

Food Waste Audit Guide

The first step in reducing food waste is understanding how much food waste you are currently producing, where it is occurring and the key contributors to this waste. This will enable you to make data informed decisions about where best to focus your food waste reduction efforts. It will also provide you with baseline data for you to track progress against. The most common way to gather this information is by completing a food waste audit

Food waste audits can be conducted in several ways. The most basic is a manual audit, using buckets and scales available onsite, manually weighing and recording food waste quantities. If you have more resources available, Method Insight bins and scales provide real-time data on a digital platform. Contact Method Recycling to learn more <https://methodrecycling.com/nz/contact>.

Food waste in the catering sector typically occurs as:

- Spoilage: food that is no longer safe to consume
- Preparation waste: Food waste generated in the process of preparation, includes inedible items such as eggshells, and bones
- Service waste: Surplus/excess food from the tray line or Bain-marie that has been cooked but not served
- Plate waste: Food that has been plated but not eaten

You will need to decide which sources of food waste you will measure. We recommend measuring each source of food waste separately to give you a clear picture of how much food waste is coming from each source. This will better enable you to target food waste reduction efforts to where it will have the most impact.

You will also need to decide how long you will measure your food waste for. Common approaches include measuring for 3 non-consecutive days over the span of a week including one weekend, or to measure for 7 days in a row. Given the variation in food waste levels from day to day, capturing food waste levels over a longer period enables a more accurate snapshot of food waste levels.

How to conduct a manual food waste audit.

- 1) Clearly label three separate bins for the collection of food waste from spoilage, preparation waste, tray line or bain-marie waste, and plate waste.
- 2) Determine which days you will measure your food waste and communicate this clearly with staff ahead of the audit.
- 3) Assign a staff member to be responsible for the audit. Make sure that staff don't make any changes to what is normally thrown out. Ensure that all staff involved in the meal service are aware of the food waste audit and what they need to do.

- 4) Weigh each bin at the end of each meal service and record how many residents you have catered for. This will enable you to calculate the amount of food waste per resident. Ensure the scales have been zeroed to exclude the weight of the collection bin.
- 5) Note down the three main contributors to the waste bin at each meal service.
- 6) Record the results for each bin over a minimum of three days out of a week, ideally for at least two weekday and 1 weekend. Choose the days that work best for your team.
- 7) Use the results of the initial audit to help inform where to target any food waste interventions.
- 8) As you make changes to your organisation to help reduce food waste, re-audit using the same process. Standardising the food waste audit process will help show the impact of the changes made. Regular audits can help inform progress and motivate staff to maintain momentum.

What goes into each bin?

Preparation Waste	
<p>Includes: All food waste generated in the production of food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edible and inedible e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vegetable peelings, bread ends ○ Bones, eggshells, and rinds • Any waste associated with the preparation of texture modified and pureed meals • Any spoilage 	<p>Excludes: Any preparation waste generated from food for sale in a cafe.</p> <p>Any preparation associated with drinks including smoothies, thickened beverages and juice</p>
Service Waste	
<p>Includes: All food prepared but not plated, including texture modified and pureed meals</p>	<p>Excludes: Leftover food you would usually repurpose within your kitchen. Use this as you normally would.</p>
Plate Waste	
<p>Includes: All food items which have been plated but not eaten. This includes items that you might consider a liquid such as: soup, ice cream, puddings</p>	<p>Excludes: Any non-food items e.g. napkins, cutlery, medication packets etc. Any beverage waste e.g. tea, coffee, juice, smoothies, thickened beverages, tea bags, coffee grounds etc.</p>

Food waste collection template:

Day: _____ Date: _____

Meal service	Waste type	Total food waste (kg)	Key food waste items.
Breakfast	Spoilage and preparation waste		
	Service waste		
	Plate waste		
Lunch	Spoilage and preparation waste		
	Service waste		
	Plate waste		
Dinner	Spoilage and preparation waste		
	Service waste		
	Plate waste		