

Food & Beverage - Eliminate Chronic Waste - By Joe Dunbar

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Years back, one of my clients had a policy of brewing coffee fresh every 20 minutes. This simple policy caused an extremely high level of waste in off peak hours. They offered patrons a choice of house brew, hazelnut flavored, and vanilla flavored (regular roast and decaf for all three).

Each afternoon, the coffee sales would slow and the routine began. The staff would habitually dump 6 nearly full pots of coffee down the drain 3 times an hour.

On more than one occasion, I have noticed operators do not adjust production to meet demand. I have seen break rooms at conference centers stocked with the same levels of donuts, bagels, danish and other pastries each day. I asked to see the conference room guest counts and the levels varied from as few as 40 to as high as 300. Most of the day old pastries made it to the staff dining room.

If you observe enough operations over many years, certain patterns emerge. You'll find management strictly controls center of the plate portions in most restaurants. On the flip side, you'll find tremendous waste in condiments, light cream, coffee, fresh baked products, portion packets, etc.

This past weekend, I went out for breakfast at a local spot. My waitress delivered my hot cup of coffee with 6 half & half portion packs. I looked around and noticed I was not singled out for this treatment. You could see many guests loading 3 to 5 of the creamers in their bags.

One of my clients baked rolls fresh all day long. At the restaurants, patrons were served a generous basket of rolls. It was common for patrons to request more rolls and they were always given a second basket. On take-out orders, some locations stuffed a bag with as much as a dozen rolls with each order.

These are all examples of chronic portion control issues which often do not hit the management radar scope. Companies with a passion for precision portion control on meat and seafood items frequently drop the ball on many other high volume items. Eliminating chronic waste and over-portioning will help lower your food cost. Start looking around for obvious issues. Take a second look at your policies.

By matching coffee production to guest counts, managing the number of creamers, rolls, baked goods, etc. and purchasing the proper container size for your needs, you can eliminate most chronic waste.

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