

Understanding Waste Management

Kitchen waste has a double hit on kitchen costs. Food not sold and thrown away immediately hits the bottom line of profit, but the second hit is the charge of removal for both kitchen waste and plate waste. Most local authorities will charge for both packaging and food waste removal and waste cooking oil often carries a removal and recycling cost from specialist oil recycling companies.

There is not uniformity across the UK with waste disposal regulations and different local authorities and water companies have conflicting policies. But one aspect of food waste management common to all is that food waste cannot go for animal feed as it once did.

While not always illegal, tipping old cooking oil into the sewerage system is a serious pollution and if it caused a mains drain blockage leading from a kitchen, the restaurant could be charged for cleaning and repairs to the drain by the local authority. Some water authorities take a harder view than others on it. It is a feature of most local authority building regulations for commercial food premises that a grease separation system be fitted in all new or refurbished kitchens, but the legislation is not retrospective.

While plastic sacks are adequate for non-food waste in small premises, no waste food should ever be stored in plastic sacks which vermin can easily tear open. The most practical means of holding all waste not destined for recycling are heavy-duty wheelie bins with lids that are too heavy for vermin, feral cats, dogs and foxes to lift. Wheelie bins come in a range of sizes and can be bought outright, leased or loaned as part of a collection scheme.

Since waste collection is charged by the wheelie bin it makes economic sense for premises which produce a lot waste to invest in a waste compactor. Typically, the wheelie bin is pushed up against the compactor and bulky items such as packaging waste will compress to a quarter of the space. The cost of buying a compactor can easily be recouped by a busy operation in under a year.

While commercial wheelie bins are efficient in holding waste, they can be unsightly and smelly. Screening hides the view, but not the smells in summer. One way to contain both sight and smell is to invest in a dedicated walk-in cold-room for food waste with a constant temperature of 8 deg C.

Blocked drains in kitchen premises caused by food waste and fats that wash off dirty plates can be a very expensive service call and can be avoided through fitting a fat separation unit or grease trap to the water outflow system.

A grease trap works by slowing down the flow of warm or hot greasy water coming out of a dishwasher and allowing it to cool. As the water cools, the grease and oil separate and float to the top of the grease trap. The cooler water containing less grease continues to

flow down the pipe to the sewer. The grease is trapped by baffles, which cover the inlet and outlet of the tank, preventing grease from flowing out of the trap. The baffles are regularly removed for cleaning and the grease put into general waste.

Different local authorities have different views on the siting of a grease trap. Some say it must be outside of the kitchen, other are happy for it to be in the kitchen. Where a grease trap is taking water from a dishwashing system, it has to be sited sufficiently far away from the dishwasher to allow the emulsified fat to cool and split out from the water. A popular way of reducing the amount of food waste going into wheelie bins is to fit a waste disposal unit. Food waste is pulverised and discharged into the sewerage system, reducing the cost of waste management.

Some local authorities will not allow food waste that has been pulverised in an under-sink waste disposal unit to be discharged into the sewers and the normal way of complying with this regulation is through a dewatering system. This quite simply separates out the water from suspended solids. The water goes into the drains and the slurry disposed of through other means.

How to find out more about Waste management Systems

Talk to the experts.

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