

Five steps to more sustainable catering

To inspire confidence and spread knowledge, we have developed bartlett mitchell's recipe for success guides for workplace and contract catering. You can download other guides from our website www.bartlettmitchell.co.uk/category/expert-guides

With scientists concerned about the climate emergency, it's critical for companies to improve their business sustainability. This applies to all areas of building management and soft services including on-site catering. Not only is sustainability vital for our planet and our future, but it makes great business sense. Many steps to improving sustainability also provide direct improvements to the catering budget as well!

bartlett mitchell is proud to be one of the most sustainable contract caterers in the UK. We have compiled our key suggestions of where and how you can work with your contractor to improve your catering's sustainability.

1. Change the menu

The food is the most important part of any catering offer. There are a lot of ways that sustainability can be improved while still ensuring your food is delicious, nutritious, and budget-friendly.

Go seasonal - shaping your menus around what's in season means less food needs to be imported, which makes it cheaper as well as more sustainable. Plus using fresh, in-season ingredients is always going to taste better! You can find good resources at www.eatseasonably.co.uk

Review portion size - many caterers dish up a whole dinner-size portion for their lunch. Reducing portion size cuts down on the amount of ingredients used. It also reduces the amount of food waste left over after customers have realised their eyes are bigger than their bellies.

Make use of leftovers - vegetables and animal bones both make fantastic stock, leftover meat can be used for a stew, and some of those veggies can also be pickled for a tangy side dish. By planning out your menus and using your leftovers, you can get the most out of every ingredient.

Give ugly veg and less popular cuts a chance - a wonky carrot still tastes great once it's diced up and put in a pot, and some of the most flavourful cuts of meat are the ones that usually get discarded or ignored. Even better: both of these are usually pennies to the pound compared to the aesthetically pleasing, popular stuff!

Source sustainably and ethically - one company operating sustainably means very little if we aren't encouraging our suppliers to do the same.



Food production is notorious for operating unsustainably and unethically, but it doesn't have to be! By ensuring that your produce is sustainably and ethically produced, you can rest easy knowing that you aren't contributing to some of the world's biggest environmental issues.

Get behind the hype - make sure your chefs are briefed on global agricultural production. Take avocados, a very popular plant-based brunch option, but are they responsible for deforestation and water shortages?

Plant herbs and produce on-site - take your sourcing one step closer to home: dedicate a space on-site to a herb or vegetable garden. In urban areas, rooftop gardens and hydroponic systems can be just as good, even if you don't have the ground space.

Engage with social enterprises - include them in the catering supply chain. Join Social Enterprise UK's 'Buy Social Corporate Challenge', which helps corporate businesses to better support social enterprises through their expertise.

Give start-ups a chance - bartlett mitchell's BM Inc is an entrepreneurial scheme for start-ups to give them their first opportunity in the catering sector. BM Inc businesses provide customers with new-to-market products that are frequently both healthy and environmentally-conscious.

2. Reduce waste and improve what you do with it

Waste is an inevitable part of life, and recycling only helps if it's handled properly. Here are ways to help reduce your waste and make use out of it too!

Understand the client's waste arrangements - every client and their local council handles waste and recycling differently. Be clear what materials can be recycled on-site, and how they need to be separated and collected.

Weigh your waste - use technology and a set of weighing scales with a tablet dashboard for chefs to take a picture of the weighed waste food. All the data is then uploaded to an online dashboard where the information can be monitored and compared to look for trends in food waste. In trials, using these systems is proven to reduce avoidable food waste by 23%, and help lower costs.



Start composting - especially useful for those on-site gardens, aerobic digestion and composting is a great way of dealing with food waste. Some councils will also collect food waste separately for this purpose.

Donate food waste - if you have food waste that's still safe to eat, reach out to charities such as City Harvest, who will redistribute it to those in need. Last year, bartlett mitchell diverted over 865kg of food away from landfill and into the hands of London's vulnerable people through City Harvest.

Hydration station - infuse water with fruit peel for customers to drink. It tastes delicious, contains no processed sugar and uses waste up. Micronutrient-rich fruits and vegetables provide thirst-quenching flavour with added health benefits!

Ditch the disposables - disposable cups, dishes and cutlery are a major part of the world's rubbish problem. We've recently published an expert guide focused on how you can reduce and eliminate these single use plastics from your catering.

bartlettmitchell.co.uk



Examples include:

- Sell reusable cups made of rice husks, which are fully biodegradable.
- Choose cups made from bamboo fibre, stainless steel or glass in place of plastic. Check that reusable cups don't contain melamine resin.
- Use compostable packaging (as long as there is a compostable waste stream).
- Ban all disposables for eating and drinking on site.

Closed loop recycling - if disposable cups are the only option, make sure they can be recycled and/or work with specialist cup recyclers who can separate the wax lining from the paper cup.

Utilise the circular economy - why not retail some of the products that are made from the products you recycle? Coffee grounds can become a body scrub or fertiliser for the garden!

Make energy - recycle used cooking oil and turn it into fuel and recycle used coffee grounds and turn them into eco-briquettes or logs.

Lose the loyalty cards - replace them with apps and save print and carbon emissions.

Pack it in - agree with suppliers how to minimise packaging when food and supplies are delivered to site and ensure it is made from 100% recycled plastic.



3. Minimise your power and water usage

Sustainability isn't just reducing waste and improving your supply chain: it also means reducing CO² emissions and water usage.

Switch off - make sure that when they aren't in use, all lights, POS systems and appliances are turned off. Obviously, your fridges and freezers need to keep running, but that heat lamp over an empty surface doesn't!

Red, amber, green - bartlett mitchell uses a simple system that tells catering staff which items need to be turned on when needed, or turned on in advance.

Rearrange the appliances - make sure that your kitchen is well-planned so that the ambient temperatures of the other appliances aren't making your fridges and freezers work extra hard to keep your ingredients chilled.

Batch together your washing - dishwashers use large amounts of hot water and electricity; the same amount of energy is required whether a load contains one plate or 100.

Keep it clean - the more debris that collects in and on fryers, ranges and grill surfaces, the harder they have to work, which uses more energy. Refrigerators and ice machines run 24/7, and if evaporator and condenser coils are clean, the equipment doesn't have to work as hard.

Regularly maintain your equipment - poorly maintained equipment has to work harder and use more energy. Maintain door seals, don't let warm air leak into the units. Not only that, but replacing a poorly maintained appliance when it inevitably breaks is much more expensive and environmentally unfriendly.

Switch up your equipment - when it is time to replace your equipment, switch to more energy-efficient ones or multi-functional designs. Under the Ecodesign and energy labelling directives it's easy to compare the energy efficiency of different models. The Catering Equipment Suppliers association (CESA) has also published a guide to decommissioning used catering equipment, which can be downloaded from their website.

4. Engage with your team, customers and suppliers

Achieve sustainability improvements by making sure the catering team and customers buy into it. By engaging with them, you help them understand the plan's importance and show them the impact of their efforts!

Run a campaign - kick-start customers' awareness of the part they play in eating sustainability. Plan a year's calendar of sustainability events.

Celebrate achievements - keep everyone informed of your progress and achievements. Encourage your caterer to host an annual or bi-annual event to celebrate these improvements and show them what's next. Our Green Roadshows are highly effective at engaging customers and encouraging behaviour change.



Farm to fork - display a map showing customers where your fruit, vegetables, meat and milk come from.

Turn sustainability into teachable moments - bartlett mitchell hosts workshops for our customers where they can learn how to improve sustainability in their own lives. This includes Waste-Ed, where attendees learn how to make the most out of all of those bits of food that usually go straight into the bin.

Read your wrap - print sustainability information on greaseproof paper that wraps deli goods to engage customers while they are eating. It saves on print - no need for table talkers or leaflets.

Table talk - host a round table with your sustainability representatives and other stakeholders - waste contractor, cleaning company and facilities managers - to agree the best way to collaborate to increase sustainability.

Support sustainable and environmental causes - sustainability efforts don't have to just be focused on our own front doors.

- For some clients, we sponsor water pumps in their names through Thirsty Planet.
- We also have an acre of rainforest in the Asháninka community in Central Peru. Their territory is at extreme risk from illegal logging and coca trafficking and their livelihoods depend on the Amazon rainforest.
- bartlett mitchell has also sponsored over 30 beehives in clients' names. Bees struggle to survive and they are vital to pollinate our crops.
- We donate our pre-loved uniforms to a school in the Gambia who use them as sports kit.

Clean eating - make sure caterers use cleaning products that are free of VOCs, phosphates, phosphonates, EDTA or APEs (see glossary overleaf) and that they are not tested on animals. Ensure bottles are made from 100% recycled plastic.

5. TIMITI

Try It, Measure It, Tweak It! Review and improve your sustainability processes continuously to take advantage of developments in technology, legislation, new research and to respond to changing customer expectations.

Further information

Please contact us if you would like innovative ideas to improve the sustainability of your workplace catering.

GLOSSARY

Aerobic Digestion: The oxygen-rich process that drives the degradation of compostable materials.

Anaerobic Digestion: The process in which micro-organisms rapidly break down biodegradable material such as food waste in the absence of oxygen, in order to produce methane and agricultural fertiliser.

APEs: When alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs) escape into the environment, they break down into chemicals called nonylphenols. Nonylphenols contaminate the food chain, including human breast milk, blood, and urine, are lethal to fish at low concentrations, and can affect human and animal development.

Biodegradable: Materials capable of breaking down safely and relatively quickly by bacteria or other organisms into raw materials, disappearing into the environment. Nearly everything will biodegrade if given enough time, but it is important to consider the rate at which it will break down, and whether the product will pollute the ecosystem. Oil-based plastics for example will degrade over thousands of years and leave chemical pollutants behind.

Bioplastics: Umbrella term for plastics derived from renewable biomass sources, such as vegetable fats and oils, corn starch, or microbiota. Not all bioplastics are biodegradable, nor biodegrade more readily than crude oil derived plastics. PLA is one of many types of bioplastic.

Compostable: Materials capable of degrading into a nutrient-rich compost under specific conditions. Compostable materials should be certified (EU 13432). These materials are often only suitable for commercial composting, not home composting. And there has to be the right 'mix'. If there's too much compostable packaging versus compostable veg it has to go to incineration.

Degradable: Materials capable of breaking down through chemical or biological processes.

Closed loop recycling: Waste is used to make another product i.e. using old plastic bottles and recycling them to make new ones.

Down-cycling: The process of recycling waste where the resulting product is of lower quality and functionality than the original material. Often this is due the accumulation of impurities, which may exclude the recycled material from high-quality applications e.g. RPET.

EDTA: Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid is a chelating agent that is common in household and commercial cleaning products. EDTA doesn't break down much in the natural environment, making it a persistent pollutant, which also contributes to the remobilisation of heavy metals. EDTA is potentially harmful to people and animals, causing problems from nausea to kidney damage.

EfW: Energy-from-waste. The process of generating electricity and/or heat directly through the combustion of waste. Increasingly seen as an alternative to landfill, although it is not a "clean" solution.

Home compostable: Capable of fully degrading in a 'traditional' compost heap, as opposed to a commercial compost facility.

MRF: Materials recovery facility

PET: Polyethylene terephthalate. Crude oil derived plastic commonly used to make drinks bottles and food containers. PET made in the UK has a considerably lower carbon footprint than cheap, imported PET.

Phosphorus: Traditional detergents are a source of phosphorus in waterways. Phosphorus causes over-fertilisation of aquatic flora like algae - a condition known as eutrophication. When these flora die, they decay and use up oxygen, causing the death of fish, invertebrates, and aquatic organisms. This is why we don't use cleaning products that contain phosphates or phosphonates.

PLA: Polylactic acid. Plastic-like material derived from plant starch such as corn or sugar cane that has similar characteristics to PET. PLA is one of many materials that falls under the umbrella term 'bioplastic'.

Recyclable: Able to be reprocessed into another product.

Recycled: Made from 1% - 100% converted waste material.

RPET: Recycled polyethylene terephthalate. Plastic derived from recycled PET plastic. RPET is lower quality than virgin PET and packaging will often contain a blend of PET and RPET. (Thirsty Planet is 50% rPET.)

Up-cycling: The process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless, or unwanted products into new materials of better quality or for better environmental value.

VOCs: Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, are organic chemical compounds that are able to evaporate under normal indoor conditions. VOCs can cause indoor air pollution and adversely impact the health of people, and animals, particularly those with underlying conditions like asthma.

WtE: Waste to energy. Generating energy by treating waste.

5 ways bartlett mitchell powers your business

Great food, eaten in great surroundings, can make a huge difference to your business. It's our job to help you make the most of this, in five ways...

1. Attracting the best people

Today's employees expect more from their workplace, and the food you provide is a crucial part of that – especially as many people now care more about what they eat. We can help you enhance your 'employer brand' by creating a food and drink offer that sets you apart from other companies. You'll have a happier, healthier, more engaged workforce, and find it easier to recruit and retain the most talented people.

2. Improving productivity

Well-fed employees are more productive. In 2013, the Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine argued that employees who eat well are 25% more likely to perform better. And, of course, if there's an appealing restaurant or café in the workplace, they will stay on site. More importantly, taking lunch and coffee breaks with colleagues encourages interaction. People talk more freely, information flows more easily, and your business benefits.

3. Enhancing your reputation with customers

When customers and other guests visit, you want them to enjoy the experience and be impressed by your workplace. An appealing, well-run café, restaurant or executive dining facility, serving great food, says a lot about your business. We can ensure your food, drink and hospitality reflect your brand style and values, and uphold its reputation.

4. Providing return on investment

Every square foot of your business premises is highly valuable, and the space you dedicate to catering and hospitality has to work hard for you. We ensure these facilities work efficiently and cost-effectively, making best use of your resources. Also, choosing us to manage your food and drink services leaves you and your team free to focus on running all the other vital aspects of your business.

5. Collaboration

You want your business to have a positive impact on the environment and your community – and your customers, staff and shareholders want to know about it. We can boost your reputation as a responsible organisation through our strong track record in sustainability. Our achievements become your achievements. And inspiring stories – like our Perkee coffee sourced from a Fairtrade cooperative in Nicaragua – can be associated with your brand.

About bartlett mitchell

bartlett mitchell is a multi-award-winning contract caterer. Our experienced, energetic and enthusiastic team takes a fresh approach to food and drink – with delicious results for you and your business.

We've grown steadily to a team of over 1,000 experienced foodies, serving 45,000 customers every day in over 90 locations in the UK.

We're also a responsible company, and can help yours to be one, too. We were the first contract caterer to achieve the Planet Mark and commit to measure, report and deliver our carbon footprint reduction.



Fresh ideas every time

Because we're an entrepreneurial business, we don't have a one-size-fits-all template that we attempt to force on each client. Our catering focuses on tailor-made solutions using innovation. We take time to develop bespoke ideas to match the client culture, employees' tastes and the physical environment.

We also recognise the importance of value for money. We work as a tight, agile team to develop solutions that reduce costs and use resources more smartly.



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