



# How To Recycle Food Scraps a Guide for Restaurants



**metrovancouver**

SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR A LIVABLE REGION

## The way we manage our waste is changing

The Organics Disposal Ban came into effect January 1, 2015, and encourages residents and businesses to separate food waste from regular garbage.

The ban applies across the Lower Mainland and on all residential and commercial garbage, including restaurants.

The disposal ban includes all food, for example; meat, fish, dairy, bakery, produce, and food that is cooked or raw, leftover, packaged or unpackaged.

Instead of being thrown away, food scraps are separated from regular garbage, put into a green bin, and recycled into compost or biofuel.

The ban is enforced at Metro Vancouver and City of Vancouver disposal facilities, where loads of garbage are inspected for recyclable materials, before going to final disposal at either a landfill or waste-to-energy facility.

## Why recycle food waste?

- *Wasting food is costly to your business. Food in your garbage has been paid for three times: when purchased, when stored and prepared, and then when thrown away.*
- *Recycling food scraps can be cost effective. Many food businesses report cost savings by reducing their regular garbage service, and reducing their food waste.*
- *Environmentally conscious companies attract customers and retain staff.*
- *About 35% of all garbage sent to landfills is compostable, and most of that is food. Food disposed in the landfill generates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Instead it can be recycled into compost, and used to grow more food locally.*
- *When the government developed the current solid waste plan, businesses and the public strongly supported keeping food out of the landfills.*

## Using this guide

This guide was produced with input from local restaurants to help you set up food waste collection and recycling in your business. Talk to your waste hauler, landlord, or Business Association to supplement the information.

This is a shortened version of the more detailed *Closing the Loop with Organics Recycling*, available at [metrovancover.org](http://metrovancover.org), or call 604-432-6200.

Signage, staff room posters, 2-minute videos, and other resources can be found at [metrovancover.org/foodscraps](http://metrovancover.org/foodscraps).

**Questions? Or need contacts for service providers?  
Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604-732-9253.**

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“ It took staff some time to get used to [recycling food scraps], but once the rules and precedents were in place, that was it. It became part of everyone’s job description and they just started doing it.” – **Mike Wiebe, Owner of Eight 1/2 Restaurant Lounge**

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## Getting started

This guide outlines steps for a successful food scraps recycling program based on other restaurants’ experiences. Like any operational change, starting to recycle food scraps will take some planning and adjustments. Over time though, most restaurants report that food scraps recycling becomes a normal part of their business.

1. *Engage your staff*
2. *Look at your current garbage*
3. *Understand your hauling service contract*
4. *Assess work flow and recycling areas*
5. *Start in the kitchen*
6. *Create clear signage*
7. *Train, monitor and provide feedback to staff*

### 1. ENGAGE YOUR STAFF

Every business is different and has its own culture. Talking about your restaurant's food scraps program will help build interest and get staff support.

Which staff to include? Everyone involved in food from the front to the back door:

- *Owner, manager, chef, purchaser*
- *Serving, kitchen and custodial staff*
- *Others* \_\_\_\_\_
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Ask staff for ideas

- *What are your ideas or concerns?*
- *How will this impact your work station?*
- *Are there opportunities to save costs? Be more efficient?*
- *Are you interested in helping with program design? Consider a program naming contest.*

## 2. LOOK AT YOUR CURRENT GARBAGE

- Review the amount of food scraps and other recyclables in your garbage on a variety of business days by visually estimating the amount.
- Use a simple work sheet to record what you see.
- Your waste hauler might offer a service to assess your waste.
- On collection days, note if your bins are full, overfull, or underfull.

DATE	FOOD	CARDBOARD	SOFT PLASTIC PACKAGING	HARD PLASTIC CONTAINERS	OTHER/ ONE OFFS
Thurs MAY 7'15	50% <b>Bin Full</b>	20%	10%	10%	10% BROKEN PROCESSOR
Fri MAY 8'15	60% <b>Bin Overfull</b>	10%	30%	NONE	NONE

## Sample signage

**YES** to food scraps, plate scrapings, floral waste and food soiled paper.



**NO** to cups, cartons, containers, plastic bags, bread ties, rubber bands.



### 3. UNDERSTAND YOUR HAULING SERVICE CONTRACT

- *Consider shared service with your neighbouring businesses to save money and space.*
- *Check with your hauler to see if you can change the size or pick-up frequency of your garbage and green bins.*
- *Discuss bin cleaning options and use of bin liners.*

***Keep bins clean to manage pests and odour.***

***Options include:  
bin-cleaning service, increasing  
collection (in hot weather), or using  
paper products to  
absorb moisture***



#### 4. ASSESS WORK FLOW AND RECYCLING AREAS

You will need space for food scraps containers in the kitchen, and large green bins in the recycling area. Your hauler may have suggestions. Some things to consider are:

- *Let staff choose a container for their work station that suits their set-up and volume.*
- *Position green bins beside the garbage bins so staff can sort items conveniently.*
- *When a green bin is introduced, you can likely change to a smaller garbage bin.*
- *Talk to your waste hauler about types of liners you can use in your green bin. Plastics, including those marked biodegradable, do not belong in compost. For an extra cost, some haulers accept certain liners, which are removed before processing.*

**Separating food waste does not generate new garbage - the same food waste is moved to a different bin**



#### 5. START IN THE KITCHEN

Start your food scraps recycling program in the kitchen where food waste is concentrated and you can focus on a small number of staff. Once that is working, expand to other work areas.

Place bins in visible locations, at work stations where food waste is created and discarded. Keep the area clean, and make custom signage showing common products in your establishment.

Understand that it will take time to grow a program.

Allow for adjustments as your staff adapt to the program.

**Considering compostable packaging and foodware? Ask your hauler what is acceptable. Not all compost processors can take all products, even if they are labelled compostable or biodegradable.**



## 6. CREATE CLEAR SIGNAGE

Food scraps recycling is increasingly common at home, workplaces, schools and public spaces. The more consistent signage, colours and images, the more successful people are at sorting.

- *Find colour scheme recommendations at [metrovancover.org/foodscraps](http://metrovancover.org/foodscraps).*
- *Use images of common items found in your business to help staff make quick decisions.*
- *If you think people are 'always putting things in the wrong bin', ask how the signs can be more clear.*
- *Sample signage is provided on page 6.*



HAZARDOUS



MIXED  
CONTAINERS



MIXED  
PAPER



REFUNDABLES



ORGANICS



CARDBOARD



GLASS



GARBAGE

## 7. TRAIN, MONITOR AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK TO STAFF

- *Call a staff meeting to introduce the program and train your staff.  
Be available to answer their questions.*
- *Allow staff time to adjust. Garbage, recycling, and food scraps may end up in the wrong bins during the first few months.*
- *Let staff know how they are doing, including how much food they've composted.*
- *Identify ongoing problem areas and ask for suggestions for improvement.*
- *Award staff who go above and beyond with a mention at a staff meeting or a coffee card.*
- *Use social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) to celebrate what you're doing.*

***“We recycle  
our food scraps!***

***You helped this restaurant recycle  
over 200 garbage cans of food  
scraps last year. That means less  
garbage in the landfill.***

***Thank you!”***



## Final Checklist:

- Engaged all of the staff*
- Looked at our current garbage*
- Located and re-read my hauling service contract*
- Assessed work flow and recycling areas*
- Started food scraps collection in the kitchen, and got that right before expanding*
- Created clear signage*
- Trained staff*
- Have a plan to monitor progress and provide feedback*





## Need more help?

For information and resources, including case studies of other businesses, signage, staff room posters, the more detailed Closing the Loop guide for restaurants, a two-minute video for staff and more visit: [metrovancover.org/foodscraps](https://metrovancover.org/foodscraps), or call the Metro Vancouver Information Centre at 604-432-6200.

Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline at **604-REC-YCLE (604-732-9253)** for a list of waste haulers and consultants.



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