

IOWA FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PROJECT

Case Study

Food Displaced = WASTE

Food Waste from Iowa City Diner Becomes Compost

Jon Wilson and Thomas Connolly opened Bluebird Diner in the Northside Marketplace district of Iowa City in October, 2008. Bluebird boasts delicious homemade food with a bright and cheery modern style atmosphere. It provides customers with a unique experience in the restaurant's conscientious decision to implement food waste diversion and responsible dining. Whenever possible, food waste from Bluebird enters a compost pile, not a landfill.

ADDING FOOD WASTE

Wanting to do more than just recycle, the owners decided to tackle food waste. Connolly and Wilson applied for, and received a Solid Waste Alternatives Program grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in 2011. The grant provided funds to reconfigure the dump station to allow the addition of food waste collection. It also helped them purchase bins, signage and containers. In addition to the SWAP grant, they also received an

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Waste tracking is a great method to help reduce food waste by modifying inventory according to results.

Waste tracking can also help reduce costs and create awareness when menu planning to prevent food waste.



easement from the city to allow for an outdoor collection and pick-up center for the food waste. A private hauling company picks up the food waste twice per week and takes it to the Iowa City Landfill and Recycling Center where it is matured into compost.

The challenges of implementing and maintaining the food waste diversion project for Bluebird Diner have been few. Straws and jam packets in the food waste need to be sorted out or contamination will be an issue. Presently, Connolly and Wilson have not found an affordable, compostable straw that can be safely added to the food waste and jam packets are not compostable but are essential to the diner's breakfast menu. Also, ongoing training for new staff is imperative to the success of the diner's diversion project. These are the only major challenges that face the diner in their project to reduce materials going to the landfill.

Food Displaced = WASTE

POSITIVE IMAGE

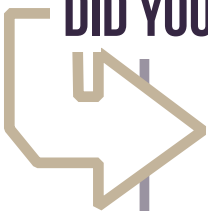
For Bluebird, this program is basically a financial wash but the public relations benefits are far reaching. Throughout the Iowa City community, Bluebird is considered to be a responsible option in dining that has a positive sustainable image. This is due to the fact that Bluebird sends 800 pounds of material per week to a compost facility and recycles cardboard and plastics as well. Customers feel good about eating at Bluebird knowing the owners are going above and beyond to maintain an environmentally-friendly business. And at the end of the day, the food waste is being diverted from the landfill to be reused as compost.

NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD WASTE COLLECTION

The owners of Bluebird Diner would like to see more restaurants in the Northside Marketplace divert food waste from landfills. It is Connolly's wish that a common area for the collection of food waste be established for the neighborhood restaurants. With space being an issue, a common collection area could help alleviate some of the difficulties restaurants face in implementing a food waste diversion program. Either way, Bluebird Diner is a great example of a successful and sustainable restaurant business in Iowa.



DID YOU KNOW?



Not only does composting beneficially utilize the nutrients in food waste; mixing compost with soil has many benefits as well. Some of these benefits include reducing the need for chemical fertilizers, promoting higher yields, removing oil, grease, and heavy metals from stormwater runoff, reducing the need for pesticides, and the facilitation of restoration of habitats.

