Food Waste Awareness - Fall 2019

September 26, 2019 | Kaija Schlangen

UMD students tackle food waste education in the Superior Dining Center

In 2018, about 14.3 million households in the United States were food insecure. Alongside food insecurity, food waste also embodies wasted water, wasted fertilizers and pesticides, wasted animal feed, GHG emissions and exploited labor used to produce the food. (https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx) Last September, UMD students raised awareness for food waste in the Superior Dining Center by

> "Sustainability can be incorporated into any field of education; it is very holistic and is

having students scrape their food waste into large composting bins. The wasted food was then weighed and averaged 0.14 lbs of wasted food per meal swipe.

> a part of anything and everything." -Alaina Lawrence

This year, students volunteered again to educate dining customers about food waste and weighed all of the wasted food. On September 19, 433 pounds of food was wasted over 4,517 meal swipes. For each meal swipe, the average food waste was 0.096 pounds, marking a significant difference from last year's total.

In comparison, the University of Vermont (https://www.uvm.edu/sustain/eco-reps/waste) (undergraduate enrollment of 11,328), measured their food waste during the 2017/18 school year and found that each meal swipe wasted about 0.011 pounds of food. The University of Northern Iowa (https://iwrc.uni.edu/sites/default/files/Roe.pdf) also has a similar undergraduate enrollment as UMD. They measured their food waste in 2017/18 and found the average food waste per meal in their three dining centers averaged 0.118 pounds.

Alaina Lawrence, a Sustainability Student Assistant, coordinated this year's Food Waste Awareness day. To her, food waste education matters because, "it is easy to forget what it takes to produce food. There is a major disconnect between people who produce food and those who eat the food. Not many people think twice about the energy and resources required to create a meal." Monitoring of food waste will continue in the Superior Dining Center with measurements occurring monthly. Additionally, another Food Waste Awareness day will happen early next semester.

Most of the food waste from UMD's Superior Dining Center goes to the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District's commercial composting facility. Unused leftover food gets donated (http://www.d.umn.edu/sustainability/campus-initiatives/food) to Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank. These initiatives help curb the amount of food waste that Superior Dining Center customers produce. However, the overarching goal is to stop relying on services to dispose of food waste and instead produce zero waste.

Joining the Clean Plate Club is a simple and easy process. Start by taking smaller portions and only get second helpings if you finish all of the food on your plate and have room for more. If living off-campus, don't grocery shop hungry. Make a shopping list beforehand and stick to it. Save leftover food and keep track of what will expire first and eat it first.

Our campus has improved sustainable initiatives, including reducing food waste, and we must continue to educate ourselves and others and take action to reduce our waste.

Tags

Sustainability

Food

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/UMDSustainability/) (https://twitter.com/UMDSustain/) (https://www.instagram.com/umdsustain/)