



Solutions for a Sustainable Supply Chain



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Green Events

Don't Forget!

Make sure to check the fact sheets on Sustainable Catering and Sustainable Promotional Products for more tips before planning your event.

What's in this Factsheet?

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Top Tips for Greener Events

1. Find a caterer who can provide more sustainable, local food options.
2. Choose reusable, compostable and/or biodegradable dinnerware.
3. Have separate bins for garbage, recycling, and compost at each waste station and ensure signage is simple, clear and visible.
4. Plan ahead, ensuring only to order what is needed and share greening objectives with all relevant vendors, staff, and participants.

The Problem: Impacts of Events

- **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions.** Industrial agriculture is an enormous contributor to the world's GHG emissions. In the catering industry the embodied carbon of meals served, transportation, and landfilling of food waste and dinnerware are all major sources of GHG emissions.
- **Resource Use.** Agriculture, especially animal feed and meat production, requires significant amounts of land and resource inputs. Additionally, a large portion of conventional single serve dinnerware materials are made from plastics and polystyrene foam, derived from petroleum.
- **Toxins.** Industrial farming has led to monoculture and excessive use of fertilizers to make up for degrading soil productivity. The toxic pesticides and fertilizers runoff into water systems which affects wildlife and human health.
- **Waste Generation.** An average event wastes at least 15 to 20 percent of the food it produces, while used dinnerware can be hard to recycle as it is contaminated and often ends up landfilled.

Sourcing Sustainable Food

Organic and sustainable farming protects the soil, ensures resistance to pests and diseases, and reduces water use and GHG emissions. Look for catering companies, or ask TRU Food Services, to provide:

- Seasonal and locally grown and produced food.
- Certified organic and certified sustainable and humane foods (see eco-labels below).
- Indigenous wild foods and traditional menus.
- Plant-based options and reduced amount of meat served.

Eco-labels & Certifications

Below are several common food related eco-labels. See the 'Sustainable Catering' Factsheet for more information on these labels and sourcing sustainable food options.

Organic Certified Food



Sustainable Seafood



Sustainable & Ethical Farming



Opportunities for Reducing Waste

TRU recognizes food waste is an issue on campus and in the community; and is working on solutions to address it. With some forethought and switching to sustainable dinnerware and proper waste stream management, you can implement the following strategies to further reduce waste:

Food Waste

- Try to accurately plan the amount of food served for your event, to avoid food waste.
- Provide composting bins to collect food waste for composting either on- or off-site (i.e. separate food waste for commercial composting if necessary).

Dinnerware & Other Consumables

- Choose reusable (i.e. stainless steel, ceramic) dinnerware when cleaning is available or caterer offers to take-back for cleaning and reuse.

Plan Ahead!

1. **Plan.** Identify key actions you want to achieve for your event.
2. **Understand.** Consult vendors and available resources to understand how to achieve those objectives.
3. **Implement.** Pick 3 actions to start with first, then add more!
4. **Collaborate.** Share your objectives with guests, vendors and staff in advance of the event.

- Choose chlorine-free, compostable and/or biodegradable dinnerware made from materials such as corn, bamboo, potato starch, or wheat, with no plastic or wax coating.
- When composting is not available, aim for dinnerware made from at least 60-80% recycled or post-consumer content.
- Serve refreshments, condiments and other toppings in bulk rather than single serving packages.
- Look for eco-labels such as these to indicate more sustainable dinnerware options:

Sustainable Dinnerware



Waste Stream Management

- Identify high traffic areas of the event and plan the number and locations of your waste stations accordingly.
- Have separate bins for garbage, recycling, and compost at each waste station.
- Ensure signage is simple, clear and visible to attendees and pedestrians.
- Have a “Green Team” of volunteers to monitor waste stations and to educate attendees on proper disposal.
- Recycle all back of house corrugated boxes, buckets, tubs, and containers.

Encourage Reusable Water Containers & Avoid Single-use Plastic!

It takes about 6 liters of water to produce just 1.5 liters of bottled water. It is also estimated that just 50% of all plastic water bottles are recycled; the rest are either littered or end up in landfills. By eliminating bottled water at your event, you can take an important step in reducing waste and lowering our carbon footprint.

- Consider access to drinking water in advance when selecting your event site.
- Used fixed and movable water refill stations.
- Identify high traffic areas of the event and plan the number and locations of your water refill stations accordingly.



Opportunities for Social Benefit

Supporting local businesses who in turn purchase from local farms and engage in ethical sourcing and hiring practices directly contributes to the economic wellbeing and resilience of our communities.

- Find caterers who source their food from direct farm-to-institution programs and from farmer cooperatives.
- Look for social enterprises and Certified Diverse caterers who employ and support equity-seeking groups like by women, Indigenous individuals or communities, underrepresented ethno-cultural groups (minorities, newcomers, or immigrants), persons with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ+ persons.
- Choose Indigenous catering as a way to connect with fresh, local and wild foods and cooking methods while educating people about Indigenous culture and promoting reconciliation.

Best Practices for Running a Green Event

Events and meetings are frequent business activities with many impacts – from participant transportation and food sourcing to material use and waste. Here are 10 more tips to keep in mind when planning your next event:

1. Tell vendors and service providers about your plans to “green” the event in advance and see what they can do to support those objectives.
2. If your venue is off-campus, try to select one that has an in-house environmental program and/or participates in a certification program such as [Green Key Meetings](#).
3. Reduce excess purchasing and waste by ordering only what you need – get firm numbers of participants if possible.
4. Select locations that minimize travel distance for attendees, are easily accessible by public transit, and/or have bike racks to promote sustainable modes of transportation.
5. Strive for a paperless event. Use electronic promotional materials and registration, encourage presenters to limit handouts, and circulate presentations and handouts by email or post them on a website after the event.
6. Ensure that promotional and give-away items are environmentally preferable and likely to be used. Opt for reusable instead of disposable or items made from post-consumer content.
7. For speaker gifts, consider unique locally made items, locally produced consumable items (e.g., maple syrup, wine, handmade chocolates) or gift certificates.
8. Ensure recycling and compost bins are placed in visible locations, post clear signage and notify attendees that they are available.
9. For indoor room set-up, place a small supply of pens/notepads at the back (instead of one per person on tables), use whiteboards instead of flipcharts, and use reusable signage.
10. Calculate the event’s carbon impact and offset the GHG emissions through tools such as [www.offsetters.ca](#) and [www.zerofootprint.net](#).