

Greene King drives down food costs in pub chain

Summary

Branocs Tree Hungry Horse pub, part of Greene King, took part in an eight week trial to actively monitor and reduce food waste. By using a smart meter to measure food waste the hotel was able to identify savings and reduce the amount of food being thrown away through:

- Improved portion control, by ensuring that Green King meal specifications were carefully adhered to;
- Optimising the use of ingredients; and
- Improved management of the quantities of food prepared after the main evening peak service.

The trial successfully **reduced food waste per cover by around 15% and achieved substantial financial savings**. This equates to a reduction across the site of around 4 tonnes per year.

Background

Leading pub operator and brewer Greene King operates more than 200 Hungry Horse pubs across the country. They are a founding member of the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, which is taking action on reducing waste and increasing recycling rates.



"Working with WRAP as part of our commitment to the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, we have been able to drive down food waste significantly through a combination of small changes. The trial has been a great success, making a real difference to our bottom line."

Jeff Bones, Manager

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Food waste trial saves money

Smart monitoring & making changes

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Food waste monitoring system

A smart meter to measure food waste, from Winnow Solutions, was installed in the kitchen to track kitchen waste and customer plate waste. The system linked digital floor scales, for the food waste bin, to a tablet computer. This allowed food waste to be quickly weighed and categorised by selecting icons on the tablet touch screen. The process was simple to use and took just seconds for each transaction.

This weight data was linked to cost information to calculate the 'true cost of food waste' for the Branocs Tree Hungry Horse pub. Data was transmitted to a remote server and analysis undertaken to produce daily and weekly reports.

These reports were provided to the site manager showing:

- waste weight by category (absolute and per cover);
- waste value (absolute and as a percentage of sales); and
- suggested waste reduction improvements for discussion and action.

Weekly calls were also made to discuss the data and the improvement opportunities.

By using this information, the site manager and head chef were able to gain a much clearer understanding of the source of the food waste, prioritise improvements and track their impact. The nature of the Hungry Horse pub operation meant that the food waste was largely plate waste, although some avoidable preparation and spoilage waste was also identified.

Achieving cost reductions

The analysis identified a range of relatively small and often simple opportunities, which together could achieve notable cost savings:

- Portion specifications and procedures for items such as chips, peas and beans were re-examined. Portion sizes had crept up beyond the set specifications and the excess was often left by customers. Reverting back to specification levels, for example through more careful use of portion scoops, meant that significant reductions in waste were possible.
- The use of vegetables could be optimised further, through improving the utilisation of the item and reducing unnecessary waste. For example, by carefully removing only the very central core of a pepper, at least 10% extra could be gained. Similar gains were made by not automatically discarding a large number of outer layers of onions.
- Too much food was also being prepared late in the evening service period, after the main evening peak, which led to unnecessary spoilage. For example, defrosting a whole bag of 12 chicken portions at 8pm meant that some of these may have been wasted. By actively considering bookings and customer numbers in the restaurant, requirements for defrosting and other preparation could be more carefully controlled, and wastage of high value ingredients reduced.

The trial achieved a significant reduction in food waste, over the nine weeks, of around 15% per cover. This equates to a potential saving of around 4 tonnes of food per year at this one pub.

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Further improvements

A number of simple improvements, made at the Branocs Tree Hungry Horse pub, have resulted in substantial savings. These improved practices could be rolled out across all of Greene King's Hungry Horse sites. The approach taken at the Branocs Tree Hungry Horse pub could also be successfully applied across the other Greene King brands (such as Old English Inns, Loch Fyne Seafood & Grill and Belhaven Pubs), and a further trial is planned. This will potentially bring even greater benefits and savings to the wider group.

In addition to the on site improvements, further opportunities were identified. For example, the tracking of plate waste highlighted particular dishes on the menu that were responsible for the majority of the waste, so further savings could be achieved through wider changes to the menus and specifications.

Top tips

- ✓ Actively track what food is being thrown away.
- ✓ Check your specifications (e.g. meal element portions and preparation procedures) and make sure these are met consistently.
- ✓ Prepare and cook in small batches to respond to demand 'on the go'.
- ✓ Make the most of meat, fruit and vegetables through careful trimming (e.g. reducing the end waste on carrots).
- ✓ Where possible use pre-portioned meal elements.
- ✓ Take particular care over portioning of chips, veg and salad garnish.
- ✓ Maximise the use of prepared and not served food in daily 'specials'.
- ✓ Offer 'lite' bite versions of main courses.
- ✓ Ask customers if there are meal items they don't want that are included in a meal, such as tomatoes with breakfast and steaks.
- ✓ Reduce side dish and buffet plate and bowl sizes, but allow top ups.

The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement

In June 2012, WRAP launched the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, a voluntary agreement to support the sector in reducing waste and increasing recycling rates.

For more information, as well as tools and guidance, on WRAP's work with the Hospitality and Food Service Sector, visit www.wrap.org.uk/hospitality or email hafs@wrap.org.uk

WRAP's vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership to help businesses, individuals and communities improve resource efficiency. Established as a not-for-profit company in 2000, WRAP is backed by government funding from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

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