

Reducing food waste in restaurants and at home

Everybody Eats

The average New Zealand household throws away around $1,326 worth of food every year, with negative impacts for our environment as well as our bank accounts. A new venture from Everybody Eats makes it easier to save food, money and the planet in our kitchens at home.

Everybody Eats is a restaurant that rescues food destined to be thrown out, turns it into a beautiful dining experience, and offers a pay-what-you-can model so anyone can gather and enjoy a flavoursome, nutritious meal in a restaurant setting. Their small Wellington staff is supported by volunteers to collect surplus food, craft it into outstanding meals, and serve dinner to people from all walks of life at their Dixon Street restaurant. Restaurant manager Jack Rainey defines Everybody Eats as a hospitality social enterprise.

The restaurant strives to be a sustainable business both financially and environmentally. They use an electric vehicle to collect ingredients around Pōneke | Wellington. Collaboration with other food rescue organisations makes sure any surplus is shared thoughtfully. Head chef Alicia Mendez plans each evening's menu for maximum flavour and minimum waste, and the small amount of food that can't be used is composted. They save around ten tonnes of food from going to waste each year – a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions and strengthening Wellington's circular waste systems.

"We're trying to challenge people to stop and think before they chuck something away. It's such a precious commodity, food." *-Jack Rainey, Everybody Eats*

Receiving surplus food from supermarkets and other providers means the industrial Everybody Eats kitchen recycles large amounts of the same kind of packaging as someone cooking at home – including bags, lids, trays and wraps made of plastic. Jack Rainey says their process includes separating soft plastics and Tetra Pak and transporting them to recycling centres.

As well as missing an opportunity to nourish someone, throwing food out contributes to climate change. It wastes the resources needed to produce and transport food. Harmful gases are created when food goes to the rubbish tip and can't break down properly. By intercepting food waste and redirecting it to feed people, Everybody Eats is helping to build a more resilient food network - one that values resources and people equally.

In October 2024, Everybody Eats received funding through the Climate and Sustainability Fund to deliver and distribute a series of zero waste and low carbon educational cooking videos. The funding also supports collaboration with local organisations and hospitality venues - such as Voice of Aroha and The Botanist, Lyall Bay - to reduce food waste in kitchens and engage diners around low carbon kai.



"We want to see less food going to landfill. The difference in environmental impact between that and compost is massive."

"We're sharing what we know about what's useable and not useable when someone buys produce. You can make delicious food out of things like leek tops, or the peel of an orange, pumpkin seeds, the leaves of a cauliflower, banana skins." *-Jack Rainey, Everybody Eats*

The team relishes the chance to save food from landfill and create something magical from an overlooked part of a fruit or vegetable. Driven to expand their impact beyond the restaurant, their new video series shares zero waste techniques and tips so people cooking at home can do the same. After bread and leftovers, oranges, apples and bananas are the most wasted foods in New Zealand.

Growing Wellington's zero waste community in person and online is a priority for Everybody Eats, with around 20,000 diners through the restaurant each year, 20,000 people following their social media, and a mailing list of 1,750 Wellington volunteers. This kaupapa extends to the wider hospitality sector, too. Everybody Eats works alongside other restaurant businesses to help them get the most from their ingredients and reduce food waste. These efforts not only reduce emissions but also advance public understanding and uptake of low carbon practices across the community.

From diners to volunteers, food rescue organisations, hospitality industry peers and a network of organisations working to improve food security, Everybody Eats is energising and connecting a movement of zero waste devotees.

"We're working really hard with all the other community organisations to champion food sustainability. To make a real change, it takes effort from all of us. We need to think about where we fit and what we can do." *-Jack Rainey, Everybody Eats*



By rethinking how we eat and share food, we can reduce emissions, cut food waste, and make good food accessible to everyone. Join the movement toward a more sustainable and equitable food system - one plate at a time.

To book a table or donate, visit **everybodyeats.nz**