





# HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS AND REDUCE FOOD waste

BY GILLES STASSART, CEC

**WITH RISING FOOD COSTS** and continued labor issues, foodservice professionals are already doing more with less every day—making the most of their people and products with a constant eye on waste reduction. Menu planning today often involves as much focus on labor and inventory as it does on ingredients and nutrition.

When every penny counts, streamlining your operations can increase margins while showcasing your team's skills. According to Feeding America, nearly 120 billion pounds of food is wasted in the United States each year despite the ongoing food insecurity crisis. Homes, restaurants, and foodservice operations can all contribute to shifting this reality and reducing the number of items that transition from the refrigerator to the garbage can.

## THE CYCLING TRIFECTA

Foodservice operations spend a lot of time and money finding and purchasing the ideal ingredients to meet their patrons' needs, one of the reasons that waste reduction is so important. With that in mind, operations can maximize prep time and minimize food waste with the trifecta of *precycling*, *upcycling*, and *recycling*.

### Precycling

Like it sounds, precycling is about thinking ahead to improve food ordering, purchase and usage through regular communication with staff, vendors, distributors, and sales reps. Taking inventory and planning ahead will help you right-size your orders.

This is where a strong relationship with sales reps or distributors can go a long way. They can likely help to pinpoint quantities and identify multi-use products.

### Upcycling

This is learning to use all of the food that is ordered to get closer to the ultimate goal of zero waste. Repurposing leftover baked goods for desserts or croutons is a great example of upcycling, as is using onion trimmings, carrot peels, and other vegetables for a broth or stock. Foodservice operations are getting more creative with upcycling all the time.

### Recycling

This is the last pillar and involves disposing of unavoidable waste to support local partners and give back to the community.

Together, these three practices will create efficiencies and cost savings while reducing the number of

perishable items that go unused in your operation.

## REMAKING AND REIMAGINING FAVORITE RECIPES

When you look at your tried-and-true recipes with fresh eyes, you might discover opportunities to repurpose many of the sweet and savory ingredients you already use every day. Standardized recipes and value-added products can play a significant role in shrinking food waste.

When updating menus, the more applications you can use an ingredient for, the better. Product versatility is the name of the game here—items with multiple uses can create cohesive menus with popular products and maximize every order. Personally, I like to make sure that everything I purchase has at least three applications.

For example, biscuit dough can be used as appetizers, made into waffles, used as sandwich carriers/flatbreads or breadbasket sides, and also as dessert. Likewise, cinnamon rolls can be turned into French toast, monkey bread, or bread puddings. Your team's creativity can really shine when you determine how single products can be used in multiple ways.



## HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Smoothies are another clear winner: Bananas often ripen faster than desired, but they are ideal in a smoothie with some strawberries and yogurt, delivering a nutrient-dense, convenient, and fan-favorite snack. Finally, you can create daily specials or limited-time offers such as strata and omelets with leftover ingredients. When you make the most of products across your menu, this will notably reduce food waste.

In addition, it's always helpful to identify opportunities to decrease the steps you take in food prep. Frozen baked goods that can be baked off on demand and pre-portioned items can organize your operation for the better, reducing labor and waste.

Provided here are some well-liked recipes that show the value of upcycling ingredients and ensuring your dishes can go the extra mile. Recipes can also be adapted to use various leftover or surplus ingredients.

### CUT FOOD WASTE TO BENEFIT YOUR OPERATION AND THE PLANET

When looking to maximize labor and manage costs, minimizing food waste heads the list of priorities. It not only supports your bottom line, but is a green practice everyone can get behind.


Here are four simple tips for reducing overall waste in your operation:

**1. Control portion sizes.** Are plates regularly returning to the kitchen with leftover food on them? If so, consider reducing portion sizes. Ensure all staff are trained on the correct sizes for all of your menu offerings—this provides consistency while preventing food waste.

**2. Ask for ideas.** Encourage both front- and back-of-house staff to share ideas for preventing waste across your operation. This will bolster awareness of current challenges and foster team involvement. Likewise, when you pre-identify various uses for prep waste, it can help kitchen staff feel more empowered in the moment: Potato peels can be fried for a crispy garnish, and overripe or

imperfect berries can be roasted for a sauce, for example.

**3. Check products at the back door.** When products are delivered, open cases to ensure that they are fresh, which can prevent you from throwing away a lot of food down the line. Let your vendor know if it doesn't meet your expectations and don't be afraid to ask for a credit. When you update your product



### TROPICAL GREEN SMOOTHIE BOWL

Serves 5

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup Skim milk
- 4 cups Greek vanilla yogurt
- 2 cups Kale, fresh, chopped, tightly packed
- 2 each Avocados, fresh
- 1 cup Pineapple, fresh, chunks
- 3 cups Bananas, chopped

#### Instructions

1. Place milk, yogurt, kale, avocado, pineapple, and banana in large capacity blender (or prepare in batches).
2. Blend on high speed for 1 minute. Stop blender, stir ingredients with spatula.
3. Continue to blend until smooth. Portion into serving bowls and cover.
4. Serve chilled. Smoothie bowls may be refrigerated overnight.

#### TIP

Serve frozen if desired. Top with smoothie bowl favorites such as granola, sliced banana, avocado, or nuts.

receiving practices, you can save significant money over time.

**4. Redistribute surplus food.** This is a great way to give back to the community and local food banks. General Mills supports MealConnect, a technology platform that redirects excess food from foodservice operations to organizations that help feed people facing hunger. Created by Feeding America, the nation's leading hunger-relief organization, the app is free for operators and nonprofits. (See sidebar.) When you donate to local organizations, make sure you share the gesture through social media and marketing channels to spotlight your focus on helping others and serving as a reliable community partner.

In the end, there will always be some waste. Savvy operations can turn eggshells, coffee grounds, and vegetable trimmings into compost for their own or neighborhood gardens or to share with local farms to use as animal feed. It's simple to add a bin for compost ingredients to encourage the next generation of recycling.

When your operation excels at doing more with the ingredients you already have, you promote creativity, support green business practices, and decrease the amount of waste in your

organization—ensuring that food waste isn't eating your profits. **E**

For more recipes and information on waste reduction tactics, visit [generalmillscf.com](http://generalmillscf.com)

## CROISSANT BREAD PUDDING

Serves 32

### Ingredients

- Freezer-to-oven butter croissant dough pinched (18 ea.)
- 1-1/2 cups Raisins
- 2 qt. Whole milk
- 4-1/2 cups Granulated sugar
- 1 qt. Liquid eggs
- 2 Tbsp. Vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp. Salt

### Instructions

1. Bake croissants as indicated on package; allow to cool for 1 hour.
2. Cut baked croissants into approx. 1/2-3/4-inch cubes.
3. Place croissant pieces into sprayed 2-inch hotel pan; sprinkle with dried fruit blend.
4. Whisk together milk, sugar, eggs, vanilla, and salt in large bowl until sugar is dissolved.
5. Pour mixture over croissants, stirring gently as needed; cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
6. Gently stir to redistribute liquid; bake as directed until knife comes out clean. Serve warm or cold.

Convection Oven: 350 °F, 20-24 min.

Standard Oven: 400 °F, 26-29 min.

*Rotate pans baked in convection oven one-half turn (180°) after 10 minutes of baking.*

### TIP

Use leftover croissants for this recipe to reduce waste.

## HOW TO MAKE USE OF SURPLUS FOOD

Donate surplus food to help feed your community. MealConnect, a free mobile app created by Feeding America, makes it easy for operations to list food that may otherwise go to waste. It provides a match with a local food shelf or pantry that will schedule a pick-up time and provide a volunteer to receive your donation.

Visit [www.mealconnect.org](http://www.mealconnect.org)



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