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Zero Waste Restaurant Team

Interviews about Food-Waste

The Team

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Restaurants in Los Alamos and White Rock

1) Blue Window Bistro	15) Ruby K's Bagel Cafe
2) Pyramid Cafe	16) Starbucks
3) Sirphey	17) Yuan's Noodle Shop
4) El Parasol	18) El Rigobertos Taco Shop
5) China Palace Restaurant (Not interested)	19) Starbucks
6) Hot Rocks Java Cafe	20) Fleur de Lys
7) Subway Restaurant Los Alamos	21) Little Saigon — White Rock
8) Origami	22) Food Is Love — White Rock
9) Pasta Paradiso Ristorante Italiano	23) Smith's Marketplace
10) Cottonwood on the Greens	24) Daniels Cafe
11) Chili Works	25) Viola's
12) Bob's Bodacious BBQ	26) Morning Glory
13) Pig+Fig Bakery and Cafe	27) Pizza: Dominos, Time Out, Papa Murphey
14) Cooperative Market	28) Sonic Drive In

Procedure

We distributed informational printouts to many restaurants.

Information for handouts is from this excellent webpage: https://www.refed.com/downloads/Restaurant_Guide_Web.pdf

- 1) *About the Roadmap*
- 2) *The Opportunity*
- 3) *Restaurant Solution Matrix*
- 4) *Prevention Solutions*
- 5) *Solutions Summary*

**Restaurants know that
limiting food waste helps
their bottom line.**

What did we learn about food waste?

We spoke to 13 of the ~28 restaurants in Los Alamos and White Rock. Of those who were interested—and actually cognizant of food waste—the responses were pretty consistent:

- ◆ All would like the opportunity to be greener, but it takes time, effort, and money.
- ◆ All believe they have little food-prep waste.
- ◆ All believe they have minimal unusable leftovers.
- ◆ All would like more convenient-to-their-doors recycle dumpsters.
- ◆ All look forward to the proposed County Composting.
- ◆ None measured how much customer uneaten-food is thrown away.
- ◆ If they had edible leftovers that couldn't be repurposed for the next day's menu, they would like someone to come collect it for those in need.

The Plastic Waste Issue

(Although our mandate is food waste, Julia took the opportunity to lobby for reduction of all waste.)

- ◆ Most restaurant take-out boxes are Styrofoam. We discussed alternatives that are more expensive.
- ◆ Some use paper/sugarcane take-out boxes and biodegradable utensils, and also ask if the patron wants utensils.
- ◆ To reduce waste, some restaurants ask whether people want straws. They're trying to find a straw solution that isn't 5 X the cost of plastic. (By the way, MacDonald's straws are reusable and dishwasher safe for many washings. We just need to get people to reuse them).

Education!

- * All businesses (and dare we add, households?) need education as to what's recyclable and what's not. As Tiffany Pagoda says, **“Wishcycling is *not* recycling!”** Just because you want something to be recyclable, doesn't mean it is. “When in doubt, throw it out” rather than contaminating the entire recycle stream.

The easiest mitigation is education.

The County needs to offer education!

RECOMMENDATIONS

If Los Alamos is serious about Zero Waste, the County can facilitate these efforts to help restaurants

- * More recycle dumpsters more conveniently located nearer the vendors. All our vendors would like this convenience.
- * More frequent pickup of recycle.
- * Local glass recycle *especially* for restaurants serving alcohol.
- * Cardboard recycle for every single business, with more frequent pickups.
- * County (or some kind of) reliable compost pickup.

(Note: Business owners are in racing mode all day long. As much help from the County as we can give would alleviate their stress as well as some of our trash issues.)

More Recommendations

- ★ **EDUCATION!** Formal, County-supplied education of owners, management, and staff as to what's recyclable, what's not, and that it costs not only the County, but the Earth, to have contaminated recycle.
- ★ Energy audits for businesses to give them both a clear indication of current energy use and a baseline for comparing progress.
- ★ Offer/train staff to do a food waste audit
- ★ Develop a prestigious award for restaurants and other businesses when they meet the County-developed Green criteria.

Summary

For the most part, the businesses we talked to *want* to go green.

They, however, are understaffed and overworked, and could use as much help as they can get.

The County can help with *EDUCATION!*, energy audits, more recycle (especially cardboard) more conveniently located closer to the business.

Summary

- * The County can spread the word to service organizations that these organizations can collaborate with restaurants to help collect leftover food.
- * Facilitate efficient composting in Los Alamos
- * Promote BYO cups/mugs/soda drink cups.
- * Follow up on Green Restaurants Certification