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# Universities and the Food Recovery Challenge, 1-19-12



Preserving Resources,  
Preventing Waste

## ***Preventing Food Waste at Campus Events***



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# Waste audits



- Measure what's actually in your trash
- Show Eco-Reps that food and recyclables are still wasted
- Chart progress from year to year

# Results of Harvard Waste Audit, 2011

Random sample of Harvard dorm trash, which yielded by weight:



41% papers, boxes, bottles & **CANS** that could have been recycled. Cups, chipboard, papers, books, magazines, bottles, cans (0 news).

## COMPOST



38% organics & liquids  
**(including 20% food scraps,**  
more than half the total, that could have been composted)

## REUSABLES

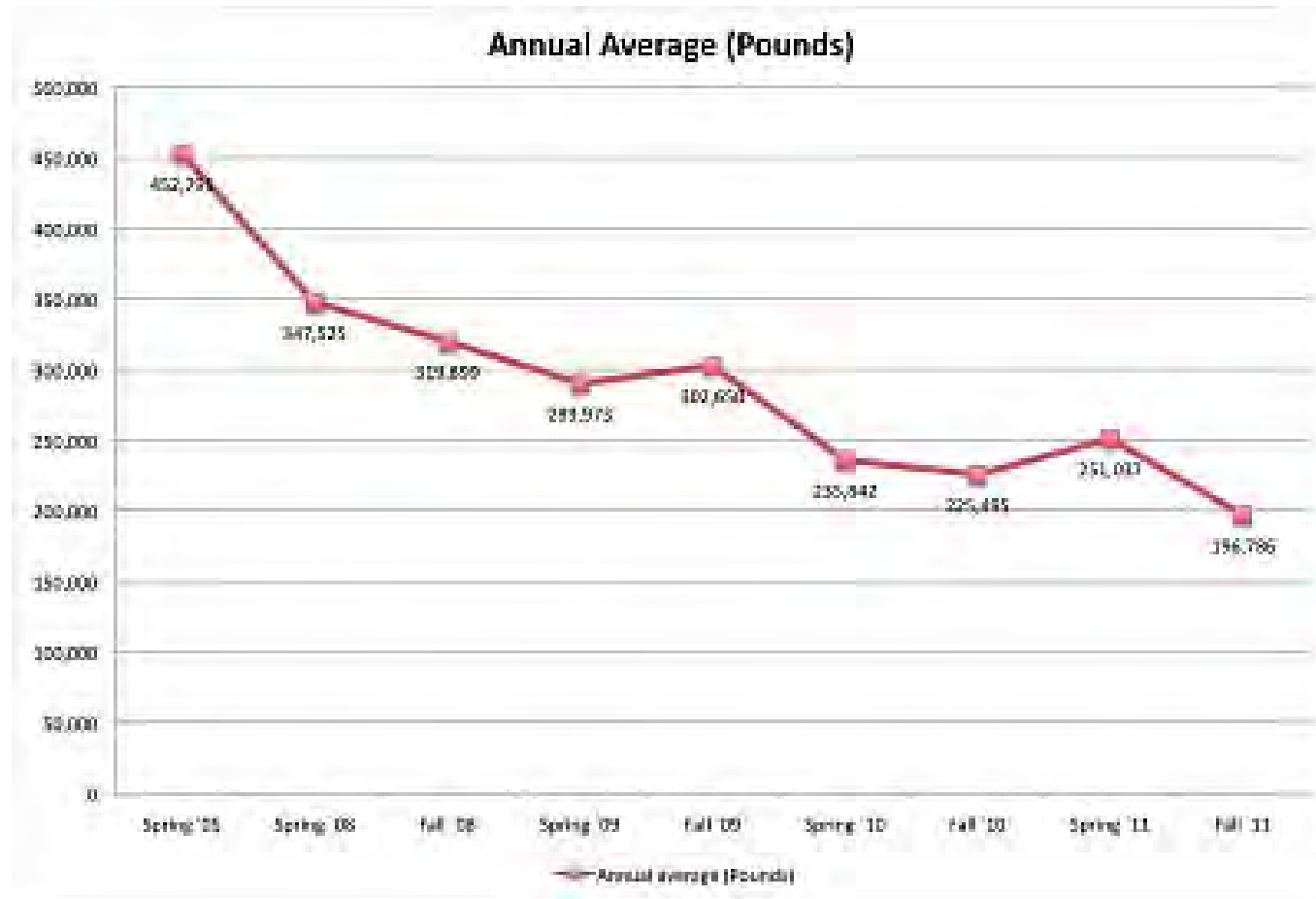
4%, mostly clothing & office supplies



Residues (“real” trash)

18% , mostly films, foams, personal hygiene materials for which sustainable substitutes are needed

# Food Waste Audit charts drop in post-consumer food scraps



Per plate waste drop: from 5 ounces/meal to <2 ounces/meal

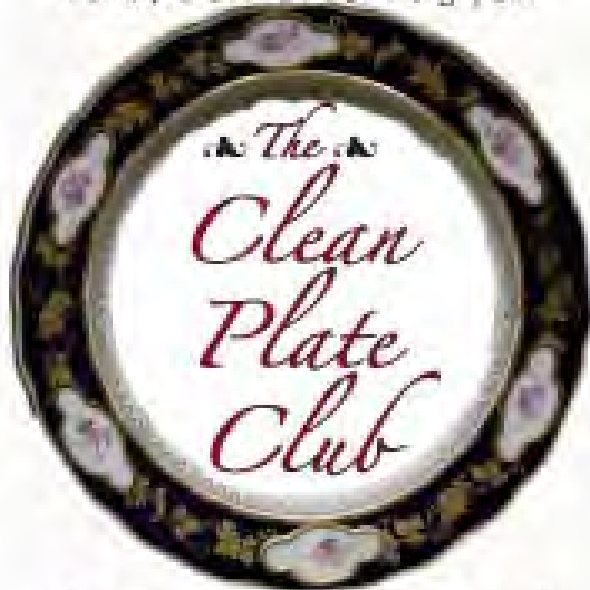
# Waste Prevention: Back of the House

- Order the correct amount of the food your students will actually eat, e.g. serve Cap'n Crunch,<sup>®</sup> not (cheaper) Pirate Pete's
- Research students' favorites: "Julie Smith's Mom's Chicken Pot Pie"
- Train staff to minimize waste: TrimTrax
- Buy pre-peeled, pre-chopped vegetables to minimize prep waste and reduce transport carbon footprint *Caution: labor relations concerns due to reduced staffing needs*



# Waste Prevention: Front of the House

CONGRATULATIONS  
YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN



Over one year, the average U.S. citizen will generate 475 pounds of food waste.

Food waste leads to more landfills, an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and the depletion of natural resources.



THANK YOU FOR NOT TAKING  
MORE THAN YOU CAN EAT.

- Self-service allows individual portion control
- Praise for students leaving no edible food
- Collective shaming: accumulate 30 minutes of plate scrapings and display—“Yuck” factor is powerful.
- Go trayless *Caution: Athletes may not get enough calories; people with eating disorders may hear wrong message*



## Food Waste Prevention at Special Events

1. Order the correct amount of food that your guests will want to eat. Wasting food is a sin in every religion (e.g., **John 6:12**).
2. Encourage your caterer to pack any complete meals in **reusable bags**. That way guests can take food away with them to eat later.
3. **Donate servable food** meeting strict time-and-temperature guidelines for food safety to a non-profit organization after the event. (e.g., Center for Homeless Veterans, Boston Food Bank, Rosie's Place, "RockIt and WrapIt" model). Good Samaritan laws will protect you in most states.
4. Because compost is used by farms and landscapers, the **quality** of the materials that we send to composting facilities is very important. ***Event hosts are responsible for ensuring that contamination of event compost bags does not occur. Composting is easy, but clear communication to event participants about what can and cannot be composted is critical.***



Brandon Geller '08 and REP Captains Annie Baldwin '13 and Akshay Sharma '14 help Harvard Freshman parents recover recycling and composting to boost Harvard's GameDay Challenge recycling rate to 71% this year. Photo by Rob Gogan



## At the Event: Best Practices

1. Put out signage. Taping actual objects to the bins is VERY helpful.
2. Check for any non-compostable materials brought by the caterer.
3. If possible, staff the waste stations to ensure that compost is not contaminated.
4. Train custodians, servers, bartenders, and volunteers. Bar kits with “slops buckets” extremely popular for recovering food scraps.
5. Make a brief announcement about event composting (remind attendees that contamination is harmful to those who use our compost and make it clear to guests what can be composted).
6. Compost bin **Signage**: Download signs from [green.harvard.edu/reducing-waste/downloads](http://green.harvard.edu/reducing-waste/downloads) Photos by Philip Kreycik



# Compost on campus as part of Organic Landscape Maintenance system



Landscape Services picks up coffee grounds and selected fruit and vegetable peels as ingredients to make composts and teas as horticultural nutrients on campus grounds.



# Pick-up & Commercial Composting Off-campus



- Many farmers do not want “compostable” flatware, even if certified by BPI
- Prepare to pay more to deliver compostables which include serviceware
- Try to find local sites to receive food scraps, or at least find ways to incorporate composted food scraps into local soils

# Special equipment for more efficient composting



Food pulpers (like Somat unit shown above) take ground pulp piped from two locations in building and spin it 50% dry (about the consistency of cooked rice).



Food pulp falls through chute to 2-yard container for composter's rear-load compactor truck to take to compost location.



Back to the earth!



Pre-digesters (like BioGreen 360 to left) pre-compost food scraps to 20% of original volume, cutting loading dock space requirements while yielding a sterile soil amendment not attractive to pests for on-campus use.