



Recycling Innovations in Commercial Kitchens

CULINARY CONNECTION



INNOVATIONS
FEATURE

USING CULINARY CREATIVITY AND PROVEN PRACTICES TO REDUCE KITCHEN WASTE

New and exciting innovations are hitting commercial kitchens every day. Over the past few decades we've seen groundbreaking equipment of all sizes, shapes, and applications introduced in the marketplace. Yet, countless concepts have stood the test of time—some for hundreds of years. Many innovations in history have been improved, changed, or simply revisited over time and have led to further advances in ideas and concepts. One such concept that seems "innovative" is merely a resurgence of a fundamental idea dating back to the origins of cooking in the most basic kitchen brigades: eliminating waste.

This topic has emerged across the globe in efforts to increase sustainability and slash waste in food service. In

2015, the National Restaurant Association reported that reducing food waste ranked ninth in the Top 20 Food Trends according to 1,300 chefs nationwide. Now, in 2018, this issue has become mainstream in all segments of our industry. Politics is now getting involved in cities like San Francisco, which requires its citizens to compost food waste, and Seattle, which launched a citywide compost program. The legislative material cites staggering numbers including one statistic that shocks many—America loses about 31 percent of its food to waste.

Organizations and educational institutions like the University of Michigan and the University of Washington are actively pushing sustainability programs and waste



reduction strategies pressured largely by student activists. But why is this suddenly a trending topic of environmental concern?

Actually, it's *not* a new initiative. Reducing or eliminating waste is a fundamental practice that has been described in some of the earliest cookbooks, including the early writings of Auguste Escoffier (the father of modern cuisine) in *Le Guide Culinaire*. It doesn't take much research to realize that this has been a topic of discussion and concern for centuries. In more recent times since Escoffier (mid-to-late 1800s), we've seen movements to eliminate waste in times like the Depression era when sausages, home-churned butter, and fermented/pickled vegetables became common.

Many of the "innovations" in kitchens over the past decade involve heavy use of convenience items that are often processed prior to entering the kitchen. We buy frozen pizza and have literally no idea what happens to the tomato vines/stems from the making of pizza sauce, or the ribs and seeds extracted from the bell peppers on our Supreme version. Due to a desire for convenience, many kitchens have digressed to a position

where staples in cuisine are simply purchased at or near a complete state.

At face value, this idea appears very alluring and the thought of not spending time (labor dollars) on work that we can outsource to corporations is going to positively impact our bottom line. However, over the past 20 years or so, our kitchens have basically abandoned the notion of applying use to ingredients that too often get tossed. And even if we did think about this matter when reflecting on our own operations, does our staff possess the knowledge and skillset necessary to achieve our goal of reducing waste?

BACK TO BASICS

In an attempt to "do our part," I propose the recycling of innovation. Let's explore and encourage fundamental culinary applications that for centuries have produced better flavor at a lower cost, and with much less impact on Mother Earth.

We can start with the production of one of the earliest kitchen's most basic recipes: stock. Today, many kitchens across the country utilize premade stocks, broths, consommés, or bases. Yet most of these same kitchens roast whole chickens, dice onions, and

de-stem fresh herbs in their daily operations. Based on this simple observation, it would be easy to teach staff to save the onion, celery, and carrot trimmings and to reserve the carcass from the roasted chicken to create a basic chicken stock in-house. If we don't typically roast enough chicken for a steady supply of fresh stock, we can easily freeze concentrated stock to add back to sauces or soups at a later date.

Using this approach we not only waste less food, we also avoid the cartons, cans, pouches, and other packaging associated with commercial products.

No chicken? No problem. Utilize the trimmings from all of your veggies to make a simple stock for vegetarian uses. A quick roast of beef/pork bones allows you to make darker, fuller stocks. Voila! We've recycled our waste into a delicious and responsible secondary ingredient with a plethora of applications.

Another great idea we've been exploring is the mind-blowing concept of reducing waste by simply not having any. OK, admittedly this isn't really that "mind-blowing," but it's a concept that has recently been recycled and is now innovating menus

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Rocky Dunnam, CEC, CDM, CFPP is Executive Chef at the Bivins Foundation, Childers Place, Bivins Memorial Nursing Home, Elizabeth Jane Bivins Culinary Center, NINETEEN49 Catering, and Rock'D Recipes in Amarillo, Texas.

nationwide. Notice terms like “root to stem” on signage and menus alike. We are really beginning to love vegetables and their natural beauty. Scrub vegetables—like potatoes and carrots—really well instead of peeling them. Leave some greenery attached to the top of radishes, carrots, or tomatoes.

Steven Satterfield, a chef from Atlanta, outlines this idea as well as others like making broths from mushroom stems or corncobs in his book, Root to Leaf. Imperfect vegetables are now very much desired as artisan and “more natural,” and should take the place of the modified versions we’ve been using for years due to their consistent size, shape, and color.

One visionary, Chef Dan Barber (a chef that I look up to a great deal), is actually doing full dinners where each dish is celebrating traditional “waste” in new, flavorful ways. Even Chef Daniel Humm of Eleven Madison Park and NoMad is on board for a cameo with Barber’s idea. These forward-thinking chefs are bringing back ageless ideas and introducing them to us (often for the first time) as innovative and revolutionary.

While these ideas might seem basic, like any innovation in commercial kitchens, the concepts are built on necessity driving the innovation itself. Today, the focus on environmental sustainability has forced us to recycle some of the old innovations and begin thinking about them in new ways.

Current food trends are indicating that this rejuvenated approach is really catching fire. Pickling, fermenting, root to stem, nose to tail, and composting are all on the industry’s top chefs’ to-do lists and should likewise be on yours.

Foodservice operations can exercise environmental responsibility in countless ways. Reduce, reuse, and recycle are practices we can all adopt. Train your foodservice staff to be good stewards of our natural resources. The industry is offering some pretty revolutionary and fascinating products to help on our quest for more sustainable practices. Think compostable cutlery, liquid food composting machines, low-flow faucets, motion-sensor lighting—the list goes on. So many innovations are out there to help you minimize or eliminate waste.

I’ve always remembered the adage that says those



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ensure that we maintain a responsible approach to feeding our guests for years to come.



who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Today, we need to learn from the past and from ancient civilizations to ensure that we maintain a responsible approach to feeding our guests for years to come. By recycling these past waste reduction practices into our current kitchens, we do just that. **E**

CE Questions | CULINARY CONNECTION



This Level II article assumes that the reader has a foundation of basic concepts of the topic. The desired outcome is to enhance knowledge and facilitate application of knowledge to practice.



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1. What is the title of Auguste Escoffier's book written to educate young chefs?
 - A. Le Guide Culinaire
 - B. Cooked
 - C. Kitchen Brigade
2. What percentage of food do we lose due to waste?
 - A. 10 percent
 - B. 24 percent
 - C. 31 percent
3. What are some basic ingredients of chicken stock?
 - A. Chicken carcass, herbs, onion
 - B. Chicken base, water, salt
 - C. Onion, celery, mushroom stems
4. What is the title of Chef Steven Satterfield's book about seasonal cooking?
 - A. Root to Leaf
 - B. Nose to Tail
 - C. Le Guide Culinaire
5. What chef is celebrating waste with full dinners dedicated to it?
 - A. Mike Scrivener
 - B. Tom Crothers
 - C. Dan Barber
6. Who is the executive chef at Eleven Madison Park that's on board with reducing waste by utilizing flavorful items traditionally discarded?
 - A. Daniel Humm
 - B. Matt Foxworthy
 - C. Marlana Fluke
7. What is used to give stock a darker color?
 - A. Roasted beets
 - B. Roasted beef/pork bones
 - C. Cola

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