



HOW TO MANAGE AND REDUCE  
**RESTAURANT  
FOOD WASTE**  
— **IN NYC** —



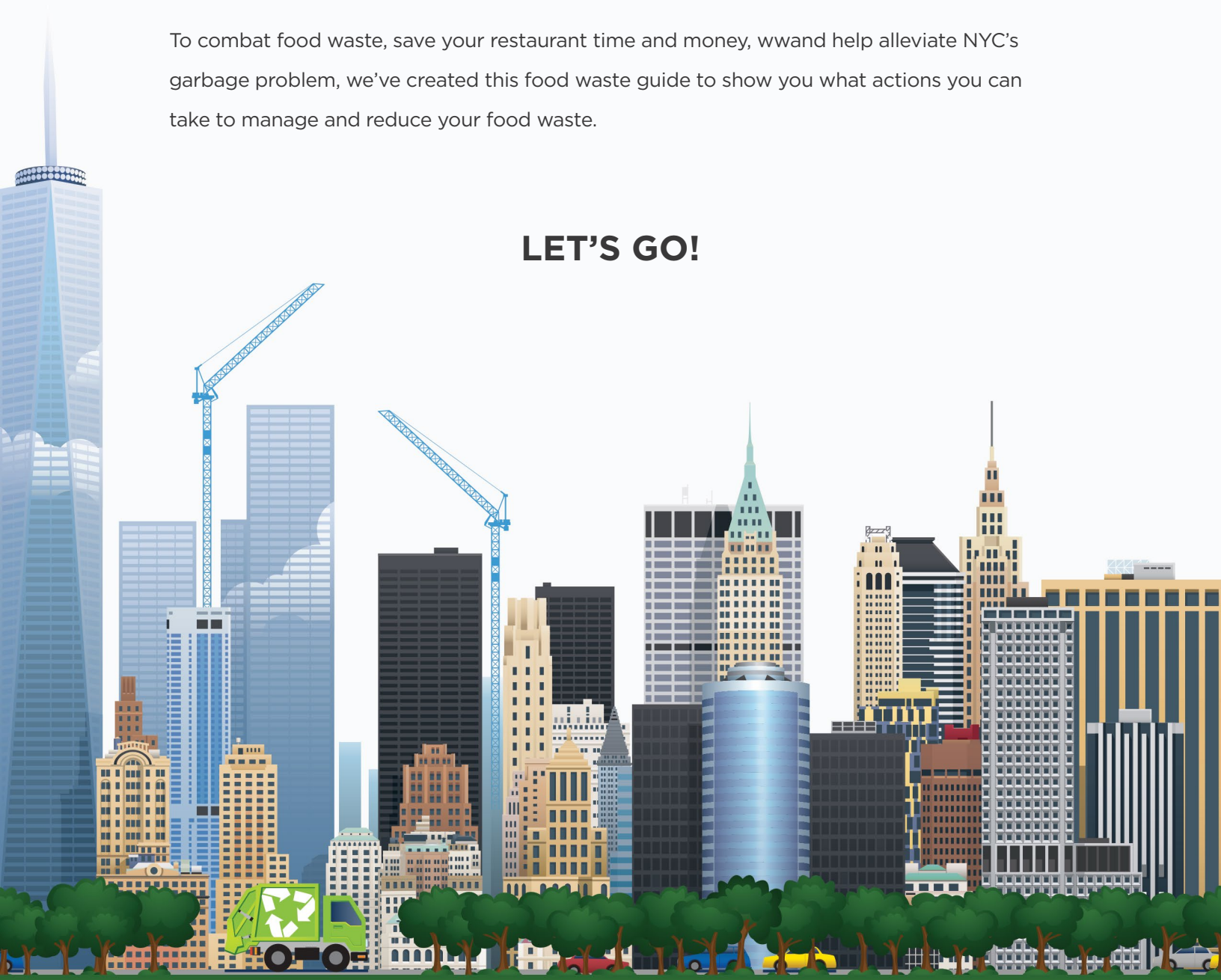
# NEW YORK, THE CITY OF WASTE

New York City is famous for its food scene – there are more than 24,000 restaurants and every imaginable cuisine to enjoy. However, there is a price attached to this variety and it's not listed on the menu.

Each day more than 9,000 tons of waste are discarded by New York City's businesses. 35% of this waste is food. Overall, 70% of commercial food waste comes from our restaurants.

To combat food waste, save your restaurant time and money, and help alleviate NYC's garbage problem, we've created this food waste guide to show you what actions you can take to manage and reduce your food waste.

**LET'S GO!**



# WHAT NYC IS DOING ABOUT ITS GARBAGE PROBLEM

NYC is committed to waste reduction and taking serious steps to reduce garbage.

As of July 19th 2016, NYC enacted a composting mandate requiring restaurants operating within large scale hotels with more than 150 rooms, stadiums (such as Yankee Stadium) and food service establishments with more than 25,000 square feet to separate their organic waste from their landfill waste. Venues who do not follow the composting mandate are fined \$250 to \$1000 per offense.

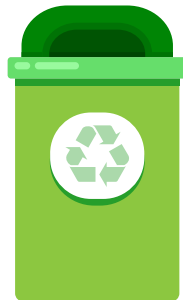
Dozens of NYC based venues and wholesalers such as Hilton Garden Inn, Whole Foods, Citi Field, and Le Pain Quotidien have already begun their waste reduction initiatives thanks to mayor Bill De Blasio's [Zero Waste Challenge](#). The end goal of this challenge was to test how the city can achieve zero waste by 2030, and the results have been promising. As of June 2016, all participating venues have managed to reduce their waste by a whopping 50%!

## NYC Zero Waste Initiative

- Expand the New York City organics program to serve all New Yorkers by the end of 2018.
- Enhance the City's curbside recycling program by offering single-stream recycling by 2020.
- Reduce the use of plastic bags and other non-compostable waste.
- Make all schools Zero Waste Schools.
- Give every New Yorker the opportunity to recycle and reduce waste, including at NYCHA housing.
- Expand opportunities to reuse and recycle textiles and electronic waste.
- Develop an equitable blueprint for a Save-As-You-Throw program to reduce waste.
- Reduce commercial waste disposal by 90 percent by 2030.

# HOW TO SORT YOUR GARBAGE IN NYC

## WHAT GOES WHERE?



### **Things that need to be separated as organic waste for composting are:**

Fruit and vegetable scraps and cores, fruit and vegetable peels, egg shells, coffee grinds, tea bags, old bread, grains, corn husks, old boxed food and anything made from flour such as pizza, muffins, pastries, etc.



### **Things that cannot be composted include:**

Plastic, metal, and glass. Remove spoiled food and leftovers from its packaging before tossing them into your composting bin so the organic waste can breakdown properly.



### Things that must be recycled include:

**Paper products:** Newspapers, magazines, computer paper, paper bags, soft-cover books, cardboard egg cartons and trays, cardboard boxes, pizza boxes, cartons, paper cups.

**Metal items:** Metal cans, aluminum foil wrap and trays, metal caps and lids, bulk metal (like large appliances and furniture).

**Glass:** Glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles, jugs and jars.

**Plastic:** Plastic food containers, plastic such as crates, buckets, furniture, appliances, plastic bottles, jugs, jars and single service food items such as plastic cutlery and rigid plastics.



### Things that cannot be recycled include:

**Paper products:** Hardcover books, napkins, paper towels, soiled paper, plastic or wax coated paper, paper with a lot of glue or tape on it, photographic paper.

**Metal items:** Lighters, batteries, razors.

**Glass:** Do not recycle anything other than what is listed above. Mirrors, light bulbs, dishware etc. are all not accepted.

**Plastic:** Plastic bags, lighters, plastic squeeze tubes (lotion, toothpaste etc.), single serve food and drink squeezable packages, containers with toxins or other dangerous chemicals in them.



#### Note:

These composting rules apply strictly to restaurant businesses in New York City. If you are an individual who would like to compost at home you can access separate sorting requirements [here](#).

# MANAGE YOUR WASTE

In order to cut down on your venue's food waste you have to first understand what you are throwing out. Waste is essentially separated into two main categories: non-consumed waste (this includes spoiled food, spillage and food scraps) and consumer leftovers (what the customer leaves uneaten on the plate that gets tossed in the garbage).

To begin your waste management program, start by creating five separate bins for your waste: dedicate one bin to landfill, three for recycling and a fifth for organic waste.

Educate your staff on the different types of waste and make sure they are up-to-date on your waste management initiative and know what can be composted, recycled, and what is garbage.

Once your waste bins are separated, weigh them daily for three to four weeks. Record the numbers each day, and compare them to come up with an average for each bin. This will give you a clear understanding of how much food your venue is actually wasting and from here you can strategize food waste solutions for your restaurant.

Initiating a waste management process is important as it's required by the city to recycle certain materials and to make sure that all disposed items are properly handled. It also forces you to look closely at what's going in the trash and face what that waste is costing you. Take this time to organize your food storage, reassess your inventory needs, and tighten up your purchases from your food vendors where necessary.



# FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IDEAS

Now that you understand what and how much you're wasting, it's time to begin reducing your waste and increasing your profit. Here are some suggestions:

## **Be mindful of storage conditions**

By storing produce properly you will elongate the postharvest life span. Simple things such as putting rooted vegetables in a container with water and covering them with a plastic bag will increase lifespan and save them from wilting quickly. When doing this make sure you are also following the protocols such as labeling all food items by name and date stocked as listed by the New York City Health Department. [Here](#) is a complete list of the city's requirements.

## **Use smaller plates**

Overconsumption leads to food waste, spoilage and obesity. The average consumer in America wastes one third of the food they buy, so consider introducing smaller plates to your customers. By reducing plate size and therefore portion sizes, you will be doing your restaurant, the city, and your customers a favor.

## **Reevaluate your inventory needs**

Use your POS to track what items you are selling and when they are being sold, then compare these reports to your food waste bins. For example, if you sell a lot of hearty menu items like a daily soup during the fall and winter months, but barely any in the spring and summer, consider offering those items seasonally.

## **Adjust your menu**

Once you know what you're throwing away you can adjust your menu by eliminating any items that are underperforming and therefore leading to food waste. Also note what menu items come back to the kitchen with the most leftovers and adjust portions as needed. For example, if you serve a seared salmon dish over a bed of greens, but the greens are never consumed, consider dressing the dish differently. Presentation is important, so find new and creative ways to make your menu items beautiful without wasting food in the process.

## Donate excess and soon-to-be spoiled food

Did you recently host an event at your venue and have tons of unserved leftovers? Or perhaps your refrigerators are full of food on the verge of spoiling. Either way, this food can be consumed by hungry New Yorkers. City Harvest, a nonprofit dedicated to saving food and reusing it, is the world's first – and NYC's only – food rescue organization. According to its [guidelines](#), City Harvest accepts, “fresh food, refrigerated and frozen food, dried food, food in boxes, cans, and bottles. Donated food must be prepared by a regulated or licensed food business, such as a restaurant, caterer, wholesaler or bakery.” In addition to being good for the planet and NYC's hungry, all of your donations are tax deductible which is a win-win.

## Celebrate ugly food

Americans judge their food by how it looks and expect it to be beautiful and flawless. For example, a peach should look like a perfect peach. Produce often grows misshapen or “imperfect” and those fruit and vegetables don't make it out of the orchards or greenhouses. According to the National Resource Defense Council, six billion pounds of fresh produce goes unharvested each year. One reason being that imperfect fruit is deemed “too ugly” to sell even though it tastes the same and contains the same nutritional value.

By celebrating ugly food and changing the public's perceptions, a lot of food destined to rot could be saved. Reach out to your suppliers and New York state farmers and ask if they'll cut you a deal on their imperfect produce. Once chopped, misshapen vegetables don't look any different from their perfect counterparts, and bruised fruits cooked into a pie or dessert taste the same. You can also highlight ugly produce by creating a menu item that showcases the individuality of locally-grown food. For example, perhaps you offer a salad featuring interesting-looking bent radishes and knobby carrots.





## Re-imagine what you consider garbage

New York restaurateur Dan Barber who owns the upscale farm-to-table restaurant and farm Blue Hill, featured two weeks of [wastED](#) food. He worked with top chefs and used recycled food that would have otherwise been discarded to create an interesting, artistic menu. The goal here was to change the way consumers, chefs and restaurateurs think of food waste, usage and consumption. It was a success and led to a lot of consumer awareness, publicity, and fun.

While Barber's method of recycling food might not be your venue's cup of tea, you can take inspiration from his concept and apply it to what's leaving your kitchen with untapped potential. In the series Mind of a Chef, owner of NYC restaurant Prune, Gabrielle Hamilton reincarnates a stock three times: first it starts off as water to boil octopus, then it's strained and used to braise a pork roast, then strained again and used to deglaze chorizo sausage, and finally strained once more and used as a cooking liquid for periwinkles. With this attitude, think about ways that ingredients like broth, chicken feet, fish heads, and fruit and vegetable peels can be reworked or reused to add flavor, texture, or heft to an existing dish.

Implementing these waste reduction strategies will reduce your restaurant's waste, help the community, and save you time and money.

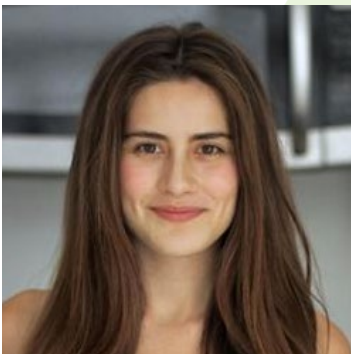


# FOOD WASTE REDUCTION LEADERS IN NYC

In addition to the changing laws and regulations being implemented in New York City, there are also individuals working tirelessly to lessen food waste and inspire positive change on New York's food system. Here are four people who are doing their part to alleviate New York City's food waste problem:



**Bill de Blasio:** Mayor Bill de Blasio is passionate feeding New Yorkers and reducing waste. That's why he implemented the Zero Waste Challenge. The goal is to have a waste free city by 2030 and position participating businesses as leaders in the sustainability and food waste reduction initiative. Thus far more than 24,000 tons of organic material have been diverted from landfills and collected by organizations such as City Harvest and Rock and Wrap it Up!



**Lauren Singer:** Lauren is a 24-year-old waste-free woman who lives in New York City and runs [Trash is for Tossers](#), a local blog about how individuals can empower themselves to also lead a zero waste life. Her actionable advice, such as how to compost anywhere and shop for food without creating waste is available via how-to vlogs and articles.



**Syd Mandelbaum:** As founder and CEO of Rock and Wrap it Up! an anti-poverty nonprofit focused on addressing poverty and hunger in America, Syd has been a food waste activist for more than two decades.

Each year, Rock and Wrap it Up! recovers unserved, unsold food from concession stands at ballparks and restaurants. It then takes the recovered food and matches it with local food agencies who can redistribute and serve it to people in need. To date, Rock and Wrap it Up! has more than 5,000 participating organizations and partners and spans across 500 cities.



**Margaret Tung:** Margaret is a food justice activist in New York City and the co-founder of PareUp, a mobile food app that connects local people with would-be discarded food.

PareUp partners with New York City based restaurants and features menu items on the verge of expiry, and offers them to consumers at a heavily discounted price. Consumers can search by venue name or location to find food options in their selected area.



# CONCLUSION

As a restaurateur in one of the biggest culinary cities in the world, you have a unique opportunity to reshape the way food is consumed from farm to fork to landfill. By looking creatively at your restaurant's food waste and making small changes that have a big impact, you can help your city reduce its refuse, while increasing your profits. In addition, you can raise consumer awareness on food waste and influence the way your customers view and understand the cycle of food.



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