



Managing Surplus

- Christmas Special -

- Guide No.4 -

in a series of 10 for you to collect and keep

WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Bite sized guide to help hospitality businesses to find innovative ways to reduce waste



Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year for caterers. With family, friends and colleagues enjoying meals out, events and celebrations can sometimes lead to huge amounts of surplus food.

Over-ordering, over-supply or obsolete seasonal stock are top reasons for food surplus, but redistribution options can prevent excess food from ever becoming waste. There is plenty you can do to avoid waste at events as well as repurposing food once it has accumulated, for example donating useable food to those in need.

This guide contains some simple actions you can apply during the festive season and beyond.



1. Get the number of attendees right

We know it sounds obvious, but ask your customers to reconfirm the exact number of attendees shortly before the event in order to accurately estimate the amount of food required. Allow for some flexibility in changing attendee lists prior to the event to allow for drop-outs and to avoid overcooking.



Try recording the booking number and the number of actual attendees during your events to better calculate the average dropout rates for various types of events.

2. Think about your buffet

- If all food is prepared in advance of the function, serve smaller batches to reduce excess food being served. That way any surplus can be redistributed. Just remember to put out a sign that additional food can be delivered quickly.
- Think about providing small plates with the food already on it. This way, people are limited by how much food they can take and be more likely to fill up without leaving plate waste.
- Buffets are much more costly and produce more waste than plated meals. Although it is customer choice, you could incentivise plated meal choices over buffets.



3. Promote pre-orders

Pre-orders allow you to prepare more accurately, estimate the quantities of food you need, and reduce the chance of over-catering. Provide a list of meal options to the customer before the event to allow guests to pre-choose their meal.



4. Reduce resource-intensive items

Review the most expensive ingredients on your buffet; these are likely to be dishes containing meat. Try to balance your menu between these items and cheaper and less resource intensive offers like vegetarian options.



5. Feedback

Regularly ask for feedback on quality and customers likes and dislikes. Menus can then be adjusted to preferred dishes.



6. Track consumption and waste data

Weighing and measuring your waste can help you to determine the type and quantity of food wasted during an event. Looking at how much food is thrown out at the end of an event is useful in understanding customers eating trends.

You can do this by using a scale to weigh bins containing plate waste and leftover food from the buffet. If you want more specific detail on what ingredients are being wasted, there are also companies which can automatically measure what food items are binned and why.



Using this information, you can adapt your menu accordingly for the next event. Customers are increasingly asking for sustainability information so they can track their own business footprints.

7. Food Salvage Plan

Depending on the type of food surplus produced, there are two ways of making the most of it:

1. Re-distribution for consumption; and
2. Re-purposing surplus as ingredients for animal food

If you'd like to re-distribute food surplus, be sure to handle untouched food properly. By donating food, you can feed those in need whilst also reducing the amount of waste being sent to landfills.



Donating your food to charities

Nationwide, there are many charities that redistribute food surplus for companies in the hospitality and food service sector. The bottom line is that all of your food surplus can be redistributed so it is just a matter of finding one that is local and who can accept the type of food that you produce. Once you have found a partner to work with, you can agree on the methods of storage as well as type and regularity of collection.

6,000 t



Around 6,000 tonnes of food fit for human consumption is redistributed through charities and other organisations

UK

450,000 t



Around 450,000 tonnes of food unfit for human consumption is reused as ingredients animal food



Q: *If I donate food and someone gets sick, who is responsible?*

A: *Check with your charity partner but usually, as soon as the redistribution charity accepts a donation, they take on 100% of the responsibility.*



“There are no legal restrictions in the UK preventing businesses from donating their surplus food to charities. Any type of food can be donated - cooked, uncooked, frozen, fresh, packaged or un-packaged, as long as it matches the needs of the receiving charity.”
- Chris Wilkie, Co-Founder, Plan Zheroes.

Practical advice and expert know-how for the hospitality industry created through collaboration between Winnow, SWR and the BHA:



The BHA aims to be the single most powerful voice actively championing the interests of the whole industry and its business partnership scheme enables the best suppliers and partners to the industry to participate in developing insight and sharing best practice.

www.bha.org.uk



SWR offers a comprehensive, integrated waste management service, helping companies control costs and improve their recycling and sustainable environmental performance.

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Winnow is the revolutionary smart meter that helps kitchens cut food waste in half by automatically measuring what's put in the bin.

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Get in touch with us - we'd love to hear from you!

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