Reducing Food Waste
Within the Iowa City Community

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RECYCLING COORDINATOR
• 2017 Iowa Statewide Waste Characterization Study participant
• 25% food waste (34,000 tons of material)
RESPONSE TO DATA

• Reduce the amount of food waste ending up in trash

• **How?** (In order of priority, not in order of action)
  1. Food waste source reduction
  2. Composting
STEP BY STEP FOR IOWA CITY RESIDENTS

• Step 1: Learn to divert food waste out of residential trash (a.k.a. curbside composting)
• Step 2: Learn to reduce amount of preventative food waste ending up in curbside compost cart
RESIDENTIAL: LANDFILL DIVERSION THROUGH CURBSIDE COMPOSTING

- Carts available to curbside customers (for food waste + yard waste):
  - 95-gallon cart
  - 25-gallon cart
- 2-gallon kitchen food scraps container

For more info, visit www.icgov.org/organics
COMMUNITY EVENTS: LANDFILL DIVERSION THROUGH COMPOST CARTS

• 95-gallon organics carts available to events
  – Taste of Iowa City
  – Jazz Fest
  – Soul Fest
  – Arts Fest
  – Iowa City Block Party
• City staff assists with delivery and pickup of carts
BUSINESSES: SOURCE REDUCTION OPPORTUNITY

• Reduce, donate, and then compost.
• Iowa City Compost Facility does not currently have capacity to add on a large amount of commercial entities to program.
• Composting is not the main solution.
• Business Plan:
  – Offer source reduction information
    • Food Recovery Challenge
    • Food: Too Good to Waste
  – Table to Table partnership
  – Composting options
MAKE RESIDENTS AWARE OF THEIR FOOD WASTE...

• Composting is a good first step because they have to form the habit of putting food in a different container, meaning they can see how much food waste accumulates.

• Once resident gets a better idea of the amount and type of food waste being composted, we can figure out how to reduce it!
PREVENTATIVE VS. NON-EDIBLE

• Preventative: food that should have been eaten and instead was wasted
  – Moldy bread
  – Plate scrapings
  – Expired food

• Non-edible: parts of food that traditionally are not eaten
  – Banana peels
  – Coffee grounds
  – Meat bones
  – Egg shells

Image source: City of Ventura
FOOD: TOO GOOD TO WASTE

- **Smart Shopping**: Shop with Meals in Mind
- **Smart Storage**: Fruits and Vegetables Storage Tips
- **Smart Prep**: Prep Now, Eat Later
- **Smart Saving**: “Eat First” Sign
“WHY IS FOOD WASTE SO BAD?”

- Goal: close the knowledge gap!
- Do not assume that residents know what happens when food waste ends up in a landfill. Education needed:
  - Organic material in landfill = Methane production
  - Organic material in landfill = Resources lost (energy, water, transportation, money)
- Preach the hierarchy.
  - Composting is better than landfills, but not the best option.
EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT!

• Communication with public:
  – News releases
  – Social media (Facebook, Next Door, Twitter)
  – Utility bill insert
  – City website
  – City Channel 4 and other press coverage

• Education on what is and is not compostable
  – Every cart distributed is paired with an informational handout

• Kitchen compost container just for kitchen, not curb!

• Each bin color means something different
  – Composting is yellow
  – Recycling is blue
  – Trash is green
SUCCESES

• Breaking down barriers from the kitchen to curb with 2-gallon kitchen food scraps containers to reduce mess and increase ease

• Carts offered a valuable opportunity to promote the program and to educate on the RIGHT way to participate
  – Reached audience we would not normally reach because of the lure of a new fancy cart
OBSTACLES

- Difficult to predict how many carts to order
- Defining “organics” and overall word choice for best understanding
  - “Food waste” vs. “food scraps” vs. “organics”
  - Organics (Food waste + Yard Waste)—this must also mean...
    - Garden hoses
    - Mulch bags
    - Plastic yard netting
    - Food packaging
    - Butter and cream packets
- Dramatic influx of carts requests and questions from public
  - Prepare staff to deal with large request volumes and customer service needs
ONGOING SOLUTIONS

• Expand Food: Too Good To Waste in creative ways
  – Rap song
  – Events
  – Highlight one action at a time
• Continue to distribute organics carts as budget and staff capacity allow
• Look into other food waste reduction resources
what the font?

40% of food is wasted in the U.S. Think that’s garbage? Say it with this font.

Here’s an unsettling fact: Americans waste about 100,000 tons of food each day.

As part of our Erase Food Waste movement, we’re challenging eaters everywhere to think before they toss—starting with a font made from food waste. The font is 100% free, because we’re 100% salty about food waste.

What will you create with the font? Explore the story and tag your inspiring work with #EraseFoodWaste.

GET THE FONT →
REFED: RESTAURANT FOOD WASTE ACTION GUIDE 2018

SAVE THE FOOD RESOURCES

5 WAYS TO REVIVE FOOD

Source: https://www.savethefood.com/
THANK YOU!

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