

Less is  
**more** >

Reducing  
Organic  
Waste



# Organic Waste Diversion Guide

## for the Food Service Industry

A guide for restaurants, food retailers, and food service operators to help divert food and food scraps from the garbage in the RDCK.



Learn more  
[rdck.ca/ici-organics](https://rdck.ca/ici-organics)

## Managing Food Waste in the RDCK

Food waste and compostable organics do not belong in the landfill. Prevention of food waste is key, while diversion to food recovery programs or commercial composting services can save you money and help build the circular economy.

Our landfills have limited lifespans, measured in the amount of “airspace” remaining. Landfilled organics rot and release methane and leachate, two harmful pollutants that must be reduced. Participating in organics recycling means you are saving yourself and future taxpayers money while helping the environment, building a resilient local economy, and modernizing the waste system (to be less wasteful).

[Learn more at rdck.ca/organics](https://rdck.ca/organics)

## Organics Disposal Regulation

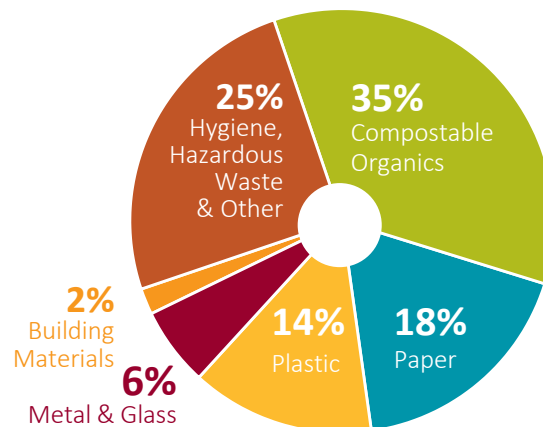
The RDCK has new regulation targeting the Food Service Industry. If more than 10% of your operation’s waste is compostable organics, you are subject to the RDCK Recycling Regulation and are required to separate organic waste from garbage to avoid paying higher tipping fees.

The RDCK audits loads at our facilities to ensure compliance. Loads found to contain more than 10% organic waste are charged a Variable Tipping Fee set at double the mixed waste rate.

Meanwhile, separated organic waste tipping fees for commercial customers are cheaper than garbage. This is a way to save money – you will pay less for garbage disposal as more of your waste is charged as separated organics.

## Waste by the Numbers

35% percent of what the IC&I sector sends to landfill is organic waste, up 3,900 tonnes per year of can be diverted with full-scale participation. Getting started with Organics Recycling means you are making a big impact, even if it starts with small actions.



What the IC&I sector sends to landfill in the RDCK (2023)

## Tips to Reduce Food Waste

The most effective way to manage food waste is to not produce it in the first place. Any unpreventable food waste should then be recycled.



### Purchasing and Inventory

**Keep it fresh:** Store food in the proper conditions to avoid spoilage and use older products first.

**Use it up:** Review stock and food delivery processes for food items that have a short shelf life. Ensure you only purchase what you need, when you need it.

**Plan it out:** Identify problem areas related to spoilage, menu prep and customer plate waste to reveal opportunities to reduce waste. Choose food products that have compostable or recyclable packaging.

### Take-out and Delivery

**Choose recyclable or compostable containers:** Stick to one type within a product category to avoid confusing staff and customers. For example, avoid mixing compostable containers or cups with non-compostable lids. Ensure products are compatible with existing composting or recycling facilities.



**Choose re-usable containers:** Whenever possible, a re-usable foodware program that meets health requirements is the best choice.

**Verify products** are not included in Single Use Plastics Bans. Avoid items that are neither compostable nor recyclable (i.e. plastic lined paper products).

## Three Ways to Reduce Commercial Food Waste

Wasting food is costly to your business, and food scraps disposed in the garbage are a wasted resource. There are three main ways for restaurants and food service operators to reduce their food waste: prevent, donate, and recycle.



# Seven Steps to a Successful Food Scraps Recycling Program

## 1 Engage your Staff

Everyone at all levels of staff need to be involved in a successful food scraps recycling program. Front and back of house, different departments all work together to make the system work.

- Ask your staff for their ideas or concerns.
- Assign responsibilities to all staff.
- Encourage feedback on challenges and solutions



## 2 Look at Your Current Garbage

Review the amount of food scraps and compostable organics that end up in the garbage.

- Consider tracking compostable and recyclable materials in your garbage using a simple spreadsheet.
- Visually estimate compostable and recyclables in the garbage to find the causes (workload, absence, turnover) and solutions.

Date	May 7	May 8
Food Scraps	50%	60%
Paper	20%	10%
Soft Plastic	10%	30%
Hard Plastic	10%	None
Other	10%	None

## 3 Understand Your Hauling Service Contract

Work with your hauler to access food scraps collection, manage contamination, keep costs low, and maximize diversion from the garbage. Some topics to discuss include:

- The number and size of bins and pick-up frequency.
- Cost of additional pick-ups/adding food scraps collection.
- Availability of bin liners, bin cleaning and/or bin replacement program to help control odours/wildlife attractants
- Acceptable compostable packaging and foodware.
- Supplementary services such as signage, waste audits, or regular reporting on your diversion.
- Consolidating your waste and recycling programs with one hauling service, or find other operating/cost efficiencies

Call or email the Recycling Council of BC Info Line at [info@rcbc.ca](mailto:info@rcbc.ca); 1-800-667-4321 for a list of waste haulers and consultants, or get in touch with the RDCK Resource Recovery Department at 250.352.8161 or email [organics@rdck.ca](mailto:organics@rdck.ca).

## 4 Assess Work Flow and Recycling Areas

Organize work areas to make space for food scraps recycling containers in the kitchen, and larger green bins in the recycling area.

- Let staff choose waste sorting containers for their work stations that suit their needs.
- Position green bins beside the garbage bins for convenient sorting.
- Adapt the bin sizes as less garbage and more food waste is produced.

## 5 Start in the Kitchen(s)

Start your food scraps recycling program in the kitchen/back of house and then expand to the other work areas.

- Place bins in visible locations where food scraps are created and discarded.

## 6 Create Clear Signage

Use clear and simple signage to encourage food scraps recycling. The more consistent the signage, colours and images, the easier it will be for staff to use the correct bins.

- Signage that clearly illustrate both the “Yes” and “No” items are the best at helping avoid contamination.

- If the same items keep ending up in the wrong bin, discuss with staff how to make the signage more clear.

For sample signage, staff room posters, videos, and other resources, go to our website: [rdck.ca/ici-organics](http://rdck.ca/ici-organics)



## 7 Train, Monitor and Provide Feedback to Staff

Ensure that food waste reduction is integrated in your staff training program.

- Make food waste reduction part of staff training.
- Discuss food scraps recycling issues and brainstorm solutions at regular staff meetings.
- Talk about the program successes, such as kgs. or tonnes of food waste prevented, to encourage them to contribute.
- Emphasize impact of landfilling organic waste - creates methane, takes up landfill capacity, wasted resource that can be turned into soil.

## Recycling Food Scraps

What's In ✓	What's Out ✗
✓ All food and table scraps from front and back of house	✗ Glass, metal, and hazardous waste
✓ Bones, eggshells, solidified fats and sauces (small amounts)	✗ Styrofoam, plastic bags and packaging
✓ Coffee grounds, filters, and tea bags	✗ Produce stickers, elastic bands, clips and ties
✓ Wooden utensils, chopsticks and toothpicks	✗ Plastic cutlery, plates and clamshells
✓ Paper napkins, pizza boxes, food-soiled newspaper	✗ Waxy or plastic lined cardboard and paper containers
✓ Certified Compostable or paper-based food-service wares	✗ Liquid oils, grease trap waste, large bones
✓ Certified Compostable or paper bags and bin liners	✗ 'Biodegradable' or any bio-plastic not labeled as CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE

Accepted and Prohibited materials list governed by RDCK Resource Recovery Regulatory Bylaw (Schedule H & I)

### Avoid Contamination

A hauler or the RDCK can refuse to pick up/accept a food scraps bin contaminated with non-organic products, such as plastic bags. Repeat infractions mean higher costs.

**Eliminate or reduce contamination:** If the same contaminants often end up in the food scraps recycling bin, consider improvements (staff training, signage, location of bins) to prevent it from recurring.

### When in doubt, place in the garbage:

Haulers and compost facility operators prefer items go in the garbage rather than risk contaminating the food scraps recycling bin.

**Make recycling easy:** Glass is the most dangerous contaminant in a food scraps bin, and plastic is the most common. Ensure that cleaning and sorting of recyclable items is convenient



Be part of the circular economy and zero waste effort in the RDCK!

## Reduce Wildlife, Pests and Odours

**Keep bins secure:** Use a "Bear Resistant" container, keep lids locked, in an enclosure, or secure bins to something immovable with chains or straps to prevent bears dragging bins away.

**Keep bins clean:** Clean and rinse bins regularly. Line bin bottoms with non-waxed compostable cardboard, egg cartons, or paper to soak up excess liquid, or use Certified Compostable bin liners

**Prevent odours:** Refresh bins with vinegar or baking soda. Use leakproof containers with closed lids. Keep outdoor bins out of direct sunlight on warm days.

**Avoid attracting flies:** Keep bins closed, especially those that contain meat and protein scraps. Use layers of shredded paper, napkins or other similar to cover food scraps. Freeze meat scraps in summer between collections if possible.

## Donating Safe and Healthy Foods

Five reasons to have a food donation program:

- Community engagement
- Reduce environmental impact
- Improve corporate social responsibility
- Attract dedicated staff
- Maximize financial benefits

**The "Good Samaritan Act":** BC has adopted the FOOD DONOR ENCOURAGEMENT ACT which protects donors from liability when they donate surplus food.



### Three steps to starting a food donation program:

- Determine if food is appropriate for donation
- Choose where to donate your food
- Record and track food donations

For more information on food donation, search "**BCCDC Food Donation Guidelines**" online.

## Front-of-House

### Customer Awareness

**Design a front-of-house system:** Bins and signage that clearly show your customers what to do will encourage them to sort their waste and recyclables properly.

**Serve food, not waste:** Find ways to reduce packaging, single-use items, and make it easy for customers to separate and properly dispose of food waste and tableware.



## Need More Information?

**Full Guide:** This is a shortened version of a more detailed guide, Closing the Loop with Organics Recycling, created by Metro Vancouver Regional District. Find the link at our website, along with other information for the ICI Sector on Organics Recycling

**Signage:** Accepted and Prohibited materials graphics available at [rdck.ca/ici-organics](http://rdck.ca/ici-organics) or contact us. For other sample signage, staff room posters, videos, and other resources, visit [www.metrovancouver.org/foodscraps](http://www.metrovancouver.org/foodscraps).

**Haulers:** Speak directly with your waste hauler and ask for pricing and service levels. For self-hauling, visit our website for current pricing, sites with organics disposal, and hours of operations. All customers, commercial and residential are welcome to dispose of organic waste at select RDCK facilities.

**Food Storage:** for information on shelf life, best before dates, and fridge/freezer guides, visit [www.lovefoodhatewaste.ca](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.ca)

### Contact the RDCK

**RDCK Resource Recovery Department:**

**Phone:** 250-352-8161 (Monday to Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm)

**Email:** [RRdept@rdck.ca](mailto:RRdept@rdck.ca) | [organics@rdck.ca](mailto:organics@rdck.ca)

**Website:** [rdck.ca/ici-organics](http://rdck.ca/ici-organics)



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