

Irish Restaurants Face €125 million Food Waste Bill

-Unilever Food Solutions Unites Ireland's Foodservice Industry to Take Action Against Food Waste -

Monday, 19th September 2011. Irish restaurants lose €125 million a year by throwing away 63,670 tonnes of food, the equivalent of 7,959 Double Decker buses¹ or enough food waste to cover Croke Park pitch eight times over.

Over half (53%) of food wasted in restaurants is generated during preparation, but Irish diners are responsible for most of the food wasted out-of-home (65%) with one in two people (48%) admitting to regularly over-ordering and leaving food behind, according to new research from Unilever Food Solutions' Ireland.

This staggering finding was revealed at an exclusive industry event where, for the first time, Unilever Food Solutions invited the biggest players in Ireland's foodservice industry along with sustainability experts to take part in *United Against Waste*, a campaign calling for the foodservice industry to join forces and work with chefs, restaurants and consumers to take action and address the issue of reducing avoidable food waste with a single voice.

Research into the eating habits of Irish consumers when eating out supports the findings from Unilever Food Solutions' second World Menu Report, announced globally today. This report highlights that food waste in professional kitchens is high on the consumer agenda. Eight out of 10 people (84%) of those questioned globally stated that they were concerned with not only the amount of food wasted everyday in dining establishments but also the way in which this waste is disposed of.

Since the introduction of new Food Waste Regulations in Ireland last summer, food waste remains a hot topic among restaurateurs. Unilever Food Solutions Ireland commissioned research among 100 Irish chefs and operators via the Restaurant Association of Ireland (RAI) which shows that Irish restaurants each throw out on average 4.5 tonnes of food waste a year, at a cost per establishment of €8,840*². Portion sizing has been identified both by diners and chefs as a serious problem, with 34% of diners saying the reason they last left food behind them when eating out was because the portion was too big. This compares with 27% of diners who left food behind because they weren't happy with the food.

Majority of Chefs and Operators concerned

The majority (85%) of Irish chefs and operators are concerned about the amount of food wasted by their business with 71% willing to avail of an expert food waste audit to learn how to manage

¹ One double decker bus weighs on average 8 tonnes

² Based on an average restaurant throwing out 85kg a week at a cost of €2 per kg to represent the cost of purchasing the raw ingredients, the cost of transport, storing of food, preparing, cooking food (staff, energy costs), also the cost of disposing of the food

food waste more efficiently.

Portioning and plate waste is the No. 1 area that chefs and operators want to improve on with 57% of those polled strongly welcoming expert training in this area. 35% of restaurant owners and chefs admit they need to improve in creative cheffing, training staff to be more resourceful when it comes to prepping food and using ingredients so as to reduce avoidable waste.

Unilever Food Solutions' managing director Tracey Rogers delved into the findings: "The phrase waste not want not comes to mind. We know that the Irish Government is committed to moving toward a zero waste society and our actions in foodservice are going to be under the spotlight. We have the opportunity to take the initiative to be 'United Against Waste' and with small everyday steps we can reduce waste, respond to consumers concerns, improve kitchen efficiency and also help caterers to save money.

"Some caterers are already reducing avoidable food waste very effectively and we have also launched a toolkit for reducing food waste, *Wise up on Waste*, which will help caterers to make their businesses more efficient. Together we must be united and share best practice so we can tackle the issues head on," Rogers added.

At the event, Unilever Food Solutions launched a waste reduction toolkit, **Wise up on Waste**, offering simple solutions for Irish restaurants and foodservice outlets who can monitor and measure food waste and ensure the whole team, both back and front of house, are aligned. It includes a manual waste audit that only takes 10 to 15 minutes a day to complete and is expected to reduce food waste by at least 20% if implemented.

Other research highlights:

The top 5 'hot zones' of food waste in Irish commercial kitchens are:

1. Customer plates (65%)
 2. Preparation waste (53%)
 3. Bones/fat trimmings that can't be recycled (40%)
 4. Food that gets prepared but not served (27%)
 5. Food that has been stored in the fridge or cupboard for too long (15%)
- 58% of Irish restaurants currently provide training to their staff on food waste management
 - Almost one in three restaurants (30%) would embrace the new Food Waste Regulations (SI 508 of 2009) more if better tax breaks were linked to the regulations
 - 41% of chefs and operators believe the introduction of brown bin legislation was a positive initiative to reduce the environmental impact of food waste in commercial outlets
 - 21% said they are confident the new regulations will leave to cost savings for their business, with 22% saying that the new legislation has already helped reduce the cost of waste disposal in their business

Consumer worry

- The top 5 reasons why Irish people leave food behind on their plate:
 1. Portion was too big (34%)
 2. Unsatisfied by the food (27%)
 3. I ordered a meal deal but didn't want all the courses on offer (14%)
 4. I wasn't hungry (12%)
 5. I ordered too much (10%)

- One in two (52%) would like the option of being able to leave certain items off their order (e.g. garnish, side portion of veg) even if it didn't mean a reduction in price/cost
- 80% of diners would like to see the option of smaller portions available on menus to help curb over-eating and food waste.
- More women than men are likely to leave food behind, with 56% of women regularly leaving food behind compared with 35% of men
- Age is an important factor when it comes to clearing their plates with the older generation more likely to clear their plate and younger people more likely to order more than they eat and yet feel the most guilty when they cannot eat it. 15% of people aged between 55-59 years regularly leave food behind Vs 55% of younger generation aged 25-29 years. 21% of those aged 25-29 years feel guilty leaving food behind Vs 7% aged 55-59 years.
- Almost one in three (31%) say that bigger portions mean better value - this may link to our health issue as a nation (latest figures show that 61pc of Irish adults are overweight or obese)
- The research also reveals that 26% of the Irish population are eating out once a week, with one in four (25%) eating out 2-3 times a month

Great Irish Waste Menu

At today's launch event to bring the research findings to life, Chef Proprietor of the Rustic Stone and MasterChef Judge Dylan McGrath, created a 'Great Irish Waste' menu - taking food ingredients that had been thrown out, rejected or deemed inedible and turning them into delicious restaurant-standard fare that's fit to serve to paying guests.

McGrath says that while there will always be unavoidable food waste in a restaurant such as bones or fat trimmings, there is still a big opportunity to reduce wastage through a better understanding of customers needs and wants. He says, "Having recently developed a new commercial brand where portion sizes are bigger to suit the concept, I've learnt a significant amount about what customers actually eat. Even though in a huge amount of restaurants the food comes back from customer's plates and goes in the bin, the majority of diners are not fully aware of the environmental and the cost implications of that waste. This needs to change."

Dylan continued, "Without customers and consumers shifting their mindset, restaurants will struggle to reduce food waste within their business significantly. The individuals with the responsibility of preparing the food must have enough respect for the product and training not to be negligent and wasteful. We as restaurateurs need to listen to our customers more and understand what it is they want. If we're sacrificing quality for quantity in order to retain customers, wastage will always continue."

To download the full World Menu Report please go to www.unileverfoodsolutions.ie



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Notes to Editor

Research base and methodology

Global research

Based on findings of a BrainJuicer® survey conducted amongst 3500 global respondents who eat out at least once a week from seven countries: *US, UK, China, Germany, Russia, Brazil, Turkey.*

Local research

An online omnibus was conducted in August 2011 by research company Spongelt among 506 people in Ireland who eat out regularly. Supplementary research was conducted among 100 chefs and operators via the Restaurant Association of Ireland (RAI) between the 15th August - 5th September 2011.

United Against Waste Campaign

Unilever Food Solutions is calling the foodservice industry to form a coalition to bring them all together on the issue of avoidable food waste out of home. The first event was held in Dublin today (19 September) and will be attended by 50 key industry associations, organisations and the waste advisory body the Environmental Protection Agency.

The World Menu Report: 'Sustainable Kitchens - Reducing Food Waste' follows on from Unilever Food Solutions' first Report launched in January this year. The World Menu Report: 'What's in Your Food?' provided a global snapshot into consumer attitudes and opinions towards food when eating out-of-home, and identified that consumers were demanding more information about what's on their plate. That ranged from details around fat and calorie content to where the ingredients were sourced from and prepared.

To download a copy of the World Menu Report please go to www.unileverfoodsolutions.ie

About Unilever Food Solutions

At Unilever Food Solutions, we help chefs all over the world serve tasty, wholesome meals that keep guests coming back for more.

We create ingredients that save precious prep time in the kitchen, without compromising on flavour or flair. And constantly provide ideas and inspiration that keep your menu fresh and exciting. Our ingredients are some of the staples of professional kitchens in 74 countries around the world: Knorr, Hellman's, Lipton and more.

We've been in food since the 1880s. We're chefs ourselves. So we understand that critical balance between impressing your guests and making a profit. And how to keep your menus and recipes fresh and exciting, as times and tastes change.

We always care about putting healthy and nutritious food on the table, but we also care about our impact on the earth. Using ingredients and packaging that are sustainably sourced, generate less waste and consume less energy is all part of our environmentally responsible way of doing business.