

WASTE AND RECYCLING CAFE AND RESTAURANT BASICS



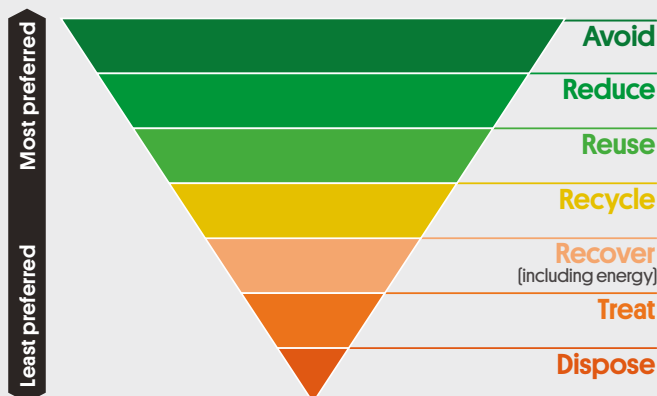
Government
of South Australia
Green Industries SA

Information for cafes and restaurants in South Australia [SA] looking to improve their waste and recycling practices. By making small changes, businesses can reduce waste, meet customer demand for environmentally responsible eateries, while potentially reducing costs and improving profitability.

Waste Management Hierarchy

The Waste Management Hierarchy is a useful tool to guide changes.

It outlines the preferred order of waste and recycling management.



Avoiding and reducing food waste Here are some tips on how to monitor and reduce food waste.

Tip 1

Do a mini waste audit to find out where food is being wasted in your business. To do this, separate your food waste into three categories (and keep them in separate bins):

- plate waste (uneaten food from customers)
- preparation waste (offcuts)
- spoilage waste (food that has gone off before it was used)

Weigh bin contents at the end of each day, for a period of 1 week and record the findings. You can repeat this exercise every few months to track your food waste and progress over time.¹

Tip 2

Train kitchen staff in the **'First In, First Out'** rule. This means rotating inventory so the oldest stock is used first to minimise food loss.

Tip 3

Use effective storage methods, such as airtight containers. This means adding date labels to food, putting oldest stock at the front and on top, and ensuring they are used first. Rotating inventory minimises food loss to help stock stay fresher for longer.

Restaurants and cafes throw away nearly a quarter of food they buy for their business! [source: RMIT University]

Tip 4

Consider changing your menu to minimise food waste from customer plates. This may include offering smaller portion sizes. Offer compostable (preferred) or recyclable takeaway containers for anything left over.

Tip 5

Donate your surplus food to a food relief organisation, such as OzHarvest or other food donation services such as Y Waste App. By doing so, you can reduce your waste bills, and ensure the food is redistributed to people in need.

Tip 6

Sourcing local and seasonal food may help to reduce food miles and associated carbon emissions. Fresh, seasonal produce has spent less time in storage and transit. Support local farmers and communities that use sustainable production methods. The SA Urban Food Network has information on local food systems.

¹This audit method is adapted from the NSW EPA Love Food Hate Waste Your Business is Food program

Service ware and packaging

Single-use Plastic Bans

SA has introduced legislation that prohibits the sale, supply and distribution of certain single-use plastic products including straws, cutlery, and beverage stirrers, with additional products to be banned or restricted in the future, including expanded polystyrene food containers from March 2022.

The legislation includes both fossil fuel-derived plastic and compostable (bioplastic) plastic products (such as Polylactic Acid - PLA).

To comply with SA's single-use plastics and other plastic products legislation, replace plastic takeaway straws,* cutlery, and stirrers with alternative products.

For more information on prohibited items and available alternative products visit: <https://replacethewaste.sa.gov.au/>

*Exemptions apply for people who require single-use plastics straws due to a disability or health need.

Tip 7

Encourage or incentivise customers to use their own reusable takeaway coffee cups and other containers.

Go plastic free!

Follow the lead of these [Plastic-Free Precincts](#) by saying goodbye to single-use plastics.

Tip 8

Use compostable takeaway containers that are certified to the Australian Standard AS4736 or AS5810. Ensure coffee cup lids are also certified. These items can be placed in household green (organics) bins.

100% paper items and cardboard can be recycled too, if clean, or composted if soiled by food.

Tip 9

Single-use straws, cutlery and stirrers should be bamboo, wood, or paper. Keep stock out of reach of customers and provide these items only upon request to avoid unnecessary waste or overuse.

Tip 10

Explore options with your supplier(s) to provide packaging that can be returned, sterilised, and reused; or packaging that is easily recyclable.

For example, some cafes arrange bulk supply of milk from local suppliers. The containers are returned, sterilised and reused by the supplier. You could also consider making your own non-dairy milk in-house to reduce packaging waste.

Compostable Products

Recycled or sustainably sourced 100% paper, wood or bamboo products are preferred over compostable bioplastic products (such as Polylactic Acid - PLA). This is because bioplastics can cause pollution and harm to marine life if they are not composted or are disposed of irresponsibly. Look for recycled content products or sustainably sourced options, such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

Compostable Plastics and Certification

There are many labels and terms used to market products as environmentally friendly. Many 'eco' and 'biodegradable' products still contain plastic and are not compostable or recyclable.

If using compostable plastics, ensure they are certified compostable. There are two Australian Standards to look for:

Industrial Compostability (AS 4736-2006)

Guarantees that the material can be processed at an industrial composting facility and won't cause contamination.



Home Compostability (AS 5810-2010)

Guarantees that the item is suitable and will breakdown in a home compost system.



Australian certification includes eco-toxicity testing, to ensure that the resulting compost is free of physical and chemical residues and is beneficial to living organisms.

Check with your supplier if their products hold Australian Standard certification and look for the verification logos.

Furniture and equipment

Tip 11

Support the circular economy and buy items made of recycled content such as cookware, paper towel and toilet paper.

Tip 12

Buy refurbished furniture and equipment. Sell or donate items that you no longer have a use for.

Tip 13

Reuse items such as glass jars for drinks, and second-hand crockery and cutlery.




Standard recycling services

Not all waste can be avoided, reduced, or reused. The next best thing is to recycle discarded items and materials. The following recycling services are standard across Metropolitan Adelaide. Most recycling services can be organised through a commercial provider.

Common waste and recycling services for cafes and restaurants:





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|  | <p>Food waste/ organics recycling</p> <p>Food waste /organics is one of the biggest streams that cafes and restaurants generate. This includes raw and cooked food scraps, bones, coffee grounds, tissues, paper towels and compostable service ware and packaging. If food waste and compostable items go to landfill, they generate greenhouse gas emissions. Food waste and organics can be collected and turned into beneficial compost locally in SA to support soil health and food production. Check if your council offers food/garden organics recycling bins for restaurants and cafes or organise a commercial collection.</p> |
|  | <p>Wine/Spirit bottles recycling</p> <p>Empty wine bottles can be processed and made into new products such as bottles, jars and fibreglass. The glass products are sent back to the shops ready to be used again. This service can be contracted, or staff members can drop them off at a local recycler, including those that accept 10c refundable items.</p> |
|  | <p>Bottles and cans recycling</p> <p>A 10-cent recycling deposit can be refunded when the container, bottle, can or carton, is returned. Containers need to be empty, the lids removed and have the 10c refund marking. This service can be contracted, or staff members can drop them off at a local recycler.</p> |
|  | <p>Cardboard recycling</p> <p>Cardboard intended for recycling should be kept clean of food scraps, polystyrene, and plastic. Cardboard that has been contaminated with food scraps can be composted.</p> |
|  | <p>Grease trap recycling</p> <p>Grease traps must be emptied periodically to ensure they function effectively. This can be arranged via a Licensed Liquid Waste Contractor [search for 'grease trap cleaning services' via Yellow Pages or similar]. Contents are taken to a commercial composter or other recycling facility [ask your contractor for details].</p> |
|  | <p>Cooking oil recycling</p> <p>Cooking oil can be collected, recycled, and refined into a wide variety of products, including biofuel and detergents. Commercial oil recyclers can provide oil supply, on-site storage, collection, and recycling services.</p> |

Infrequent waste streams for cafes and restaurants (where applicable):

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|  | <p>Lighting recycling</p> <p>Fluorescent lights are banned from landfill. They can be dropped off at a local recycling centre or collection services can be arranged. In leased buildings, the building manager or contracted electrician should manage and recycle lights. Lights are separated into glass, metals and mercury and recycled.</p> |
|  | <p>E-waste recycling</p> <p>E-waste is banned from landfill. E-waste can be dropped-off at your local transfer station and collection services are also available for commercial entities. MobileMuster offers drop off or post back services for mobile phones. Computers, laptops, phones and other electrical or electronic equipment are taken apart and metals and plastics are recycled into new products.</p> |
|  | <p>Battery recycling</p> <p>Metals are recycled and chemicals captured and treated. Batteries for recycling can be dropped off or collection organised for large amounts. Note that lead acid batteries are banned from landfill.</p> |

Additional recycling options for better practice

In addition to providing a quality eating experience, the food service industry is under increasing pressure to meet the growing sustainability expectations of their customers. The following services may help your business to further increase its recycling levels.

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|  | Comingled recycling Glass [e.g. jars], hard plastic containers, metal cans, and paper/cardboard are sorted at a Material Recovery Facility and sold to make into new products. Materials should be loose, not bagged when placed in bulk bins by staff or cleaners. Council comingled recycling bins may be available for smaller cafes/restaurants. |
|  | Plastic milk container recycling If your business has large quantities of plastic bottles and containers to recycle organise a commercial collection service or drop them off at a local recycler. If your business does not generate large quantities of plastic bottles and containers, use the comingled recycling bin. |
|  | Coffee grounds and food scraps Consider giving food scraps [including coffee grounds] to customers, staff, community groups and community gardens for use in compost, worm farms, and as chicken feed. This is a great way to encourage a local circular economy. |
|  | Dry waste for energy recovery Instead of landfill, difficult to or non-recyclable items are processed at a local facility and turned into a fuel source to replace natural gas in local industries. |

Staff engagement

Involve staff in waste improvement initiatives. If you track and report on waste generation and recycling, you can communicate to staff on progress and performance, and celebrate achievements. Remember to keep communication positive and encouraging.

Tip 14

Business owners/managers should openly and actively encourage all staff to monitor waste practices and provide mechanisms for staff to give feedback about how to improve practices.





Tip 15

Include waste management in staff inductions so everyone knows what is expected and how to dispose of waste correctly. Poor food preparation is a key contributor to food waste generated in restaurants and cafes. Therefore, staff need to learn how to store and cook food correctly, keep the premises clean, and avoid cross contamination.

Setting up good bin signage and explaining how to use the waste and recycling bin systems can help staff correctly use them.

Tip 16

Ensure that bin signage is:

- Clear and uses pictures [avoid lengthy lists of materials].
- Consistent throughout the restaurant/cafe and matches the bins provided.
- Aligned with the Australian Standards bin colours:
 -  Food and organics/green waste recycling
 -  Comingled recycling
 -  Paper/cardboard recycling
 -  General waste

Green Industries SA has a range of recycling and waste bin signage to guide source separation, help increase waste diversion and reduce contamination.

Please contact us at

<https://www.greenindustries.sa.gov.au/recycling-and-bin-signage>

Who manages/collects your waste and recycling?

Smaller cafes and restaurants may have access to their local council's three-bin kerbside service. Check the [Which Bin?](#) Website to see what can be placed in council bins.

Additional recycling services can be provided by a commercial contractor or you can drop off items at specified locations.

If you are in a shopping complex, ask the centre's management about setting up a recycling system. Look for extra places where recycled material can be collected inside and outside the building.

Larger cafes/restaurants may have their own contracts for waste and recycling services. Consider working with neighbouring businesses to procure organic waste and recycling collections that you can share, where appropriate. It may be more cost effective for businesses to work together.

Other options may include:

- setting up an onsite compost system and using the compost on a kitchen vegetable/herb garden
- giving away used coffee grounds to customers/community groups to use on private/community gardens

Other resources and support

Green Industries SA provides more resources and support for businesses to improve their waste and recycling practices. To find out more visit <http://www.greenindustries.sa.gov.au/BSP-overview>



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