

Reducing business waste – Cafés and restaurants



Serve great food with green benefits

Businesses in NSW could recover an additional 140,529 tonnes of food waste or prevent 281 million meals from going to landfill each year¹.

Food waste fills over 60% of the bin of an average café or restaurant, with paper and cardboard occupying another 18%². That means about 80% of the bin contents could be recycled or recovered instead of going to landfill.

Seventy-five per cent of cafés, restaurants and accommodation businesses agree that reducing waste and increasing recycling is part of being a sustainable and ethical business³.

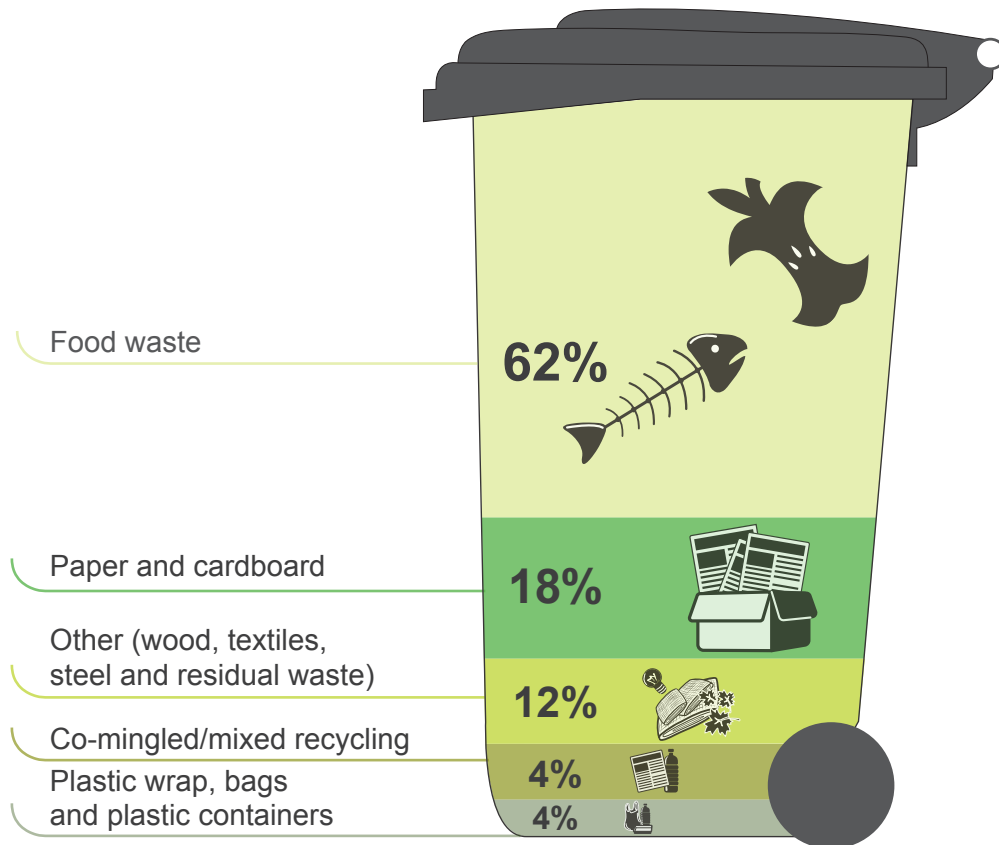
Fifty-three per cent of businesses agree that efficient waste and recycling gives them a competitive edge³.



Quick fact

Each year a typical café or restaurant generates up to 17.5m³ of waste per employee, or 1.7m³ of waste for every 1m² of floor space².

Contents of a typical waste bin in a café or restaurant



Typical waste profile of a cafe or restaurant (% weight of waste generated)²



Want to save on waste?

Join 20,000 businesses already recycling more with the EPA's Bin Trim Program. Get free advice and support to waste less and recycle more. Get up to \$50,000 back on recycling equipment. [Find a Bin Trim assessor online.](#)



What you can do

Avoid – how can you do it?

- Declutter and organise your storage spaces. Label and date food as it comes in.
- Avoid overloading the fridge or freezer to ensure food stays fresh.
- Use airtight containers or vacuum packing to keep prepared food fresh for longer.
- Check your stock regularly and purchase only what you need.
- Buy local and seasonal products – they are fresher and cheaper.
- Order smaller quantities of fresh produce more frequently to save on storage space and minimise spoilage.
- Order meat and fish cut to specifications to reduce preparation time and minimise food waste.
- Request less packaging on goods.
- Move to paperless electronic ordering systems.
- Explore ways of using the same ingredients for different dishes.
- Employ 'nose to tail' cooking methods for meats, fruits, vegetables and herbs to avoid wastage.
- Be creative by using leftover ingredients and offcuts in 'daily specials' and other menu items.
- Offer portion size options, so customers leave less on their plates and have space for dessert.
- Offer garnishes and side orders by request.
- Offer customers take away containers for their leftovers.
- [Love Food Hate Waste](#) has easy-to-follow advice on how to reduce your business food waste.

Reduce – how can you improve on it?

- If you are licensed, buy spirits in large bottles that can be used with a dispensing system.
- Rotate stock – first-in first-out.
- Check the temperatures and seals on fridges and freezers regularly to keep food fresher for longer. Maintain correct temperatures: fridge 3–4°C and freezer less than minus 18°C.
- Consult the Environmental Health Officer at your local council or the [NSW Food Authority](#) for advice on food storage techniques and how to avoid spoilage and maintain food-safe conditions.

Reuse – how can you use it again?

- Ask suppliers to deliver stock in reusable crates that can be returned to your suppliers.
- Buy post-mix drinks in reusable containers such as kegs and plastic drums.
- Use refillable sugar and condiment dispensers, and reusable cutlery, tableware and food storage containers.

Donate – how can someone else benefit from it?

- If you have surplus, edible food you can [donate](#) it to a food distribution charity. These charities will collect the food from your business and distribute it to those in need.



Coffs Harbour restaurant reduces waste by 130,000 kg

Hello Sawtell managed to reduce its waste to landfill by over 130,000 kg per year through the EPA's [Bin Trim](#) Program. The restaurant worked with Handybin Waste Services Coffs Harbour to improve the separation of food waste and educate staff on the materials to place in each recycling bin. The restaurant now has six (120-litre) food organics recycling bins collected three times a week for reprocessing. An additional 11,000 kg of paper towels are also recycled. [Join Bin Trim now.](#)



Recycle – how can you do more?

- Ask your waste/recycling service provider to show you how to recycle more. Many have services to educate your staff, and can help with signage to support your recycling program.
- If you are a tenant in a shopping complex, ask the centre management to set up a recycling service.
- Consider sharing recycling bins and equipment with neighbouring businesses.
- Use compost bins or large in-vessel composters to process food organics on site. This reduces the volume of waste and also creates a useful soil enhancer (compost).
- Organise for separated food waste to be collected by a commercial contractor for transport to a processing facility.
- Recycle more packaging materials like cardboard and plastic wrap.
- Make sure staff, contractors and cleaners follow your recycling program and that they put materials in the correct bins.
- Install clear [recycling signs](#) in the bin room, staff areas, stock rooms, and in the kitchen.
- Keep bins and bin rooms clean and uncluttered.

You are responsible for making sure that your waste is transported to a facility that is lawfully able to accept that type of waste. Make sure that you understand your [responsibilities under the law](#).

What else can you do?

- Conduct a [food waste review](#) to find out where food is being wasted.
- Gain a commitment from management, or the owner, to waste less and recycle more.
- Appoint a staff champion to drive your waste reduction and recycling program.
- Include your recycling program in your staff induction program.
- Regularly [check](#) the amount and type of waste that goes into your waste and recycling bins.
- Put together a [plan](#) to improve your waste and recycling.
- Reward staff for reducing waste, recycling more and using the correct bins.

How can you get more information?

Contact the EPA Business Recycling Unit, Waste and Resource Recovery. Phone: 131 555 | Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

References

¹ EPA 2015, *Disposal-based Audit Commercial and Industrial Waste Stream in the Regulated Areas of New South Wales – Main Report*, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Sydney (www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/warrlocal/150209-disposal-audit.pdf).

² EPA (unpub.), 'Final Report and Attachments: Industry Specific Data Analysis of Bin Trim Round 1, 2016', Environment Protection Authority, Sydney.

³ EPA 2016, *Social Research on Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) Waste and Recycling: Summary Benchmark Study*, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Sydney (www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/waste/small-medium-business-recycling-research-160139.pdf)

Photos

page 1: Greg Carroll, NSW EPA

page 2: Coffs Coast Waste Services, Hello Sawtell, Derek Paulsen

page 3: Coffs Coast Waste Services, Hello Sawtell, Derek Paulsen

page 4: Ethnic Communities Council of NSW Jin Wei Gu, Yuling Du



25,000 litres of food saved from landfill

Jinweigu Food is a small shop in Campsie that is now diverting 25,000 litres of food waste from landfill per year as a result of a free EPA [Bin Trim assessment](#). The Mandarin speaking Bin Trim assessor found that 53% of the waste in the bin was food, and helped the business organise a food waste collection. [Join Bin Trim now](#).



Find a recycler

Visit BusinessRecycling.com.au or phone the Business Recycling Hotline on 1300 763 768 to find a recycling service to suit your business. Use the Planet Ark resource on [choosing the right recycler](#).

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