

The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste

Food waste reduction in the cruise sector



Zero waste good practice

Uniworld

Rheinfelden, Switzerland

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About

Synopsis

We installed a food waste management system across our fleet of 11 luxury river cruise ships, with a roll out across the ships between 2021 until now. This gave us the ability to measure current food waste, set a baseline, and take informed decisions to reduce our food waste.

Implementation
period

2021 - now

Country

Switzerland

Location

Rheinfelden

Stakeholders and Partners: Uniworld Boutique River Cruises: river cruise organisation

Leanpath: Food waste management system organisation providing devices and continued coaching on food waste reduction. Our Culinary team is leading this implementation, together with our Hotel Managers, who support data analysis and goal setting. Entire galley teams participate by measuring all food waste before disposal. Leanpath provides us with monthly online calls direct with Hotel Managers and Chefs to provide guidance and coaching in food waste management.

Connection to Zero Waste

It is allowing us to firstly gain full understanding of our food waste not only as an organisation, but providing key data for our industry, which has not been done within river cruising, and is rare in entire cruise industry.

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

By understanding our current food waste levels, and being able to analyse our food waste on a daily basis, it gives us the tool needed to make informed decisions to gradually decrease our food waste. We do this through behavioural change (creating awareness with our employees and also our clientele), reviewing working processes and effective resource management.

Our organisation is part of The Travel Corporation, and we released our formalised sustainability strategy (which incorporates 11 goals built around the SDGs). You may find our strategy here:<https://ttc.com/hwtr/> Goal number 3 is to reduce food waste across our corporation by 50% or more by 2025. We are on track to do so.

Background, Challenges and Objectives

For the river cruise industry, key data on food waste did not yet exist. No organization had measured nor taken decisive action to reduce food waste. For the entire cruise industry, data is very limited. So to understand our impact or the need for immediate action was very difficult. As we are operating cruise ships, we are constantly moving throughout European countries, where different laws apply regarding food donations, making donation of our unwanted food near impossible - so reduction is key at this stage. Also as a luxury provider within hospitality, there is a preconceived idea of opulence and excess being key to luxury, also when it comes to food. So to break down this barrier and show that food waste may still be notably reduced while maintaining a luxury product is very much possible, and even admired not only by our guests but also by our employees who are participating in this initiative. In selection of the appropriate mechanism for our ships to measure our waste, we needed to work around our size limitations in our galleys, as well as fluctuating internet access for uploading accurate waste data. This approach of installing food waste management systems met our needs in limited size and internet reliability, as well as allowing for engagement with our teams who are the ones doing the measuring, by being extremely user friendly and minimum time consumption for our employees.

“We’ve shown that reducing food waste while maintaining luxury is not only possible but admirable. Implementing user-friendly waste management systems has allowed us to engage our teams effectively, despite size limitations and fluctuating internet access.”

Actions and Implementation

In the actions and implementation chapter, the steps taken to achieve sustainable waste management are outlined.

'Important was to first assess various options available for waste management. A full investigation and business report was compiled, listing pros and cons of various potential solutions, and comparing cost versus potential gains in a business case study. The best partner was then chosen from this investigation. We opted for a staggered roll out across our ships, that we could ensure optimal integration into our operation and acceptance and engagement for our employees operating this system. When the device was installed, we did 1 week of "practice use" for the galley teams using the device - whereby data was entered so employees could get use to using the device. We then entered the Baseline phase, whereby for up to 4 weeks food waste was measured, but no reduction actions were taken. Once the baseline was created, we went into reduction phase, where we continue throughout our food waste reduction program. Data is continually captured and uploaded into a cloud, whereby onboard managers analyse data and take actions accordingly. Fleetwide and individual goals are set, rewards are given and monthly coaching from the external provider is given. Now in 2024 we will elevate this to bi-monthly fleetwide online calls to share best practices across the ships.

Outcomes and Impact

'Since we started with 1 ship in 2021: total prevented foodwaste: 50787kg/50.787 tons. Which is the equivalent of: 93305 meals or 354 metric tons of CO2 or conserving 1,247,516 bathtubs of water.

From January to December 2023:we completed installation of Leanpath across all of our 11 ships and we prevented 34807kg/34.8 tons of food waste. Which is the equivalent of 63947 meals saved, 242 metric tons of CO2 or 854,997 bathtubs of water

Our total food waste education made during 2023 alone was 38%

Our total food waste reduction since we started in 2021 is at 36%

Our employees are actively engaged and involved in this program, and proud to participate as a community project. Data is regularly shared and compared, and our culinary teams feel they have learnt new skills in terms of food reduction practices which did not exist prior to this implementation.

50.787 tons

Total prevented food waste since 2021: 50.787 tons, equivalent to 93,305 meals or conserving 354 metric tons of CO2 or 1,247,516 bathtubs of water.

854,997 bathtubs

In 2023, Leanpath installation across all 11 ships prevented 34.8 tons of food waste, equivalent to 63,947 meals saved, 242 metric tons of CO2, or 854,997 bathtubs of water.

38% reduction

Food waste reduction in 2023 alone was 38%, while the total reduction since 2021 is at 36%.

Replicability and Scaleability

It is an implementation that may be replicated across the hospitality industry, for any organisation that is providing meals at scale. There are several companies that are not even hospitality-related, yet provide food for employees, students or patients for example that would also benefit from a food waste reduction program. A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted by each organisation prior to implementation, as well as at regular intervals throughout, for an understanding on financial benefits. We are now 3 years in, and our food waste reduction savings still outweigh the cost of implementing this system. Key take aways would be to investigate potential systems, and find the one which best suits the needs of the organisation. Take the time to implement slowly and precisely, as this time investment in the first stage leads to a natural adoption by employees, and higher reduction outcomes.

Inclusion and Innovation

We have increased engagement of this implementation across all levels of our organisation. We also actively communicate this initiative to our guests onboard, and are happy to share information with other companies that enquire about our implementation. The device itself uses a scale, which is linked to a tablet, whereby the employee weighs the waste on the scale, enters the container type that it may be misused out of the weight, selects the reason for food waste as well as the food category, which then gets uploaded into the cloud for analysis on the food waste platform. This platform uses AI to set targets and goals based on uploaded data, also allowing users to set their own.

Accountability and Sustainability

The practice is overseen by the local transport authorities. The practices has contributed to increased ridership on public buses, which suggests it can be sustainable in the long term.

Financial Data

We pay around usd4000 per ship to have this implementation, which our own organisation is financing. Myself (Sustainability Officer) initiated this implementation and rollout, hosting initial training sessions. Culinary Corporates are now leading their teams in regular discussions and topics on food waste. Onboard Executive chefs are responsible to check measurements are being done, new crew trained and data angled and regular updates given to their team members for further engagement and adoption.

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