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Restaurants

Food waste in the foodservice industry is one of the most recognizable areas of food waste in America.

According to a 2005 study at the University of Arizona, food waste as a percentage of the total food used is 9.55% in fast food establishments and 3.11% in full service restaurants in the United States. That may not seem concerning, but, to put the statistics in perspective, the same study estimated that the total food loss per day amounted to 49,296,540 lbs in all full service restaurants and 85,063,390 lbs in all fast food restaurants. While this is a projected value based on collected data, it gives an idea of the sheer amount of food that is wasted on a daily basis in foodservice.

Restaurants

The sources of food waste in restaurants vary greatly, but, on average, a restaurant can produce 150,000 lbs of garbage per year.

Pre-Consumer Waste

There is more to restaurant food waste than merely what the customers choose not to eat—a fact that tends to be ignored outside the restaurant business. The pre-consumer kitchen waste, which could be incorrectly prepared food, spoiled food, trim waste, or simply overproduction, constitutes an estimated 4-10% of purchased food, becoming waste before it ever reaches the table.

Fast Food

Food waste at fast food restaurants usually varies depending on the type and size of the chain. Larger chains tend to have lower food waste rates ranging from 5%-7%, while smaller, local chains can have loss rates as high as 50%. Although these losses are very different, even the lowest percentages still reflect the high amounts of food wasted in fast food chains.