

Educating chefs worldwide about the real value of preventing food waste



Background

John Wood's time as a chef saw him work in some of the finest kitchens around the world, from the Savoy Hotel in London to the world-famous Burj al Arab in Dubai. John has been awarded a Michelin star, four AA Rosettes and won numerous culinary accolades during his 37-year career.

Today, John is Director and Co-founder of Kitchen CUT, a cloud based food and beverage management system, used by chefs, managers and owners to control food and beverage operations, reduce waste and maximise efficiency, performance and profit.

Through his time as a chef, John saw first-hand just how wasteful kitchens and restaurants can be. So he now uses his experience and his drive for sustainability in cooking to educate chefs worldwide about the real value of preventing food waste.



Key facts

Showing the problem – When John worked in the kitchens, one of his techniques was to put all food waste in clear plastic bowls, with only egg shells going into the recycling bin. At the end of service, he'd show the team what food was left, because John knew that the only way to understand a problem was to really see it.

A money mind-set – For John, managing food waste is a mind-set. Poor portion control, stock rotation, over production and menu management has a major impact on a restaurant's profits. As such, actively preventing food waste is an opportunity to substantially increase bottom line profits immediately.

Work with the waste you have – Waste and by-products are always going to exist, so John helps chefs introduce ways to use by-products effectively. Understanding what by-products come from each dish and how businesses can effectively cross-utilise these products to drive additional revenues from new dishes can have a huge impact. The approach is simple: no food should ever go to waste in the kitchen, everything can be used if you just stop and think about it.



"I understand chefs – I've been in their shoes. When food waste is brought up, it's easy to feel like you're being told off. But, swing it to a positive. Being honest about your waste means you can give it value – suddenly, it's a profitable opportunity. If you want to improve your food profits and your margins by up to 6% then you need a structured system in place with a clear plan to do it."

John Wood



www.kitchencut.com

Key actions 1

Talk to your teams and get them to 'buy-in' to why you want to reduce waste in your business, whether this is for ethical reasons or financial ones or – as it is in most cases – for both.

Record your waste to see the problem – measure the level of food that is thrown away after each service. Make use of tools such as Kitchen Cut's waste management software or WRAP's free Your Business is Food; don't throw it away toolkit and calculator.

Key actions 2

Get creative – from stocks to soups, by-products can provide endless opportunities. For example, once the florets are removed, a broccoli stalk can still be used either in the base of a soup, or thinly sliced and fried into great tasting crisps you can add to a salad.

Plan a waste-smart menu – after recording your waste, create a menu that minimises waste in the kitchen and lowers leftover food on plates to maximise profit. If anything is wasted, it's important to know why. By tracking reasons for waste, you can identify trends and patterns and then work as a team to address these issues.

Results

Through his international work with chefs, restaurants, hotels and operations of all sizes, John is able to see the opportunities that reducing food waste can create.

Managing waste can be seen as a box ticking exercise, but for chefs to take it as seriously as they should, the value of waste needs to be made clear. The more of a product that's used, the less that needs to be bought in. Clever, controlled cross-utilisation of products is extremely important to run a profit-making kitchen.

Chefs need to commit. John's approach is built on planning and management. You need to design a menu that takes all your ingredients into account and limits waste.

Typically, Head Chefs will talk to their teams about waste and ask them to reduce it without giving them the tools or system to do this effectively. Tackling and reducing waste needs to take a team approach and chefs need to educate their teams into properly recording waste.

Integrating food waste tracking with existing systems can quickly embed food waste understanding and reduction within a business.

Summary

Changing the mind-set of every chef is no easy feat, but with the support of organisations such as WRAP, John is working to do exactly that. The result of his work will mean less food going to waste around the world. Something that's great for chefs and the environment alike.

Tips

- Invest in large, clear plastic bowls to visualise how much food is going to waste during your service
- Get creative with your menus by-products and generate cash from what would normally be thrown away in the bin or recycling service
- Working collaboratively across the team is key to embedding change and finding solutions that work for your business.
- Ensure your teams are buying into your desire to reduce food waste - share some stats on what the industry wastes every year
- Order only what you need and ensure good stock rotation plans are in place
- To help get started on measuring food waste and making changes in your business, you can download the free 'Your Business is Food, don't throw it away' tools at: <http://www.wrap.org.uk/ybifbusiness>

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