Results and Case Studies

All restaurants who have previously undertaken the food waste audit have been able to achieve food purchasing efficiencies, significant cost savings and staff engagement in monitoring food waste and food-consumption patterns. Each restaurant has used the food waste audit results to make targets for food waste reduction and develop initiatives to reduce food waste across all aspects of their operations; examples of these are displayed below.

Restaurant A – a 75 seat pub – wanted to audit their food waste as they knew there was a lack of communication between staff about what food was not being eaten by customers and which food was being thrown out due to spoilage.

The food waste audit highlighted to staff that particular side dishes and garnishes were always left on the plate by customers and some food was often being thrown out at the prep stage as it was not ordered regularly enough. The restaurant redesigned their menu to order and serve a different range of dishes and saved money by avoiding the purchase of produce that wasn't being cooked.

Restaurant B – a 110-seat suburban bistro – chose to audit their food waste so they could be in a strong position to negotiate with the contractor who collected their food waste for off-site anaerobic digestion.

Following the audit, the restaurant identified a number of ways to reduce food waste, such as:
- Review all ordering patterns and eliminate anything that is frequently underutilised or thrown out.
- Monitoring food storage practices to ensure maximum shelf life of all produce and prepped meals.
- Modifying portion sizes to create less customer plate waste.

Producing less food waste resulted in reduced amount of bin lifts the contractor would have to make. The reduced bin lifts decreased the costs of waste collection being spent by the restaurant.

Restaurant C – a 150-seat restaurant in a hotel – conducted a food waste audit so that new food prep and service practices could be integrated into their whole-of-restaurant sustainability planning. As a result of the food waste audit, the team implemented a number of new practices such as:

- Being more creative with the food that they already had, e.g. using orange skins from the juicer to make marmalade and serving skin-on potato chips.
- Rethinking how to use offcuts, e.g. keeping all useable fish offcuts to make into fish cakes.
- The chefs make staff meals out of food that has been ordered in excess, rather than creating one-off dishes for staff.

The restaurant saved money through making many more of their own products rather than buying them in separately and kitchen staff became more engaged with designing more creative dishes.

Restaurant D – a 160-seat fine dining restaurant – wanted to audit their food waste so that they could understand their purchasing patterns. The food waste audit enabled the restaurant to plan what produce they could order whole and prepare on site, such as whole chickens, and which produce is better prepared offsite by the supplier that would meet the restaurant's specifications and lead to less waste of offcuts.

This planning led to the chefs increasing their knife skills and understanding more of the fundamental aspects of cooking and it also reduced restaurant costs by ordering whole animals, when practical, instead of individual specific cuts.

Restaurant E – 60-seat café – undertook a food waste audit as part of their drive to reduce their environmental impact. As a result of the audit, the café was able to better plan menus based on seasonal produce, and they also developed an easy system for customers to take away any unfinished food instead of it being thrown out.

The restaurant achieved cost savings by increasing the amount of seasonal food on their menu – taking advantage of the cheaper costs when that produce is available in abundance – but they also engaged a new set of diners, who were choosing to eat at this café not only for the good food but also due to the café's active stance on improving their sustainability practices.