



2 WASTE-CUTTING TIPS EVERY FOODSERVICE CHEF SHOULD KNOW





A COMPILATION OF TIPS

FROM LEANPATH EXPERTS AND CUSTOMERS



A LEANPATH PUBLICATION.

LeanPath is the creator of the industry's first smart food waste metering solution. We are a team of experts, passionate about preventing food waste in foodservice. Our clients include colleges, hospitals, corporate dining facilities, hotels, casinos, and restaurants throughout the U.S. and around the globe. We believe that active metering of wasted foods motivates and inspires commercial kitchens to be as efficient as they can be, saving money while protecting the environment.



ESTABLISHED: 2004 // Portland, OR, USA



VISION: End Avoidable Food Waste



MISSION: Make Food Waste Prevention Easy

EDITOR:

JANET HAUGAN

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING



***Editor's note:** The ideas shared in this publication range from well-known practical strategies to those that are more whimsical and creative. While some may seem obvious, we didn't want to overlook solutions that can significantly help to reduce waste.*

The creative tips may not be applicable to all operations, but are intended to "get your juices flowing" and inspire readers to think about new ways of using foods that may currently be getting wasted.

We'd love to hear your thoughts, feedback, and any ideas you have that aren't listed here! Please email me at jhaugan@leanpath.com

INTRODUCTION.

Foodservice chefs have to balance many things. Serving hundreds, or even thousands, of customers each day is no easy feat—especially when it comes to managing food waste.

At LeanPath, we've been working with foodservice chefs for the past decade to identify where and why food waste is happening, and to design solutions to prevent it. Many times, a production or purchasing change is the fix, but other times it takes some creative brainstorming to determine the best way to prevent the waste.

In this E-guide, we've compiled 20 helpful tips that we've seen work. Many of these ideas come directly from our clients, who always amaze us with their creativity and persistence to fight waste. We want every chef to know about them, so you can start turning your kitchen into a “waste-less” zone too.



PUBLICATION NOTES.

SAFETY DISCLAIMER.

Remember, food safety must always be your first priority, ahead of food waste prevention. All tips in this guide rely upon operators first implementing all appropriate food safety/HACCP protocols, with particular attention to managing holding times and temperatures. Do not attempt to use or re-use food which has not been managed properly throughout its lifecycle, including with regard to temperatures, time limits, and appropriate handling and service practices.

INTENDED AUDIENCE.

This guide is written for foodservice operators in environments that have a significant amount of advance food preparation, including colleges/universities, hospitals, corporate dining, hotels/casinos, and caterers. Many of the tips provided will not be as applicable in an operation that is completely cook-to-order.

DATA FOCUS.

Many of the tips in this guide are derived from food waste data discoveries. Consistent, daily measurement practices for wasted food can help reveal where opportunities exist, and what can be done to prevent that waste in the future.

Look for this icon to notate where data plays a role in putting the tip into practice.





10

WASTE-CUTTING TIPS
EVERY FOODSERVICE
CHEF SHOULD KNOW



A close-up view of a salad bar with several white trays containing different ingredients. From top to bottom, the trays contain: chickpeas, a mix of green and red bell peppers, green sprouts, sliced cucumbers, shredded carrots, and a tray with ice. A large white number '1' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

1

**KEEP CLOSE EYES ON
YOUR SALAD BAR.**



SALAD BARS DON'T HAVE TO BE WASTEFUL

Salad bars are a staple for many of our foodservice clients. They're also quite often a top waste contributor. Here are a few ideas to help reverse that trend.

If you run a dinner or late service, **offer grab-n-go salads** at those times rather than stocking your salad bar.



Review your restock policy. How do you restock the salad bar throughout service? Instead of using 6-inch deep pans of lettuce the entire time, consider rotating to smaller pans as service winds down.

Look at the space. Salad bars can take up a lot of real estate, but does your volume really necessitate it? Based on sales, you may be able to shrink the salad bar and use that leftover space to display impulse items like bread or desserts.

Consider removing it altogether. If you haven't thought about this as an option, it's worth a discussion. Salad bars are not only high-waste; they can also contribute to food safety and food quality concerns. And many diners value freshness and quality over quantity.



2

**BUILD RE-USE INTO
YOUR CYCLE MENU.**

RE-USE, RE-USE, RE-USE

If a set cycle menu is hindering your ability to creatively re-use left-over ingredients, consider making “re-use” part of your normal cycle menu. Here are some examples from LeanPath clients.

Soup stations. If you run multiple soups, leave one open toward the end of the week so you can utilize this space to re-run unused soups saved from earlier.

Salad bar. Leftover proteins (like chicken breast) can be chopped and placed onto the salad bar. Some clients have had great cost saving success using leftover breads to make their own croutons.

Weekend service. If you run weekend service, set aside a cart or shelf in the cooler for re-usable product. Place the re-usable products there during the week, then supplement your often pared back weekend service with these items.





3

**PLAN FOR AN EXTRA SOUP EACH
DAY FROM LEFTOVERS.**



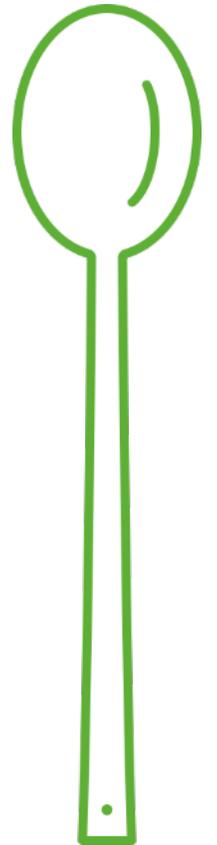
THE ULTIMATE LEFT-OVER SOLUTION

Creating a delicious soup from yesterday's left-overs is a tried and true method to avoid food waste. Build it into your menu cycle and plan for this "rotating soup" as a standard offering.

Garden Vegetable and Minestrone are popular soups for re-using ingredients. Any vegetable, tomato product/sauce or pasta can be added to make a tasty Minestrone.

Baked Potato soup is another great re-use soup as you can add bacon, cheese, broccoli, and/or sautéed onions.

Be creative! Remember, a rotating soup can be a smaller quantity than the others. Its purpose is just to use any leftover, overproduced product. It can be served in only one cafe, or at a busy coffee bar.





4

BEWARE OF BIG BATCHES.



MOVE FROM BIG BATCHES TO SMART BATCHES

Too often, batch cooking means “one or two big batches.” This can result in a lot of food waste, since you usually can’t perfectly match production to demand.

Cook in smaller portions, with the goal of getting as close to cook-to-order as possible.

This approach is less wasteful and provides a fresher, more customized experience for your guests.





5

CHANGE YOUR HOTEL PANS.

BIG PANS CAN LEAD TO BIG WASTE

A lot of the overproduction we see comes from product that was produced in a big batch, in a big pan.

Consider getting rid of your hotel pans altogether. Opt for smaller, more attractive pans and platters instead. This can help lower your merchandising pars, maintain freshness and improve guest appeal.

If replacing hotel pans isn't realistic for your operation, **consider using half-pans or reducing the depth of the hotel pan** used for items that are displayed on a serving line and often discarded at the end of the meal period. This can give the impression of a more abundant and full pan without lending itself to extra waste.





6

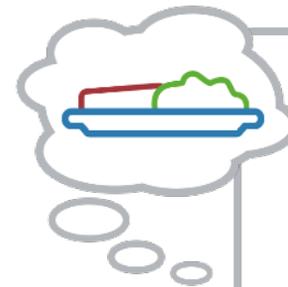
**ADD SAUCES AND
GARNISHES LAST.**



KEEP YOUR PRODUCTS FRESHER

Wait to put the seasonings or sauces on products until right before they go to the line. For example, wait to put a glaze on carrots until just before they are going to be served. This increases the re-use opportunities for those carrots and ensures a fresher product.

Also, rethink any inedible or excessive garnishes. Many plates include fancy fruits or layers of lettuce as a garnish to add visual appeal but aren't expected to be consumed.



Re-imagine your plate design with creative colors and sauces that don't lend themselves to extra food waste.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a bunch of ripe, dark blue grapes. The grapes are clustered together and have a natural bloom. Two large, vibrant green leaves are attached to the bunch. The person's hands are positioned at the bottom and sides, gently cradling the fruit. The background is softly blurred, showing a light-colored, possibly white, long-sleeved shirt. The overall lighting is natural and soft, highlighting the texture of the grapes and the skin of the hands.

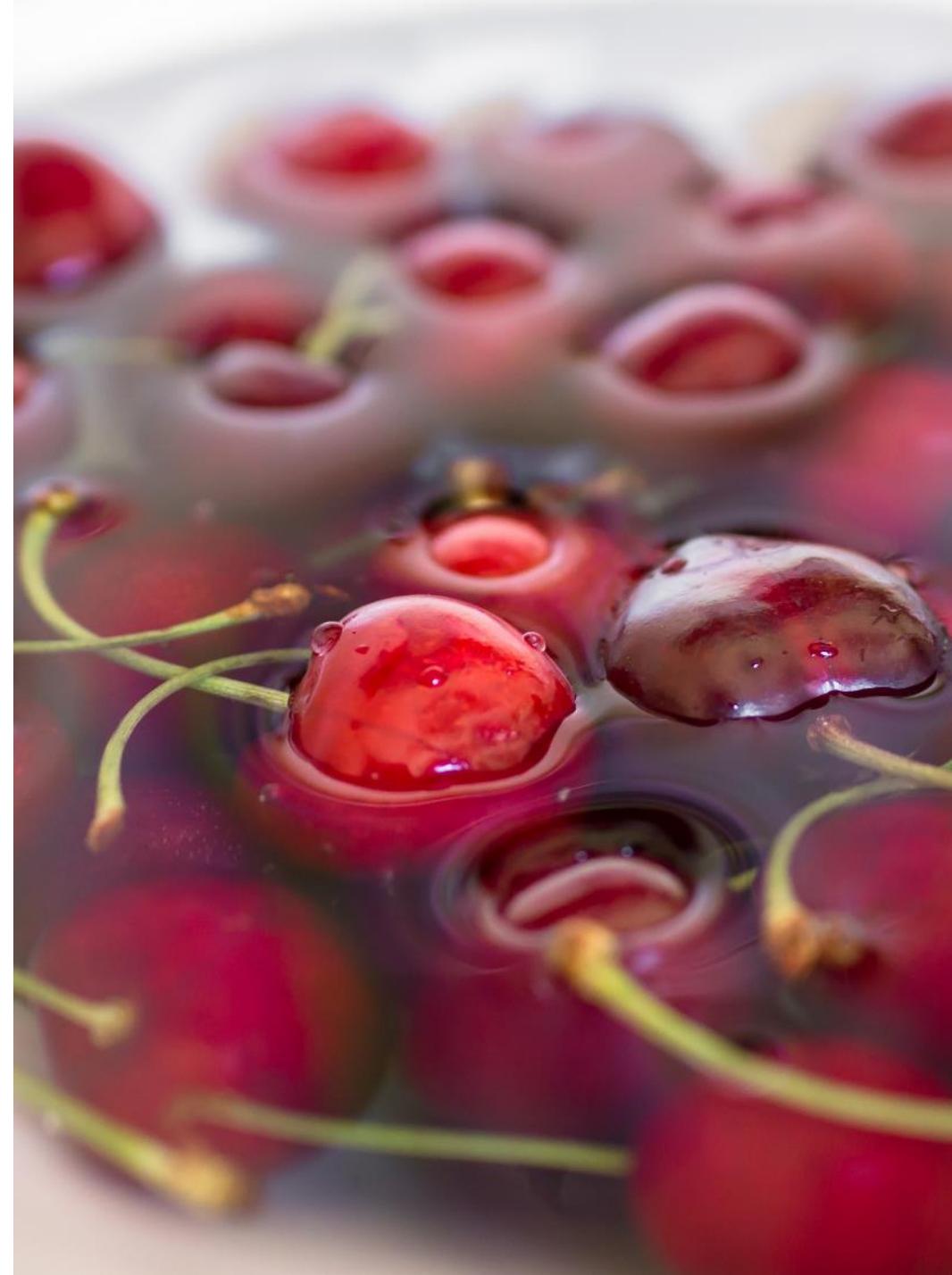
7

KEEP FOODS FRESHER, LONGER.

FRESHER FOOD MEANS LESS SPOILAGE

Keeping foods fresh can help extend their shelf life to make sure you have time to utilize them before they become wasted food. Here are some creative tips from a [Huffington Post article](#):

- Refrigerate avocados with cut onions
- Soak sliced apples in ginger ale
- Wash berries in vinegar
- Store mushrooms in a paper bag
- Freeze and preserve fresh herbs in olive oil
- Separate lettuce with paper towels
- Wrap celery in foil
- Peel, cut and freeze ginger
- Refrigerate nuts and seeds
- Store potatoes with an apple





8

REIMAGINE PIZZAS.

(They're not one-size-fits-all.)

CHANGE UP TOPPINGS AND SIZES

During the last hour of the service period, make one pizza with different sets of toppings on each half. You can still accommodate different tastes without creating extra waste—just be sure to not cross allergens or put meat on a vegetarian pizza!

Consider transitioning from large pizzas to individual pizzas. By making up the individual-sized crusts and topping them on demand, you can better gauge that day's sales and adjust offerings. Individual

pizzas can also be more visually appealing, so you're not left with the final few pieces of a pie that no customer wants.



Be sure to use up that leftover dough, too! If you have leftover pizza crust that's par baked, you can make it into bread sticks for the pasta station or salad bar. If you have unbaked dough that you're looking to repurpose, consider making it into pizza bites or calzones.





CRACK DOWN ON EGG WASTE.

BIGGER BATCHES ARE NOT BETTER

Eggs are often mass produced in the morning in big batches that aren't justified by sales, resulting in a lot of waste. Consider these tips:



Track leftovers. Cut back on the pans produced to match your demand. Make enough to get through the morning rush; after that you can either batch cook the eggs to order or make smaller batches to get through the remainder of the breakfast period.

Hold the toppings. Don't be too quick to layer on the cheese and veggies—wait until the pans are ready to be put on the line. Doing this will not only result in a better looking and tasting product, but also cut back on wasting additional items that may ultimately get thrown out.

Focus on ways to safely re-use the eggs. If you have leftover eggs that were never put out in the morning (and held safely), incorporate them into pre-made breakfast burritos. Or consider adding eggs into lunch dishes—like fried rice.





10

**REUSE LEFTOVER
BAKERY TREATS.**

(It's a piece of cake!)



CREATIVE AND DELICIOUS RE-USE IDEAS

Try some of these ideas with left-over cake trimmings, pie, or day-old breads.

Make cake pops. Ball up the cake and cover with frosting for some cake-to-go.

Make trifle. Put cake, cream or custard, and fruit in a large cup or bowl to make this English dessert. Or, for a different spin on this classic, take day-old pies that look tired and use a potato masher to break them up. Place contents in a cup and top with whipped cream. Sell in the grab and go case. You can also use cake in a pudding cup or layer it in a parfait cup.

Make Bread Pudding. Use up left-over bread by making a savory or sweet bread pudding. Make into individual cups for easier pricing. Or, make a larger amount of bread pudding, keep warm, serve with caramel syrup and sell portions priced by the ounce.



1

CUT PASTRY WASTE.



BUY WISELY, RE-USE AND MARKET

Keep pastry offerings uniform for multiple uses.

Make or buy the same types of pastries for catering and retail. That way, if a catering event gets canceled or attendance is lower than expected, the excess pastries can be moved to retail for sale and the next day's retail order can be lowered.

Get creative with your sales.

Look beyond the usual "Day Old" bin. Target a "Snack Time" sale (or "Third Shift Special") in the afternoon to entice customers with an afternoon sweet tooth.





12

WATCH CASSEROLE WASTE.



BEWARE OF OVERPRODUCED CASSEROLES

Casseroles (i.e., stews, lasagnas, baked dishes) are another high-waste item that pop up regularly on LeanPath client reports.



Review popularity on a regular basis. If your tracking shows that waste is high on a certain type, consider making a half pan instead of a full pan of that item. Also, don't get cornered by your cycle menu, if the item is not popular, make a change before the next time it's due for production.

Consider your merchandising—a change in vessels could be a big hit. Move away from large pan production to individual portioning in tart style dishes. This increases merchandising appeal while also allowing for more controlled small batch production.

Focus on the seasons and key into the calendar when making the menu. Comfort foods such as casseroles are big sellers in colder months. So don't just keep the same production levels throughout the year. As summer approaches, look at the menu and lighten the production load on hearty casseroles.



13

WATCH SOUP AND CHILI.

(Top waste offenders!)

SMALL CHANGES GO A LONG WAY

Soup and chili often top our clients' list of most wasted foods. But there are some small changes that go a long way in controlling this waste.

Hold the starch. When dealing with products that require a starch (noodles, potatoes or rice) leave this item out until it's time to serve.

By keeping the items separate, you avoid the starchy "glue" that often prohibits re-use when these soups are cooled.



Make smaller batches throughout the day. Instead of firing off multiple gallons of product first thing in the morning, do two or three batches during the day to react to needs.



Watch the weather. Change production based on the day and the season. Be sure to cut back production in the summer or if you have a nice spring day on the way.





14

**REUSE BREAKFAST MEAT
FOR OTHER MEALS.**

BACON AND SAUSAGE AREN'T JUST FOR BREAKFAST

Similar to eggs, many LeanPath clients find bacon and sausage are overproduced in the morning.



Use tracking data to determine the pattern of how much bacon, sausage or other breakfast meats are regularly left over.

Back off initial production levels to still allow for prompt guest service, without leaving all the leftovers. Instead of multiple full sheet pans of bacon, make the secondary production on half sheet pans or cook to order as breakfast service starts to wind down.

Once you've cut back the waste, there are plenty of re-use opportunities for what is still left-over:

- **Bacon Re-Use:** crumble the bacon for the salad bar to reduce costs on often expensive bacon toppings. Or utilize the leftover bacon topping in baked/mashed potatoes, hamburgers, or other recipes from soups to casseroles.
- **Sausage Re-Use:** utilize leftovers as a topping for pizza or save for sausage gravy.



A top-down view of a kitchen scene. On the left, a blue plastic tray is filled with several ripe, red tomatoes. To the right, a wooden cutting board holds a yellow bell pepper and a red bell pepper, both of which have been sliced into thin rounds. A large, sharp knife with a wooden handle lies on the cutting board. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

15 USE YOUR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE TRIMMINGS.



TRIM IS NOT TRASH

Trim waste is an inevitable by-product of any kitchen operation, but don't be so quick to just toss those trimmings in the trash. Consider some of these ideas to utilize those trimmings:

- **Melons.** Cut the tough skin off of melons, and then use the rinds as a substitute for cucumber in salads and cold soups.
- **Veggies.** Store vegetable trimmings in the freezer, and when you have enough, add them to a pot of water to make vegetable broth from scratch.
- **Celery.** Celery leaves, which usually get tossed, are full of flavor and a great addition to meatloaf, soups, and stews.
- **Potatoes.** Potato peels can be deep fried and salted to make tasty potato skin snacks.



16

TRIM DOWN YOUR TRIMMINGS.

INEFFICIENT TRIMMINGS ADD UP

Many facilities believe that trim waste is a necessary part of business and little can be done to impact the amount. But many of our LeanPath clients have found that they *can* significantly reduce the amount of trim waste using these tips.



Review trimming procedures with the staff frequently and review trim buckets often. Are employees coring out the tomatoes and strawberries or lopping off the top third? Are they taking care in beef trimming to make sure that the minimum amount of muscle is removed?

Ensure employees have the proper tools, in good condition. Knives and slicers should be sharpened regularly. High-precision blades can make a huge impact on meat trimmings.

Consider switching to pre-cut, pre-packaged items. For some operations, this can help cut down on trim waste and overall cost.

Remember, trimmings don't mean trash! Once you've mastered your trimming efficiency, consider the alternative uses for trim waste outlined in tip #15.





17

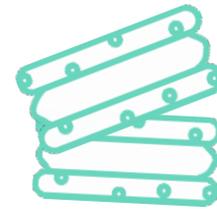
**USE UP SOFT SERVE BEFORE
YOU CLEAN THE MACHINE.**



SERVE UP SOFT SERVE IN NEW WAYS

If you have a soft-serve ice cream machine, you know that it needs to be cleaned out periodically. And often times, machine cleaning time can also mean a lot of product being trashed.

But before you dispose of that extra soft-serve, consider this tip from LeanPath client Michigan Technological University:



Ice cream sandwiches. Use the left-over soft-serve to make ice cream sandwiches before the periodic machine clean-out rather than throwing it out.



Sundae bars. To encourage more guests to indulge, create a “sundae bar” with fruit, candy, nuts and toppings.



18

**USE THE JUICE FROM
CANNED FRUIT.**

FRUIT JUICE HAS MANY USES

Wondering what to do with that left-over juice from canned fruit? Before you pour the fruit-flavored sweetener down the drain, consider using it in one of these ways:

- Create flavored water.
- Sweeten your iced tea.
- Prepare a fruity salad dressing.
- Use the juice in a marinade for chicken, pork, or fish.
- Create a glaze for ham.
- Combine with fruit slices and make frozen fruit popsicles.

Liquid waste is still waste! Create a kitchen culture where fully utilizing a product and all of its components is a top priority.



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a pile of dark brown coffee grounds. The hand is positioned in the center-left of the frame. In the background, there are several vibrant green leaves, likely from a coffee plant, which are slightly out of focus. The overall lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the texture of the coffee grounds and the skin of the hand.

19

**DON'T DUMP COFFEE
DOWN THE DRAIN.**

COFFEE HAS MANY USES

Instead of dumping out the left-over coffee from breakfast, seal it up in a container and put it in the refrigerator. You'll be ready to serve and sell **iced coffee** in the afternoon, which you can enhance by mixing with half-and-half or flavored syrups. This can be served from a bulk container (carafe or airpot) or sold as individual cups in the grab-n-go reach-in. If you serve premium brewed coffee, reusing what's left over can be especially beneficial to your bottom line.

Coffee grounds are also an excellent compost supplement.

- If your operation composts, ensure that all coffee grounds are being added to the compost bin.
- If your operation doesn't compost, consider partnering with local community gardens to provide them with your used coffee grounds, or offer the grounds to staff or customers.



A chef in a white uniform and hat is standing in a bakery, writing on a clipboard. In the background, there are shelves filled with various types of bread. The scene is brightly lit, and the chef is focused on his work.

20

**START A “FOOD WASTE
IDEAS” LOG BOOK.**

YOUR EMPLOYEES WILL HAVE SOME GREAT IDEAS

Here's a great tip from the University of Vermont, a LeanPath client:

- **Keep a note pad in the kitchen** so the staff has an easy, accessible way to ask questions and contribute ideas for food waste reduction.
- **Incorporate a Q&A into a weekly pre-shift meeting**, when you can address the questions and ideas for everyone to hear, and encourage others to share their ideas and suggestions.



Food waste reduction is a great employee engagement tool. It gives your employees more purpose-driven work, especially if they understand the positive impact they are having as an individual contributor. Recognize and reward your staff for their participation. Food waste reduction happens on the front lines, not in a manager's office!



Through a combination of technology and behavioral science, LeanPath's food waste prevention systems are helping hundreds of foodservice operations prevent food waste every day.

Get in touch with us—we'd love to hear from you.

