

# Study identifies ways consumers and businesses can handle food waste in food service-businesses

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A team of Monash Business School researchers have identified key ways consumers and business representatives can help limit food waste in food

service-businesses (FSBs), in an effort to reduce wastage in the hospitality industry.

Massive volumes of [food waste](#) can be detrimental for the economy, for example cost of the food purchased but not consumed, and for society, as food waste contributes to food insecurity, with around 3.7 million Australians facing [food insecurity](#) in the last 12 months, according to the CSIRO. Food waste can also be detrimental to the environment, in regards to [climate change](#) and biodiversity loss.

After collecting data through semi-structured interviews from restaurant owners, chefs, kitchen managers and customer facing representatives, from 20 Melbourne FSBs ranging from [fast-food](#) to mid-range and high-end, they found businesses consider food waste is unavoidable without acknowledging the hidden multiple social practices that contribute to such waste.

Led by Dr. Ananya Bhattacharya, Dr. Alka Nand, Professor Amrik Sohal and Professor Daniel Prajogo, the study found that food waste 'hotspots' vary depending on different FSB domains.

"In the case of fast-food FSBs, food waste hotspots are associated with consumption practices; however, mid-and high-range FSBs generate waste during the preparation and cooking practices (mostly kitchen and chef-related)," said Dr. Bhattacharya.

"Consumers in the fast-food restaurants mostly do not feel connected to the food due to the nature of the pre-cooked/assembled 'fast-foods' which leads to consumer-induced food waste. On the other hand, chefs' attitudes towards perfection of food appearance and taste in mid to high-end restaurants leads to food waste.

"FSB managers can focus on the hotspots where food waste is generated

and develop suitable mitigation strategies. It's important for the manager to invest in employee training and consumer awareness to shape the deep-rooted social beliefs about food waste. Since consumers are reluctant to consider the impact of their behavior during eating out, managers need to consider innovative strategies to involve consumers without affecting their experience."

The following strategies can be implemented at a business level to reduce food waste:

- Change the perception that food waste is unavoidable in the hospitality industry. It can be reduced through collaboration with customers without sacrificing the profit-motive.
- Ordering more from raw material suppliers than needed to benefit from volume discounts can create raw material waste. Though bulk ordering is a standard industry practice, technology-based forecasting and inventory management solutions can help solve the problem.
- Use the off cuts during preparation or the untouched prepared food at the end of the day to make other food items (sauce/soup/juice).
- Make the sides (vegetables, potatoes/chips) optional.
- Provide training to staff on how to prepare/cook without wasting food, even if staff turnover is high in the hospitality industry.
- Invest in proper storage infrastructure to keep extra items fresh longer.

The following strategies can be implemented at a consumer level to reduce food waste:

- Know about the ingredients in your dish before ordering or trying any new food to avoid throwing it away because the delivered food is not what you expected.

- If you are hosting guests, shift your focus to 'quality' of food, not 'quantity.'
- If you are eating out, there is no shame in taking the leftovers home and eating them.
- Switch from a large to medium size portion and see if the medium portion can satisfy your appetite, if not you can order more anytime.
- If you do not like the sides, request them not to be served. Sides could be cheaper than the main food but wasting them can be as bad as wasting the main food.
- If your restaurant suggests ways to reduce food waste, follow their advice. By reducing food waste, restaurants can help you save money, support society through food banks and protect the environment too.

Provided by Monash University

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