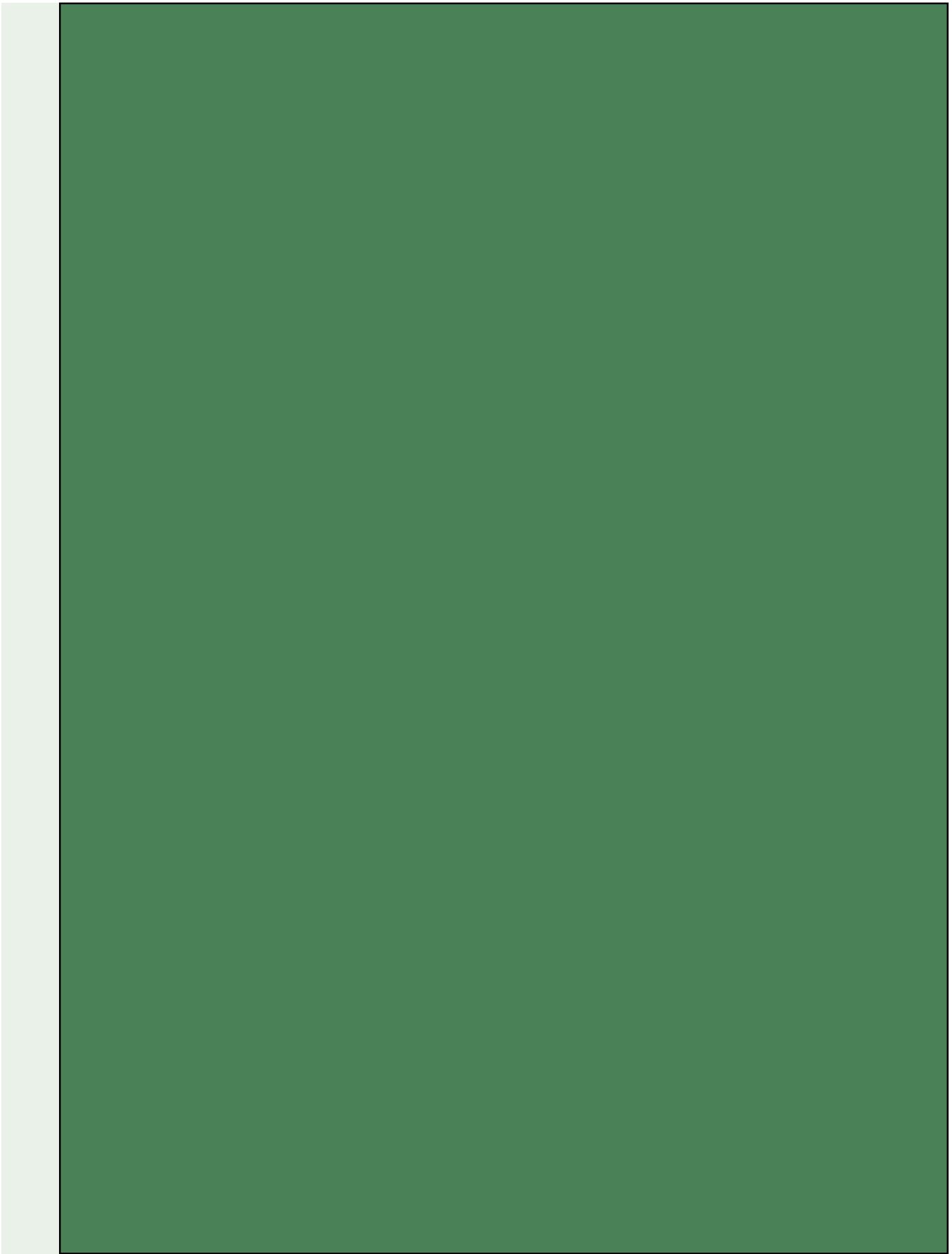


**RECIPES TO**  
**Prevent**  
**WASTE**  
**IN THE**  
**Restaurant**



**“Paying attention to simple little things that most neglect makes a few rich.”**

**Henry Ford**

**Introduction** In the restaurant and food service industry, small daily savings often make the difference between long-term profit and loss. Owners and managers in this industry are continually looking for new and better ways to meet customer’s demands while cutting costs

and minimizing overhead expenses. Assessing and monitoring the little details of your business, such as the types and amount of garbage thrown away each day, can eventually lead to significant savings.

The King County Solid Waste Division, with the cooperation of the Restaurant Association of the State of Washington, has compiled this guide to assist restaurateurs in the fine-tuning their operations to eliminate waste and save money. It addresses a full range of activities and specific steps that restaurant owners and managers can initiate in the areas of purchasing, handling and storing products, preparing food, and serving customers.

Ideas are presented for each section of a restaurant, including the kitchen, service areas, and bars. The tips in each section range from the least time-consuming and

least expensive to others that may take a bit more effort to incorporate into your establishment. However, you will be surprised at how easily the process will become part of your daily routine.

Employees are the key to the success of your program. Laminated waste-reduction tip sheets for posting are available to guide your employees step-by-step toward reducing waste. Representatives of your local solid waste division can also help you initiate your program. Please see the resource list on the back cover.

Once your waste management program is in place, reward

yourself and your employees. Restaurants in King County can become a “Business in the Green” through the Green Works Program. Sponsored by the King County Solid Waste Division. Green Works publicizes businesses that recycle 40 percent of their waste, have three waste-prevention strategies in place, and use three products made from recycled materials.

It is often the small steps taken on a daily basis that make a major difference in cost savings and contribute significantly to your restaurants waste prevention and reduction goals.

## Purchasing

Purchasing is the major control arm used in any successful waste-prevention program. Your purchasing decisions will directly result in waste prevention, especially in the areas of paper, janitorial and restaurant supplies, and beverage and grocery items. This section outlines several tips you may wish to add to your purchasing program.

**“We started our recycling program with the idea of saving resources and our environment, not realizing that through out efforts we would be saving 50 percent of what we previously spent dumping our garbage.”**

**Debra Hermansen, Ray’s Boathouse**

### General Ideas

- Purchase products that are packaged in ways that can reduce the amount of material being disposed.
- Work out a program with your supplier to take back the shipping boxes for reuse or recycling, or to purchase and ship in durable containers.

### Paper Supplies

- Ask for and purchase paper products made from recycle materials. Available items include toilet tissue, paper towels, napkins, placemats, bags (kraft), menus and more.
- Polystyrene foam packaging takes up more than four times the amount of storage and disposal volume of its paper equivalent. If a large part of your garbage consists of foam containers, consider switching to paper packaging to reduce the volume of garbage being generated.
- However, you may also set up a polystyrene recycling program if the volume warrants.
- Use straw-style stir sticks for bar beverages instead of the solid style. They cost less per unit and use less plastic. Additionally, use only one straw per drink.
- Serve straws from health department-approved dispensers rather than offering them prewrapped. At the same time, con-

sider purchasing straws with a smaller hole size than the ones you are currently buying.

- Use reusable coasters (or nothing at all) instead of paper napkins when serving beverages from the bar.

### Janitorial & Restaurant Supplies

- Use reusable table linen and durable dishware: many owners have discovered a significant cost saving over time.
- Use reusable ashtrays.
- Use roll-type paper towels in your restrooms and at hand sinks instead of precut towels.

- Use cloth cleaning towels rather than the paper equivalents. If this is not an option, consider using the Handi-Wipe style of disposable towels. Which ever you choose, rinse and sanitize both types of towels regularly.
  - Consider using plastic trashcan liners made of recycled HDPE instead of those made of LDPE or LLDPE. They contain less raw materials and work equally as well (or better).
- rather than the bag-in-the-box alternative. This way, the boxes don't get thrown into the garbage.
- Use multipurpose cleaners that can be used for all types of surfaces rather than cleaners that are job specific (e.g., stainless steel cleaner). Whenever possible, consider using cleaning agents that are either the least toxic or non-toxic in nature. For more information, call the local hazardous waste management program at 296-3976.
  - Use cleanable and reusable hats for kitchen employees instead of disposable paper ones.

### **Beverages**

- Serve carbonated beverages from a beverage gun or dispenser (i.e., postmix) rather than by the bottle or can. If you have to use bottles, recycle them along with wine and liquor bottles. If you can or already do use a postmix system, use reusable syrup canisters

**“We make every attempt to ensure that the ingredients we use are fresh and of the very best quality. We also are concerned with making sure products we purchase are not wastefully packaged. Unfortunately, we can't always control this. For instance, the Brie cheese we use comes in individually wrapped wooden boxes. We decided to be creative in dealing with this packaging problem. We found a local art school that was thrilled to take the boxes off our hands and use them for craft projects. We save on disposal costs, and the school saves on supply costs.”**

**Kim Thomas, Boulangerie Bakery**

## Product Handling & Storage

It is easy to overlook the ordering and storage of food and beverages, supplies and equipment when considering an effective waste prevention program. This guide will help you and your staff become more aware of how your daily decisions directly influence the amount of waste your establishment generates. This section will address such concerns as delivery inspections, inventory rotation, maintenance of storage areas, storage of perishables, and donation of unused food.

- Closely check your produce deliveries for rotten or damaged product and return any substandard product. Inspect every box prior to signing the delivery tag.
- Rotate perishable stocks at every delivery to minimize waste due to spoilage. Use the back-to-front system, where new product is placed on the back (or bottom) of the shelf, while the older product is rotated to the front (or top). Additionally, date all products on the day you receive them, so if they get mixed up you can still recognize the newer product from the old.
- Clean your cooler(s) and freezer(s) regularly to ensure that food has not fallen behind the shelving and spoiled. This should include both reach-ins and walk-ins.
- Arrange your refrigerated and dry storage areas to facilitate easy product access and rotation. This will help minimize waste due to spills, breakage, and spoilage.
- Reconstitute stalky vegetables (e.g., celery, lettuce, carrots, broccoli, etc.) that have wilted by trimming off the very bottom part of the stalks and immersing them in warm water (100 °F) for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wrap freezer products tightly and make sure they are used in a timely fashion to minimize waste due to freezer burn. Code-date all product stored in the freezer and rotate properly.
- Donate any edible unsold food products to a local food distribution center. For more information call:  
**Seattle's Table**  
(206) 545-6567  
  
**Food Lifeline / Second Harvest**  
(206) 545-6600  
  
**Northwest Harvest**  
(206) 625-0755

**“We changed all fish deliveries to plastic containers, which contain no cardboard and no plastic liners. The plastic containers are reused again and again.”**

**Jeffrey Arnot,  
Anthony's Homeport**

**“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what you want them to achieve and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”**

**General George S. Patton**

## **Food Preparation & Storage**

Controlling food costs is one of the most important keys to any successful restaurant operation. A review of how perishables are handled in your establishment will often lead to several adjustments that your staff can make that will result not only in cost savings, but also in less spoilage.

This section includes analysis of inventory levels, storage options, and prepping systems, as well as production and reuse options.

- Adjust inventory levels on perishables to minimize waste due to spoilage or dehydration. If you are constantly throwing out coded dairy products or dried-up lettuce, it might be because you're stocking too much inventory and/or it's not being rotated properly. Check your usage levels to see if you need to adjust either the quantity or frequency of your orders.
- Develop and use hourly or daily production charts to minimize over-prepping and unnecessary waste.
- Whenever possible, prepare foods to order to minimize waste due to over-preparation.
- Store and/or handle unwrapped paper supplies (e.g., drink cups, napkins or bags) so as to prevent the products from inadvertently falling on the floor.
- Store raw vegetables (in addition to other perishables) in reusable airtight containers to prevent unnecessary dehydration and spoilage. Also, store produce (especially leafy vegetables) as far away from the condenser unit as possible to prevent freezing. Never store tomatoes and lettuce in the same container or close to each other. Tomatoes emit a gas that will turn lettuce brown.
- When prepping food, only trim off what is not needed. Over-trimming typically occurs in the preparation of bulk meats and whole vegetables.
- Check the garbage can for telltale signs or ask that all trimmings be put into a hold container (for review) prior to disposal. If too much trimming is observed or required, retrain your prep staff, change the product's specification or size to minimize unnecessary waste, or buy it already pre-portioned.
- Use vegetable and meat trimmings for soup stock.
- Evaluate and adjust the size of your meal portions if you find they are consistently being returned unfinished.
- Buy shelf-stable food supplies in bulk whenever sales volume and storage space justifies. This minimizes unnecessary packaging and can cost less on a per-unit basis, too.

- Use health department-approval, refillable condiment dispensers (e.g., cream for coffee, ketchup, etc.) instead of portion-controlled packets when ever possible.
- Consider buying pickles, mayonnaise, salad dressings, and the like in containers other than the hard plastic pails or buckets. Almost all are available packaged in other containers, including plastic-lined cardboard, Cry-o-Vac or foil pouches. If you purchase product in plastic pails or buckets, consider reuse and/or recycling.
- Consider buying your lettuce pre-cut during those times of year when the pre-cut cost is equal to (or less than) the true cost of the bulk product. To determine this, add the net unit cost of the bulk lettuce (i.e., cost per pound after prep) to the total labor cost (time spent doing the prep and cleanup, plus time lost not doing other work) and compare it to the cost per pound of the pre-cut product.
- Buy meats in the bulk or uncut form and cut to size whenever the yield is equal to or greater than that of pre-portioned meats. Check to be sure your net cost is less.
- Consider buying eggs shelled in bulk if your egg use for general cooking or baking in three or more cases per week. Not only will this increase your yield (up to 30 percent of the egg white stays with the shell when raw eggs are shelled), but it will eliminate broken eggs in the cooler and having to dispose of the shells and boxes.
- Pre-cool steam-table hot foods (in an ice bath) before placing them into the cooler. Similarly, always place hot foods into clean, shallow containers be-

**“We reuse almost all of our plastic containers for storage. We reuse one-gallon jugs from salad dressings to store other things such as chopped veggies. They are perfect!”**

**Sunny Martineau, Shakey’s Pizza**

**“There is nothing that can replace the special intelligence that a worker has about a workplace. No matter how smart a boss is or how great a leader, he/she will fail miserably in tapping the potential of employees by working against employees instead of with them.”**

**Ronald Cantino, former deputy commissioner, New York**

fore storing in the cooler. This helps prevent premature spoilage and keeps your cooler from working overtime to keep things properly refrigerated.

- Reuse leftover cream-based sauces and soups (that have been held and stored at proper temperature) within two days of when they were originally prepared to prevent waste due to spoilage. This also applies to leftover poultry-and fish-based menu items.
- To minimize the chance of spoilage, store leftover hot foods from different stations in separate containers rather than consolidating them.



**Standard Services** Organization and several simple common-sense procedures restaurants and bar owners from costly equipment down time and significantly reduce waste initiating equipment maintenance schedules and standard operating procedures for both the front and the back of the house will result in savings and allow your employees an opportunity to participate fully in your establishments environmental commitments. This section addresses those activities/procedures that your staff can easily incorporate into daily routines.

### **Back of the House**

- Develop and implement a weekly cleaning and maintenance program for all your equipment.
- Check the syrup-to-water (brix) calibration on your beverage dispenser(s) at least twice a week. Adjust as necessary. Similarly, clean the heads and dispenser tips on your beverage machines daily. This helps ensure consistent beverage production quality and quantity.
- Keep oven equipment (especially for baking) calibrated to prevent over-baked products.
- Clean your fryers and filter the oil daily. This extends the life of both the fryer and the oil. Built-up carbon deposits on the bottom of the fryer act as an insulator that forces the fryer to heat longer, thus causing the oil to break down sooner. Use a test kit supplied by your grocery distributor (rather than eyeballing it) to determine when to change your fryer oil.
- Develop a rotation system if multiple fryers are in use. Designate a single fryer for product that is particularly high in deposits, and change more often.
- Create incentives for staff to reduce the breakage or loss of your restaurant china, glass, and silver supplies. Place rubber mats around bus and dish-washing stations to further reduce china and glass breakage. This also minimizes injury resulting from slippage.
- Have employees use permanent-ware mugs or cups for drinks.
- Minimize excess use of trash bag liners by manually compacting the trash in your garbage cans as completely as possible and emptying the cans only when they are full. Additionally, consider purchasing a garbage compactor for your restaurant to reduce the volume of material ultimately placed in the disposal container.
- Check for discarded

permanent-ware (e.g., serving trays, silverware, etc.) before throwing out dining room trash.

### **Front of the House**

- Distribute condiments, cutlery and accessories from behind the counter instead of offering them self-serve. Train your counter staff to dispense a predetermined quantity of these products for any meal or when requested by guests.
- Minimize the use of unnecessary extra packaging (e.g., double wrapping, double bagging, etc) of take-out foods. Establish packaging standards for every menu items (and combination of items), and let your staff know it's important to follow them. Remember, every bag or piece of wrap they use is money out of your pocket and more garbage in the Dumpster.
- Use less packaging for eat-in foods than for food being taken out, or use none at all.

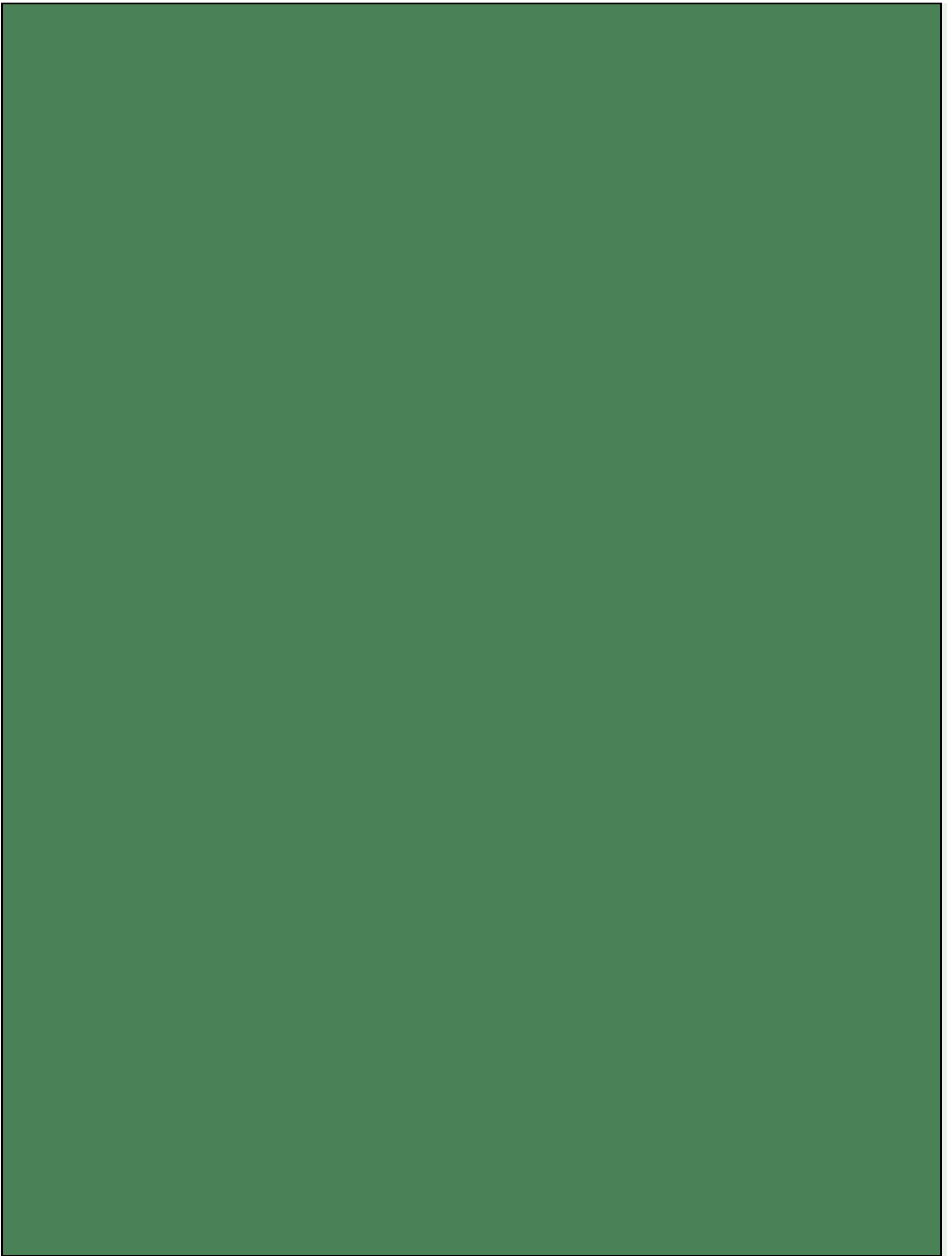
## Recycling Activities

The restaurant industry was one of the first businesses to embrace aluminum and glass recycling practices. Currently the industry is assisting its membership in their efforts to expand their recycling programs to include plastics, cardboard, food wastes, and other products. In addition to recycling activities, restaurant and bar management representatives are seeking ways to support local food banks and charities with donations of surplus product, used uniforms, equipment and other items no longer in use. The recycling considerations covered in this section include preparation of and options for recycling.

- Explore options with your organic produce supplier, local hauler, or solid waste division representative in regard to the availability of composting pre-consumer vegetative food waste. Food Lifeline, a distribution center for most of the food banks and meal programs in King County, diverts spoiled produce through vermicomposting. Some restaurants have a reciprocal system set up with their produce supplier to return pre-consumer vegetative waste for composting on the suppliers' farms. Others work with their garbage or recycling hauler for pickup of pre-consumer vegetative waste and waxed corrugated containers (WCC) for composting at a local compost facility.
- Set up a rendering service for your waste grease, fat, or used cooking oil.
- Set up a tin, aluminum, cardboard, plastic and glass recycling program with one of the local collectors or others that you may know.
- Place a recycling bin in the quick-service dining area for your customers' empty beverage containers if you have to serve beverages in cans and bottles.
- Donate empty plastic pails or buckets to schools, nurseries, and churches, or list them in the Industrial Materials Exchange catalog (IMEX, 296-4899); give them away or sell them to your customers.
- Donate old uniforms to Goodwill, Salvation Army, or other thrift shops.

**“If restaurants aren’t recycling, they’re crazy. We cut the volume of our waste in half when we started to recycle glass and cardboard.”**

**Mark Luce, Beeliner Diner**



## Waste Reduction & Recycling Resources

King County's Business Recycling Program: phone 296-4356, fax 296-0197.

King County's Green Works Program: phone 296-8800.

If a business is located in any of the following areas, information on waste reduction and recycling services and programs is available through the respective City Recycling Coordinators. Please refer business inquiries to them directly.

City	Contact	Telephone	Fax
Auburn	John Giordenengo	(206) 931-3047	931-3053
Bellevue	JoAn Johnson	(206) 637-7103	637-5214
Federal Way	Rob Van Orsow	(206) 661-4141	661-4129
Redmond	Karen Chuse	(206) 556-2832	556-2700
Renton	Linda Knight	(206) 277-6197	277-4428
SeaTac	Heidi Gallup	(206) 241-9100	241-3339
Seattle (BIRV) Business & Industry Recycling Venture	Matt Fikejs	(206) 389-7304	389-7288
Tukwila	Rebecca Fox	(206) 431-3670	431-3665
Woodinville	Cathy Harmon	(206) 489-2700	489-2705

### King County Executive

Gary Locke

### Metropolitan King County Council

Maggi Fimia	Cynthia Sullivan	Louise Miller
Larry Phillips	Ron Sims	Bruce Laing
Pete von Reichbauer	Greg Nickels	Kent Pullen
Larry Gossett	Jane Hague	Brian Derdowski
	Christopher Vance	

### King County Department of Public Works

Paul Tanaka, Director

### Solid Waste Division

Rodney G. Hansen, Manager

In cooperation with the  
Restaurant Association  
of the State of Washington

This guide benefited from information from *Food for Thought*, San Francisco Restaurants' Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling, City and County of San Francisco.