



# Waste Management

Green Seal™ Guide for  
Restaurants and Food Services

Based on GS-46, Green Seal's Standard for Restaurants and Foodservice Operations

**The situation:** Nearly 100% of waste at a food service operation can be diverted from the landfill.

**The Change Maker:** An environmentally responsible food service operation knows what its waste is, takes measures every day to reduce it and finds the best use of what's left.

- **Reduce waste, especially food waste:** Purchased food is the largest source of environmental impact from a food service operation (for more information see the Green Seal Guide for Restaurants and Food Services: Responsible Food Purchasing). Between four and ten percent of food purchased by an operation is wasted in the kitchen, and that number is doubled when looking throughout the entire operation.<sup>1 2</sup> Reducing food waste and other sources of waste significantly reduces your environmental impact and saves you money.
- **Reuse/Recycle:** The decomposition of food and other waste in landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas (GHG) 21 times stronger than carbon dioxide. Landfills are one of the largest human-related source of methane in the US, accounting for 34% of all methane emissions.<sup>3</sup> Reuse (i.e. food donations) and recycling (i.e. composting) diverts organic materials from landfills and incinerators, thereby reducing GHG emissions from landfills and waste combustion.
- **Environmentally Preferable Options:** Disposable products are used widely in the food service industry for napkins and other paper products, plastic trash liners, and fossil-fuel based plastic packaging, among other items. Disposable products provide benefits to the operation from sanitation, minimal maintenance, and reduced dishwashing needs. Yet, due to the large quantities used in food service operations, their impact on the environment can be greater than the impact from the energy used by that operation. So, when disposable options are used, they should be those with the least environmental impact.

**How to make a real difference:** According to the Green Seal Environmental Standard for Restaurants and Food Services, GS-46:

1. **Track waste and aim to reduce it over time.**
  - Separate the waste. Use separate bins for different waste types to identify sources of waste: food, recyclable, and solid waste. If possible, separate sources from back-of-house and front-of-house.
  - Record the weight of the separated waste. If you don't have scales readily accessible then note the volume of each type of waste. Check Green Seal's website for tools to help track the type and amount of waste.
  - Compare current and previous performance – normalized for your sales (divide by sales volume).

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ENVIRONMENTAL  
LEADERSHIP STANDARDS



CERTIFICATION FOR  
PRODUCTS, SERVICES,  
PROPERTIES & COMPANIES



PARTNERSHIPS IN  
GREEN PURCHASING &  
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT



SUSTAINABILITY  
RESEARCH & LIFE CYCLE  
ANALYSIS

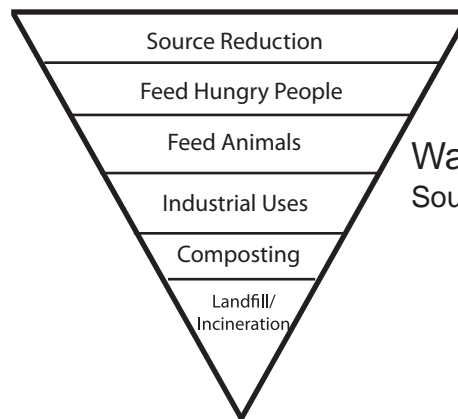


## 2. Reduce waste every day.

- Plan – Detailed forecasting can reduce over-production and quantity of expired items. Buy products that require less packaging, buy in bulk or buy products with reusable packaging.
- Monitor – Trim waste, preparation mistakes, and plate waste should be regularly evaluated with practices adjusted accordingly.
- Control – Use reusable products wherever possible. When using disposable products like straws or napkins, use portion controlling options.

## 3. Reuse and recycle waste to minimize what goes to the landfill. Follow the Waste Hierarchy Chart (below) to ensure the most efficient use of the resources.

- Donate all acceptable food for human consumption; check local donation options. Then donate food for animal feed; check with local farms and zoos.
- Recycle fats, oils, and grease (FOG). There are many options available to convert FOG to biodiesel, replacing fossil fuel use.
- Composting remaining food waste. Composting can happen in many forms including on-site, commercial, municipal (from food or through drainage disposals), and farms.
- Recycle all commonly accepted items such as paper, aluminum, plastic, steel, glass, and cardboard. Look for ways to recycle paint and ink/toner cartridges and universal hazardous waste like CFLs and batteries.



Waste Hierarchy Chart  
Source EPA<sup>4</sup>

## 4. Buy environmentally preferable disposable options. If disposable items need to be purchased, then they should have the least environmental impact.

- Paper products should be Green Seal or EcoLogo certified or contain the EPA recommended amount of recovered content:  
[www.epa.gov/waste/consERVE/tools/cpg/pdf/paper.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/waste/consERVE/tools/cpg/pdf/paper.pdf)
- Plastic products should be Green Seal or EcoLogo certified or made of certified compostable material or recycled content, and composted or recycled
- Use alternatives to distributed bottled water, such as tap water.
- Avoid polystyrene products.

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### Read the full GS-46 standard at:

[http://greenseal.org/certification/standards/gs46\\_restaurantfoodsvcs.cfm](http://greenseal.org/certification/standards/gs46_restaurantfoodsvcs.cfm)

<sup>1</sup> LeanPath. 2008. A Short Guide to Food Waste Management Best Practices.

Last accessed 5-4-09. [http://leanpath.com/lpweb/Docs/Waste\\_Guide\\_o.pdf](http://leanpath.com/lpweb/Docs/Waste_Guide_o.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. 1999. Fact Sheet for Restaurant Waste Reduction. Last accessed 4-28-09 <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/03/02790.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> EPA 2008. Basic Information about Food Scraps. Last accessed 4-28-09  
<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/organics/food/fd-basic.htm>

<sup>4</sup> EPA 2008. Basic Information about Food Scraps. Last accessed 4-28-09  
<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/organics/food/fd-basic.htm>