



Composting Quick-Start Guide

For Portsmouth Area Restaurants/Food Services

What is composting?

Composting is the process of breaking down organic waste (food scraps, yard trimmings, certain paper products, etc) to produce a rich soil mixture that can be used in gardens, agriculture and a variety of other applications. Most businesses choose to have their compost picked up and taken to an off-site composting facility. However, given adequate space, on-site composting is also possible.



What are its benefits?

The benefits of composting are both economic and environmental.

Economic

Restaurants have demonstrated the capability for substantial cost savings by composting.

On average, 50% of a restaurant's waste is food scraps.

Reducing the amount of waste that goes to the landfill allows for fewer dumpster pickups, and in some cases, almost entirely eliminates the need for a dumpster altogether.

This reduction in waste translates to a reduction in costs.

Environmental

Composting reduces our dependency on landfills. When organic waste is sent to a landfill it decomposes and releases methane, a very powerful greenhouse gas. In fact, methane is 22 times more harmful than carbon dioxide.

Once food waste turns into nutrient-rich compost, it is used to grow local food. In this way, composting closes the loop of our food system and keeps money in our local economy.

Some local success stories

**Portsmouth area restaurants and hotels are composting
1.5 MILLION pounds of food per year
And preventing 400,000 pounds of harmful greenhouse gasses**

Over 30 local restaurants, hotels and hospitals are already involved in composting. Among them are Poco's, Two Ceres Street, the Portsmouth Brewery, the Blue Mermaid, Jumpin' Jay's Fish Café, Redhook Brewery and more...



"Something that is good for the environment, good for the world around us, also costs less money. It's a no brainer"

- Evan, Black Trumpet

"It's just the right thing to do."

- Marlisa, 2 Ceres Street

"The composting program at our hotel is fully supported by our employees and has quickly become part of our workplace culture. Another great benefit is that the program isn't costing the company any more money. Overall, it's easy, effective, and it feels great to take care of our environment!"

- Meghan, Sheraton

How to get involved

In most cases, restaurants hire hauling companies to transport food waste from their location to nearby composting facilities where the waste is turned into nutrient-rich soil.

One option is to contact your existing waste service company and ask if they provide compost hauling services.

Another option is to contact a local compost hauling business. These businesses specialize in organic waste removal and provide you with the training and materials to seamlessly integrate composting into your pre-existing business model.



EcoMovement Consulting & Hauling

www.ZeroWasteNow.com

(207) 332-3518

P.O. Box 315

Portsmouth, NH 03802-0315



Herb's Disposal

Organic Waste Recycling

(800) 500-1439

31 Birch Hill Road

York, ME 03909

Developing a composting program involves 4 easy steps:

1. Meet with a hauling company to design a program that is right for you
2. Strategically place compost/recycling/waste bins throughout the kitchen to make it as easy as possible for employees
3. Train the kitchen and wait staff on what type of waste goes in each bin
4. Compost is picked up and taken to composting facilities as frequently as required



Q: How do I start composting if I'm already locked into a contract with my current waste removal company?

A: Check with your current company to see if they offer composting services or if your contract allows for working with compost hauling companies.

Q: How much money can I expect to save?

A: The economics of composting are different for every restaurant. The cost of composting depends on a number of different factors including amount of waste produced, number of pickups per week, etc. In most cases, restaurants either save money or remain cost neutral. Contact your current hauler or a compost hauler to discuss your options.

Q: Won't compost smell or create an unpleasant environment for my employees or customers?

A: A frequent pickup schedule and the proper use of bags prevent compost from creating unpleasant odors. Speak with your hauling company to discuss the appropriate pickup schedule that best suits your needs. In many cases, restaurants have their compost picked up almost every day of the week.

Q: Can I compost if my dumpster or kitchen space is limited?

A: Since composting drastically reduces the amount of waste that goes to the landfill, you may be able to downsize your dumpster and the number of trash receptacles in the kitchen. This added space may be used for compost bins. Compost haulers may also be able to offer pickup 7 days per week to eliminate the need for outdoor storage.

Q: I absolutely can't fit compost bins outside my restaurant. Can I still compost?

A: Consider collaborative composting. If space is limited for a number of restaurants nearby, restaurants may share a common space to discard food waste and recycling. This is an efficient way to solve the needs of many restaurants. Poco's, 2 Ceres Street, Ferry Landing, and Riverhouse already participate in collaborative composting.

Q: Aren't compostable products more expensive?

A: Purchasing compostable to-go containers, straws, napkins etc. is slightly more expensive. The price of compostable trash bags, in particular, is often why some restaurants choose not to compost. However, as more restaurants start to demand these products, their prices continue to fall. Often times, savings from reduced dumpster pickups even out with the added costs of compostable products. Contact a hauling company to determine whether or not bags are even required. Also consider having one hauler remove all three waste streams (composting, recycling, and landfill) to reduce the costs associated with 2 contracts.

Q: Is food the only thing that can be composted?

A: No. Among other items that can be composted are paper, coffee filters, cotton rags, shredded newspaper, tea bags, fireplace ashes, cardboard rolls, and compostable products used in the restaurant such as corn-based cups, straws, or utensils.

Q: Can I still compost if my customers are the ones who dispose of the food when they are finished?

A: Yes. Several Portsmouth "to-go" style restaurants are already composting. This process requires clear signage instructing customers how to dispose of various items. The benefit of this approach is customer education. Many customers may be interested to learn more about composting themselves or may even choose to patronize your business more frequently because of the way you handle your waste responsibly.