

Cook Smart, Waste Less, Go Green

These best practice ideas are useful pointers towards making the food, service and environment in healthcare settings more sustainable:



Identify the main causes of food waste, for example, through a food waste audit.



Source foods and beverages from more environmentally sustainable sources or suppliers.

Common causes include:

- **Overproduction** – preparing too much food, large batch cooking.
- **Unpredictable demand** – fluctuating staff numbers.
- **Plate waste (uneaten food on trays)** – large portion sizes, unappealing or repetitive options.
- **Menu design and preferences** – offering unpopular dishes, no option for smaller portions.
- **Stock** – expiring ingredients, inadequate refrigeration.
- **Customer dissatisfaction** with menu options.
- **Serving and display waste.**
- **Packaging and prep waste** – peeling and trimming too much from fruit and vegetables.

For example:

- Source wild fish with **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)** or farmed fish with the **Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)**.
- Reduce use of **air-freighted, pre-packed or ready-prepared** fruit and vegetables except where their use helps to reduce food waste (frozen, tinned, etc.).



Aim to increase recycling of food waste.



Work towards reducing packaging waste, especially single-use plastics.

For example:

- Using biodigesters.
- Using compost bins.
- Or other commercial waste systems.

For example:

- Have **potable water** freely available.
- Appropriately **recycle** any food or drink packaging and limit any unnecessary packaging.
- Consider introducing an initiative where **reuseable cups or containers** can be used in staff and visitor restaurants and coffee shops for a discount.
- Use **crockery and cutlery that can be reused** instead of single use plastics. Where this is not possible, use **biodegradable packaging**.
- Consider using **circular recycling systems** for unavoidable use of plastic packaging.





Aim for a good balance of environmentally sustainable, protein-rich foods on the menu.

For example:

- Include a good variety of **plant-based dishes** and reduce the availability of dishes with a higher carbon cost, such as red meat dishes. Examples of plant-based proteins include beans, peas, lentils, soya products (e.g., tofu), mycoprotein (e.g., Quorn), unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Reduce red meat availability from every day to **2-3 times a week**.
- Use **positive language** such as 'plant-based protein' and avoiding using the terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' in the name of dishes so that they appeal to a wider audience.
- **Position plant-based options at the start of menus** to increase the likelihood that they are seen by staff and visitors as they read down the list of options.
- Introduce meat-free menu options and initiatives, such as **'Meat-free Mondays'**.
- Reduce the amount of meat in popular recipes like spaghetti bolognese by incorporating beans, lentils and other meat alternatives.



Include locally sourced and/or seasonal food and beverages on the menu.

For example:

- Include more **home-grown seasonal** products on menus and that can be provided safely and consistently.
- Where appropriate, approach **local suppliers** to supply the hospital.
- Consider introducing a **logo** on the menu to indicate that Irish or local sourcing has been utilised.
- Display **posters** showing what produce is in season.



Use digital menus or reusable menu boards where possible.

