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Avoiding Food Waste – also during vacation!

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Food Waste” – that means all food that is lost, spoiled or discarded on its way from the field to consumption. In this way, more than one third of all food is wasted worldwide – and ends up in the garbage instead of our stomachs.

This is above all morally questionable, but also an environmental problem. Even in most private households enormous amounts of waste are produced every year, but especially the gastronomy plays an important role in this context, as numerous studies demonstrate. The sustainability initiatives [United Against Waste](#) (UAW) and [Futouris e.V.](#) carried out the project “Avoiding food waste” in three countries over 55 weeks in cooperation with seven hotels and eleven restaurants and confirm: Most of the food waste in hotels originates from overproduction and food that is left on the guests’ plates. Especially breakfast is often set up too abundantly and guests fill their plates too liberally.

In many areas the awareness for the topic of food waste has grown by now. This is forward-looking, it only needs a few simple measures to have a significant impact – by sound planning, a bit of creativity and clear communication.



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Catering for the kitchen: planning carefully while maintaining flexibility

A precise calculation and a well-conceived purchase are the most relevant aspects to prevent wastefulness. That means: keeping the stock as slim as possible so that nothing can spoil. At the same time; remaining flexible and resourcefully including the food that is available into the meal plan. If the demand for the fruit salad has not been very high on Monday, it makes sense to serve a delicious fruit cream on Tuesday. A useful tip: chose an open menu language. À la carte dishes do not have to be described down to the last detail – terms such as “winter salad” or “seasonal vegetables” do not raise false expectations and leave sufficient scope for utilizing the surplus.



Buy what is on offer

The potatoes are too big, the carrots too crooked? Industrial rejects are often cheaper and not a bit less delicious. This saves costs and prevents imperfect vitamin suppliers from being discarded. Maybe there is some fresh fish on offer? It could become the next meal of the day. Many guests appreciate a personal recommendation – and take it up gladly. This way, it is possible to influence a little what is ordered and consequently which products are processed.



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Those who have had the choice are more likely to finish their meal

A widespread concern of hungry guests as well as of gastronomes is a too small portion. However, not all guests share the same hunger. This is a problem that can be very easily solved by offering different serving sizes. In general, a lot of leftovers can be avoided by complying with the guests' wishes. Do they prefer a salad or vegetables, or croquettes instead of puree? If a guest is served exactly the food he felt like eating, he will certainly not leave it unfinished.



Instead of "All you can eat": Live Cooking and À la Carte

The majority of food waste is produced at the buffet. Everyone knows the problem: Everything looks delicious, the appetite seems to be enormous and in the end there is far too much on the plate. This problem can be solved by a few small measures. At the [Coconut Lagoon](#) run by the Indian Hotel group [CGH Earth](#) the first step is the inclusion of the number of attending guests into the calculation for the buffet. Besides small plates for the guests, small serving tureens that are regularly refilled have proved to be successful in a second step. For, what is often forgotten: not only the leftovers on the plates are discarded. Everything that has once been on the buffet has to be disposed of. Live cooking stations are a good way to serve appropriately sized portions offering a fresh preparation with a show effect. In general, CGH Earth increasingly focuses on offering a "à la Carte" menu. So, in contrast to the buffet, chefs prepare exactly those dishes that the guests have ordered. This allows for more accurate planning.



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Sensitizing guests and using a clear communication strategy

Guests should not have the impression that the restaurant kitchen is stingy with food. Thus it is important to clearly communicate the respective philosophy of sustainability. At the [Hubertus Alpin Lodge & Spa](#) the hotel's journal does not only include excursion tips but also facts and numbers on food waste and its importance. The clear message: "In order to make an important contribution to environmental protection, we decided to reduce our portions and accordingly minimize the mountains of food that our throwaway society produces. We also ask you to fill your plates consciously on buffet evenings. Of course, you will get a supplement if the served amount of food is not sufficient. We thank you for your understanding and your cooperation!"

Experience has shown that when the guests are involved and know why their plate is not over abundantly filled, there are usually no complaints. On the contrary, guests are happy to be an active part of the good cause.



Regional ingredients served according to the climate

The [Inkaterra](#) Hotels in Peru are also committed to a transparent communication strategy. Dishes served are prepared from regional products; the food is healthy and easily digestible in the special climate at an altitude of more than 3.400 meters. Moreover, the portions are reasonably sized. Of course, every guest gets enough food, but the focus lies on avoiding an oversupply. After all, a full stomach would not work with a light-footed exploration of the Andean highlands. During the tours of the surrounding area travelers get information on cultivation conditions and local products. And within the "Earth to Table" concept of [Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba](#) guests are invited to take an active part in the harvest on the 10-acre organic farm. This is an excellent way to create an understanding of the food process.



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If it is necessary: sustainable recycling

Despite all care and attention it is not possible to completely avoid producing food waste. Therefore, the disposal and recycling of the leftovers is all the more important. [Here, you can find a Green Pearls article on this topic.](#)