

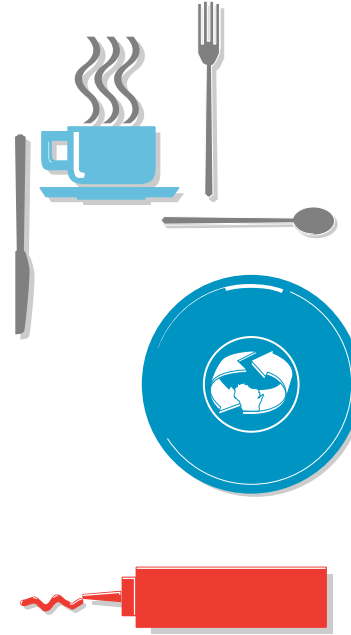
## Recycling and Waste Reduction in the Restaurant Industry

Wisconsin restaurants spend a lot of time and money managing their garbage. Many restaurants have found that they can decrease the waste through recycling and waste reduction programs. Such programs reduce waste, conserve natural resources, and save money. Learn how you can too.

### Recycling: it's not only good business—it's also the law

The Waste Reduction and Recycling Law requires all businesses and property owners to:

- Provide separate containers for the materials banned from landfills and incinerators (see below)
- Regularly educate the occupants and users of a business' facilities about the recycling program
- Arrange for the collection and delivery of the recyclables to a recycling facility



*The Waste Reduction and Recycling Law bans the following items from Wisconsin landfills and incinerators:*

#### Paper

- ⊘ office paper\*
- ⊘ newspaper
- ⊘ magazines
- ⊘ corrugated cardboard

#### Containers

- ⊘ aluminum cans
- ⊘ steel (tin) cans
- ⊘ glass bottles and jars
- ⊘ plastic containers (#1 and #2)

#### Other materials

- ⊘ major appliances
- ⊘ waste tires
- ⊘ lead-acid vehicle batteries
- ⊘ yard wastes
- ⊘ used motor oil

\* Office paper is defined as "high grade printing and writing papers from offices in non-residential facilities and properties."

Note: Some communities are served by incinerators and have special provisions for recycling. Some communities recycle additional items. Check with local officials.

## Designing your recycling and waste reduction program

### 1. Enlist management and employee support

To ensure your program's success, you need support from management and employees. Their help is critical in implementing and maintaining your program. Get support and policy directives from management that allow you to:

- Utilize staff time and resources
- Integrate the program into company procedures
- Incorporate recycling/waste reduction responsibilities into employee job duties and new employee training
- Involve staff/employees in the decision-making process. If you manage a large restaurant, set up a waste reduction and recycling team.

### 2. Conduct a waste assessment

A waste assessment will determine the types and quantities of materials in your waste stream. Here are some tips:

- Develop a waste assessment form. The form should list all the products used in your operation. Assign the products into categories such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, metal, food waste, etc.
- Walk through your restaurant from the back door (loading dock) to the front. Record items and relative amounts of materials on the waste assessment.
- Look in the dumpster. What are you throwing away?
- Review your garbage contract. How often is pickup? What size is the dumpster? How are you billed? How much does this service cost? Is recycling part of your contract?

### 3. Identify and evaluate your options

Once you have characterized your waste stream work with:

- Your staff to determine the items the restaurant can recycle, reduce, reuse, or eliminate
- Your suppliers to find packaging alternatives
- Your hauler to calculate the costs of different levels and types of services

Consider all options but be realistic. Determine which options are feasible for your business, and how to implement and promote them.

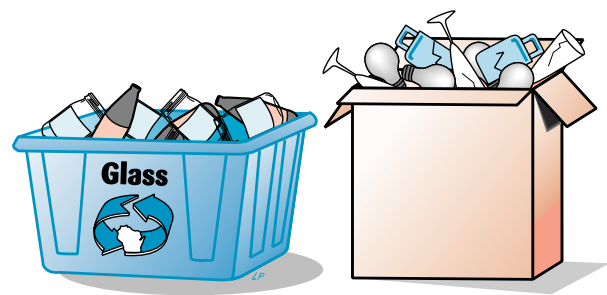
## Waste reduction and recycling ideas and suggestions

Restaurants can reduce their waste and expenses through a variety of waste reduction and recycling activities.

The following ideas originate from tried-and-true restaurant programs. Not all of these activities may be practical for you.



- Request products with a minimal amount of packaging from your suppliers. Ask them to watch for new products.
- Ask your suppliers to reuse or recycle shipping boxes, pallets, bins, etc.
- Buy shelf-stable food supplies in bulk whenever sales volume and storage space justifies it. This minimizes unnecessary packaging and may reduce the per unit price.
- Purchase products made from recycled materials. For example, anti-fatigue mats made from recycled tires and paper products (e.g., napkins, paper toweling, toilet paper) made from post-consumer recycled paper.
- Use reusable coasters or nothing at all.
- Use reusable table linen and dinnerware.
- Use cloth towels rather than paper ones.
- Purchase multi-purpose, concentrated cleaning supplies, rather than job-specific, ready-to-use ones.
- Instruct your staff to keep recyclables contaminant free. Pay particular attention to glass recycling. Ceramics, drinking glasses, light bulbs, etc. should not be mixed with glass bottles and jars and are generally not collected for recycling. Check with your hauler or local recycling program for information on how recyclables should be prepared.



- Arrange your refrigerated and dry storage areas to facilitate easy product access and rotation. This will help minimize waste due to spills, breakage, and spoilage.
- Code-date all products stored in the freezer and rotate properly.
- Donate extra food to a local food bank. For more information look in the yellow pages under Food Banks.
- Evaluate and adjust portions if meals are consistently returned unfinished.
- Offer customers half-orders at a reduced cost. Light eaters will appreciate the option and it will reduce food waste.



- Refill condiment bottles from bulk supplies.

- Place rubber mats around bus and dishwashing stations to reduce china and glass breakage and help prevent injury.

- Have employees use permanent mugs or cups for their drinks.

- Minimize excess use of trash bag liners by manually compacting the trash in your garbage cans as completely as possible and emptying the cans only when they are full.



- Minimize unnecessary packaging (e.g., double wrapping, double bagging) of take-out food.
- Offer customers a discount if they bring in reusable “doggie bags” (e.g., plastic containers).
- Donate or sell empty plastic pails or buckets to anyone who can use them.
- Send cooking oils, fats, and grease to a rendering firm. Contact your DNR waste management specialist for service providers.
- Look into composting food waste rather than throwing it away. Local farmers may take all or a portion of your food waste for landspreading or to supplement their compost pile.

Tips excerpted from: *Food for Thought, Restaurant Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling*, 1992, City and County of San Francisco.

## Restaurant success story

### EarthHeart Deli

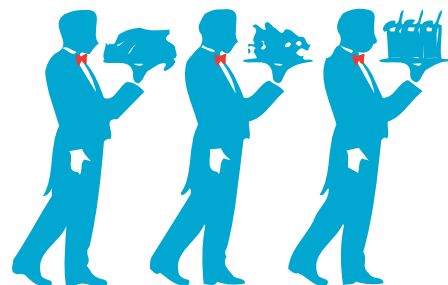
The EarthHeart Deli is located in DePere, Wisconsin. The restaurant employs twenty-two people and serves approximately 1,000 customers weekly. In 1996, the restaurant made waste reduction a high priority.

Previously, EarthHeart contracted for four dumpsters; two for recycling and two for garbage. Now, through their waste reduction and recycling efforts, the restaurant uses three dumpsters for recyclables and has reduced its garbage to less than two bags a week.

EarthHeart’s waste reduction success has a strong foundation. First, they omit unnecessary packaging by buying supplies in bulk. Second, they reuse many products, for example, jars for silverware and pencils, paper for messages or scrap paper, and plastic containers for sugar packets.

EarthHeart recycles everything possible. All paper, aluminum, plastic, steel, and glass is separated, cleaned, and kept contaminant free. Clearly labeled recycling receptacles are conveniently located for the staff and customers. The restaurant buys items that can be recycled locally and purchases recycled-content items (e.g., paper toweling, toilet paper, napkins).







EarthHeart also collects its food wastes for composting, significantly reducing its solid waste stream. Small containers for food scraps are kept in the kitchen and food prep area, and emptied into outdoor containers daily. Local farmers are more than happy to add the scraps to their compost pile. Once a week, either the farmers make a pick up or EarthHeart drops off the containers. Stephen Ketter McDiarmid, one of EarthHeart’s directors, states, “We take the time to make a bank deposit once a day, so it’s not that difficult to make a ‘compost deposit’ once a week.”



## Resources

### Waste reduction/recycling/pollution prevention assistance

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** - contact the business sector specialists or waste management staff at these DNR Regional offices:

-  Eau Claire ..... 715-839-3700
-  Green Bay ..... 414-492-5916  
(area code 920 after 7/31/97)
-  Madison ..... 608-275-3266
-  Milwaukee ..... 414-263-8500
-  Rhinelander ..... 715-365-8900
-  Spooner ..... 715-635-2101

**WasteCap Wisconsin** - A public-private partnership that offers site visits, seminars, and technical assistance to Wisconsin businesses. Contact: (608)267-3131

**Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin** - A non-profit association of government representatives, recycling services, businesses, and individuals. Contact: (608)277-1978

**Buy Recycled Business Alliance** - A broad-based group of businesses and organizations committed to promoting the purchasing of recycled-content products. Contact: 1-800-619-2722

**Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center** - Provides education and technical assistance to businesses on waste reduction, recycling, and pollution prevention. Contact: (608)262-0385

**Wisconsin Waste Reduction Coalition** - A coalition of government, private, and non-profit groups coordinating waste reduction education programs. Contact: (608)266-2711

### Wisconsin Restaurant Association

31 South Henry Street, Suite 300  
Madison, WI 53703-3110  
(608)251-3663, 1-800-859-3211



### Publications

*Business Waste Reduction and Recycling: A Guide for the Workplace*—A specific, step-by-step guide that helps businesses design and implement a waste reduction and recycling program. PUBL SW-128 95Rev. Contact: (608)267-7566

*DNR's Greatest Hits*—A listing of DNR's most helpful waste reduction and recycling publications, including those for businesses. PUBL IE-177 96Rev. Contact: (608)267-7566

*Eat, Drink, Sleep and Recycle*—A two-page fact sheet that focuses on the hospitality industry. It provides general tips and waste reduction/recycling success stories. PUBL IE-203 Contact: (608)267-7566

### Grants Information

**DNR Waste Reduction and Recycling Demonstration Grants**—If your restaurant is planning to demonstrate an innovative recycling or a waste reduction idea, you can apply for a grant, covering 50 percent of the project cost. Contact: (608)266-9426

**Recycling Market Development Board**—Funds projects through grants, loans, and rebates to expand the market demand for recyclable materials. Contact: 1-800-991-5523

