

Sustainability

[About](#)[Campus Initiatives](#)[Education & Research](#)[Take Action](#)[News & Events](#)

Food Waste at UMD: Where are we and how can we do better?



September 17, 2018 | Cole Grotting

Meal swipes: 4,365. Food waste collected: 599.5 pounds.

On September 12th, Superior Dining served 4,365 meals, a fairly typical day for UMD's primary dining operation. The kitchen below prepared huge quantities of food for the day and hungry students constantly flowed in and out during breaks in their busy schedules full of classes and extracurriculars. This day was a little different though, students on their way out could be seen scraping their plates into large compost bins which were periodically being weighed as part of a study by the Office of Sustainability to calculate how much food is wasted in Superior Dining!

In recent years, studies by the United Nations, the Natural Resource Defence Council, The U.S Department of Agriculture and others have indicated that the impacts of the food we waste are absolutely crucial to consider in our conversations about taking care of our environment, feeding the world, conserving our resources, and saving money. In an industry as resource intensive as agriculture, when we waste food, we also waste the water that was used to irrigate these crops, create unnecessary carbon emissions in transporting food, harm our soil and water health by spraying more chemical fertilizers and pesticides than necessary, and spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year to grow, process, and transport food that is never eaten, just in the U.S.

Our study consisted of two days of collecting and weighing food waste, as well as calculating total and average (per meal swipe) food waste weights. On Tuesday, September 11th, we accumulated 453 lbs of food waste over 4,427 meal swipes, averaging about 1.64 ounces of food waste per meal swipe, and on Wednesday, September 12th, we collected 599.5 lbs of food waste over 4,365 meal swipes which comes to about 2.2 ounces of food waste per meal swipe. These numbers give us a baseline to compare future measurements to and hopefully see progress!

How Can I Help Reduce Food Waste?

In Superior Dining:

- Take modest portion sizes on your first helping -- we can always go back for seconds and it reduces the chance of us overestimating how hungry we are
- Try a sample portion of something you're not sure you'll like -- and then go back for more if you do!
- Be a part of the clean plate club -- eat all you take!

What Can I Do If I Live Off-Campus or Cook for Myself in the Apartments?

- Don't grocery shop hungry
 - Studies show that shopping when we are hungry leads to buying too much food which wastes our money and leads to a higher risk of our food going bad
- Make a shopping list before going to the grocery store
 - Having a list for what we plan to buy at the grocery store makes it easier to come home with everything we need and nothing we don't which saves us trips to the store, wasted food, and money
- Eat leftovers
 - When we do end up making more food than we can eat, saving it in a tupperware for a meal the next day is another great way to save money and reduce food waste.

Contact us

sustain@d.umn.edu

(218) 726-8198

TTY/TDD:

(800) 627-3529

1208 Kirby Drive

Kirby Plaza 245

Duluth, MN 55812



(<https://www.facebook.com/UMD/Sustainability/>)

© Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.