

How to Outsmart Your Competition on Food Waste

10 Misconceptions You Need
to Know About Food Waste



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Outsmart your competition

In the creative, passionate and busy world of hospitality, distinguishing yourself from a group of competitors is rarely a straightforward task.

Nonetheless, breakthrough food waste technology presents an opportunity for businesses across the industry to operate on higher profit margins and lead their competitors. Through the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) to cut food waste, businesses can reduce food costs in the range of 3-8%, with chefs saving valuable time by not preparing food that ends up in the bin. Crucially, AI technology ensures that businesses can be equipped with the systems to help them flourish in the future. On the commercial side, businesses can build long term value by aligning their operation with a

growing customer base interested in reducing environmental impact. Additionally, as an increasing number of food waste regulations form around the world, creating a food waste strategy today could mitigate financial or reputational risk in the future. The business case is clear - [restaurants can return over \\$8 for every \\$1 invested in cutting waste.](#)

However, in Winnow's experience of helping hundreds of professional kitchens to measure and manage food waste, we noticed that we were hearing the same misconceptions about waste - or a lack of it - over and over again. This guide looks at each of these misconceptions that prevent people taking action on reducing their food waste, and in the process missing a valuable opportunity to get ahead of their competitors.



Misconception #1

We do not produce any food waste

It is common for kitchens to think they run efficiently and can't be optimized. In our experience, staff working in busy and often stressful kitchen environments underestimate the levels of food waste within their operation. Waste can occur if too much food is prepared, from cooking errors or returned from customers plates.

Reality

In complex catering environments producing food at scale, it's almost impossible to accurately guess the average level of waste.

[The Executive Chef at Pullman Dubai](#), Dwayne Krisko, says that even if your food cost is in line, it's impossible to be everywhere 100% of the time to know what gets wasted. At Winnow, every customer undergoes a 'baseline' period to collect waste data and identify the average volume and the possible savings of reducing food waste.

The baseline identifies the stages of operation high in waste (e.g. overproduction), the times of the day (e.g. breakfast), and the most wasted items by value (e.g. chicken).

Food waste technology continues to track this waste to ensure sustained reductions over the long term.

Misconception #2

Sold food is not our concern

Many people think that if the dish has already been sold, it does not matter if it gets wasted. If a customer is not hungry or takes more food than they can eat, the issue is beyond the control of the kitchen.

Reality

Wasting food has, in fact, many distinct costs: staff time to prepare the food, added cost for the customer or less profit for the kitchen, and the environmental cost of preparing food only for it to be wasted. With the additional scrutiny on the topic of food waste, the reality is that any wasted food produced in your operation presents a reputational risk. In the catering industry, caterers are including food waste initiatives in new business pitches as a key point of difference.



Misconception #3

Food waste is inevitable with lavish buffets

With customers around the world expecting luxurious and full buffets is it possible to reduce food waste? The appearance of a full canteen is a requirement in a large proportion of businesses, and many hotels and restaurants doubt it is possible to juggle efficiency with customer demand.

Reality

There are many things you can do to minimise buffet waste while presenting a full, beautiful buffet of food. You can still maintain a full offer by putting high value items in certain positions or in different bowl sizes and refilling those items more.

Some buffets have also moved to a system where they table serve selected items to minimise waste.

By reducing waste from their buffets, hotels like [Club Med Bali](#) were able to reinvest the savings in better quality products to improve customer satisfaction.

Misconception #4

Food waste is unavoidable and not worth focusing on

People think that food waste is unavoidable, in addition to categorizing both avoidable and unavoidable waste together. However, food waste is avoidable and the distinction is important. In the hospitality industry, food trimmings and coffee grounds may be unavoidable, but what about the nutritious food going in the bin?

Reality

Hospitality professionals need to focus on the avoidable food waste within your control. If you understand what you are throwing away, you can implement changes to how your kitchen operates.

At Winnow, we find that you can reduce waste by 50% within the first year of operation once you have the data to make changes.

For example, at [Sofitel Kunming](#) in South China, the team reduced food waste by over 50% in the first year - a considerable saving for the business.

Misconception #5

Food waste does not cost me a lot of money

Kitchens believe food waste contributes 1-2% of their overall food budget. However, according to Winnow data, food waste on average costs kitchens between 4-12% of total food cost. In some cases, this figure can be as high as 20%. Food waste is a hidden cost for many businesses. This is because it impacts a range of expenses in addition to the price of the food, including labour costs, waste disposal fees, and electricity and gas consumption. [In the US alone, \\$160 billion of food is binned each year.](#)

Reality

As a whole, Winnow estimates that food waste costs the hospitality industry \$100 billion annually.

Particularly in an industry where margins are tight, this is a huge opportunity. Individual kitchens using Winnow can cut their overall food spend by 3-8%, and increase profits by thousands of dollars.

Misconception #6

Tracking food waste takes too much time

People think that food waste tracking has to be time consuming and complicated. This is because traditional methods of continually weighing waste and recording the results on pen and paper were inefficient and inaccurate.

Reality

Cutting-edge technology now underpins food waste solutions to automate what was historically a slow and tedious process. In 2019, [Winnow launched an artificial intelligence \(AI\) enabled solution](#) that identifies food as it is thrown away by a camera that sits over the bin. This data is compiled in the cloud and shared with the kitchen team to help them reduce food waste. The insight is more accurate with Winnow Vision too. The tool can accurately state which foods are wasted, surpassing human intelligence.



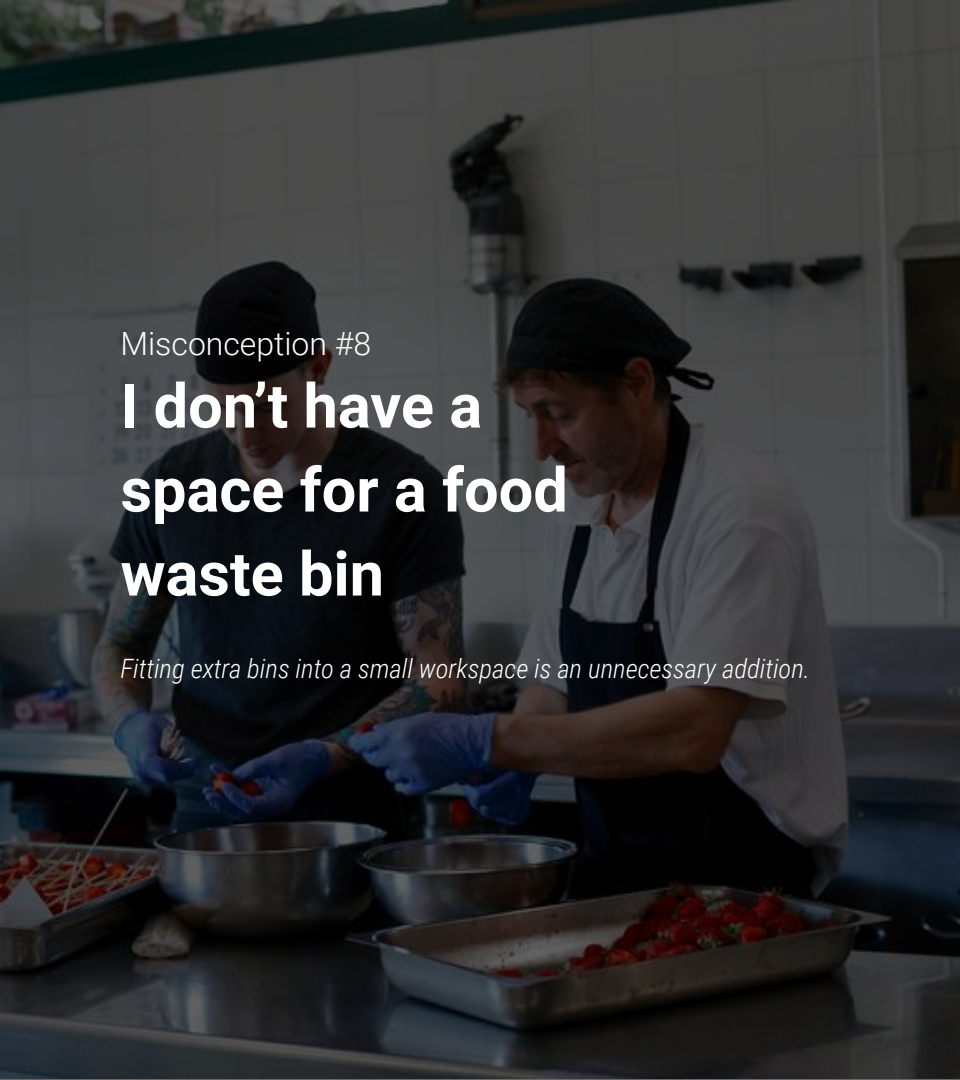
Misconception #7

My organisation or I will look bad if we talk about food waste

Many organizations believe that if they are honest about their food waste, they will receive negative media attention. In kitchens, staff are worried that food waste will make their performance look bad and they will be blamed for it.

Reality

Nearly all hospitality businesses will concede that they still have some way to go to reduce food waste. As a business with food at the centre, hospitality businesses have an opportunity and responsibility to lead the industry and inspire customers to also reduce waste. In 2017, [IKEA](#) set the ambitious target of reducing their food waste by 50% before August 2020, and are working globally with Winnov to achieve their goal.

A photograph of two chefs in a kitchen. They are wearing black hats and aprons. One chef is wearing a black shirt and the other a white shirt. They are both wearing blue gloves and are focused on preparing food on a stainless steel counter. There are several metal bowls and a tray of food in front of them. The background shows a kitchen wall with some equipment.

Misconception #8

I don't have a space for a food waste bin

Fitting extra bins into a small workspace is an unnecessary addition.

Reality

Food waste is heavier than most general waste streams resulting in many collectors using a smaller bin such as a 240l or 400l bin.

These bins will still hold a good weight and are used to stay within the health and safety limits for moving and lifting them. Should you require a smaller solution than a 240l bin there are options such as bags and food caddies which can be used.

Reality

At first glance the price for food waste collection may seem relatively high compared to the larger general waste containers. However, if you implement significant steps to reducing your waste, you can also cut collection costs. In New York for example, this can be significant - waste collections can be as much as \$600 for two large collections each week.

Misconception #9

Food waste collections are expensive

Food waste collections are more expensive than general waste containers, therefore the value for caterers in tackling food waste is less. This is particularly an issue outside of cities where the cost of collections are priced higher.

Reality

Bins with lids keep most of the odour within the bin and also deter any pests. By collaborating with your waste collection partner, you can arrange additional collections if it is not enough to suit your business.

Misconception #10

A bin full of food waste will be smelly

Designated food waste bins emit unpleasant odours caused by food waste.



About Winnow

Winnow was founded with a simple belief that food is too valuable to waste. Yet measuring food waste is a challenge for all commercial kitchens with up to 20% of all food purchased going to waste (typically 5%-15%).

Our mission is to connect the commercial kitchen, create a movement of chefs, and inspire others to see that food is too valuable to waste.

Winnow develops Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to help chefs run more profitable and sustainable kitchens by cutting food waste in half.

From city centre hotels to casinos and cruise ships, Winnow offers a solution for every kitchen. Our analytics platform and reporting suite helps teams pinpoint waste quickly, allowing enterprises to drive significant waste reductions at scale.

Our hardware options range from simple digital measurement tools to our AI enabled Winnow Vision which 'learns to see' food being thrown in the bin. We understand that achieving and improving profitability in a professional kitchen can be a challenge. We will work with you every step of the way.

Get in touch to continue the conversation
[**info@winnowsolutions.com**](mailto:info@winnowsolutions.com)



Can Winnow Help You?

1. Interested in reducing food waste and cost?
2. Want to gain better understanding of food waste in your kitchens?
3. Are you spending ~100K\$/year on food in each of your kitchens?
4. Do you prepare some or most of your food in advance?
5. Does your organisation have more than 10 sites with kitchens?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, speak to one of our food waste experts to find out what reducing food waste could mean for your business.

[Get a Free Consultation](#)