sources of food left on plates are side dishes like chips, bread and vegetables. Portion sizes that are too big also add to this. Look at what is left on plates, as it will be a good indicator of where you can make savings.



### HOW CAN I REDUCE LEFTOVERS?

**1** Offer portion size options

**2** Offer side dishes as options or by request

**3** Offer take away "doggy boxes"





## ASK FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Encourage front-of-house staff to chat to customers about the work you are doing to reduce leftovers and find out what they think about smaller portion sizes and side dishes. Staff are also good at identifying the most common leftovers and least popular garnishes and side dishes.

## PUT STAFF IN CONTROL

Help your front of house staff to promote your good efforts and talk to your customers about the improvements you've made. Involve them with menu design and listen to their feedback from customers, as this is valuable.

## ENCOURAGE CUSTOMERS TO TAKE HOME YOUR FOOD AND ENJOY LATER

- **Get staff on board** by explaining why you are reducing food. Speak to your local Environmental Health Professional about the options available for customers to take food home, for instance:
- Take away containers – encourage customers to bring their own, or provide them yourself (make sure they are new and food grade).
- Placing a sticker on the container reminds customers about food safety and promotes your business.
- Find out more from the **Food Standards Agency** and **CIEH**.

**1,000,000** TONNES  
OF FOOD IS THROWN AWAY  
BY THE SECTOR EACH YEAR





## MAKE A SMART MENU

If your review shows that spoilage and food preparation are responsible for a lot of the food your business throws away, then reviewing your menu could help.

## TIME TO REVIEW THE MENU

Too many choices on the menu can be overwhelming to customers. It can also mean high running costs for ingredients, more preparation and more food thrown away to manage. Cut running costs and increase customer satisfaction by reviewing your menu.

## BROADCAST YOUR EFFORTS

Your customers will want to be part of your actions to reduce the amount of food thrown away. Use **Guardians of Grub** materials to share your good work and thank consumers for their support.

If you want to learn more **WRAP** has some great advice.



## CLEVER IDEAS TO REVIVE YOUR MENU

- Explore ways of using the **same ingredients for different dishes**.
- Employ cooking methods for **making the most of** meats, fruit and vegetables and herbs.
- Be creative by using **leftover ingredients and offcuts**.

## Do something SPECIAL and offer:

- Chef or lunch specials to use up excess ingredients.
- Garnishes and side orders by request to give customers the choice of what and how much they want to eat.
- A range of portion sizes.



## SURPLUS FOOD

If you have surplus food that could still be eaten safely, find out if your local community can use it. And for food that cannot be eaten, find out from your local waste management contractor if they offer recycling collections.

## WHY REDISTRIBUTE FOOD?

Preventing food from being thrown away is the first priority, however surpluses can arise for a number of reasons; food could be over-ordered, over-supplied or it could be obsolete seasonal stock. If this happens the next best approach to prevention is redistribution. Why not work with a local or national food redistribution charity to ensure your reputation as a good neighbour?

## FOOD COLLECTION AND COMPOSTING

- You can find a food waste collection service by contacting your current waste management company or local authority.
- Using food waste as compost can be a great source of nutrients for your garden. Before setting up your on-site composting, make sure you follow environmental and food safety guidelines. You should also check with your environmental regulator.

### ? TIP

Interested in the bigger picture of throwing away less food? The **waste hierarchy** is a guide to managing resources in harmony with the environment and your business needs. It will also help you meet your business's legal obligations. The waste hierarchy prioritises the prevention of food becoming waste in the first place. If you do find you have surplus food that is still safe to eat by humans (e.g. food you can't use, don't need or want) then the next step is to think about redistribution. After that, consider options for recycling or composting food and then ensuring it is disposed of responsibly. It's a win-win for you and the environment.





## KEEP IT GOING!

It's great to share your results with staff to help keep them motivated. Ideas from your action plan will help to reduce what you throw away. Keep tracking spoilage, preparation and plate waste over the same review period as you did at the start so you can see what difference the changes have made. Repeating the review seasonally or every six months will help keep your business in check.

### LET THEM KNOW

- Why you are doing a food waste review;
- How you have done it;
- What actions you have taken to reduce the amount of food thrown away;
- What you plan to do next;
- How they can get involved.

If you operate on more than one site it's a good idea to share your success with others in your business.

### YOU CAN

- Make time at staff meetings to share progress with the review process;
- Make space on a notice board for ideas and updates;
- Highlight top staff ideas;
- Set goals and targets and see if you can reach them;
- Create league tables to help staff to stay interested and involved;
- Recognise and reward staff in whatever way works best for your business.

### THIS CAN HELP

- Generate wider action across the business and support to other sites;
- Gain support from colleagues, including those in departments who may not see how much food is being saved but can help;
- Boost team morale by helping your staff feel good about doing the right thing and making an impact;
- Improve the reputation of your business;
- Your clients; at some sites clients may handle disposal costs. Reducing how much food is thrown away helps them too.



“Guardians of Grub” has been developed by WRAP under the **Courtauld Commitment 2025**.

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