



Five Simple Tips to Reduce Waste at Your Special Event

Planning a party, conference, or other special event? Don't leave overflowing garbage cans behind at the end of the day. Below are some easy things you can do to reduce and recycle waste at your event.

- 1. Design for Waste Reduction and Recycling:** Plan for food menu and event decorations to leave less waste and allow recycling and composting of leftovers. Select "finger foods" that can be served in just a napkin, like a hot dog or burrito, or use food as serving containers, like a salad served in a cut fresh melon. Use live greens and plants for decorations. Consider renting washable/reusable plates, cups, serviceware, and linen rather than throwaways. Choose entertainment and games that produce little or no waste. Save paper by printing invitations or registration forms on both sides; better yet, e-mail them and also save postage. For reoccurring events, make banners and signs that can be used again. Hire event managers and caterers who do "minimum waste events," and write recycling tasks into all contracts with vendors and concessionaires. Call PSSI/Stanford Recycling at (650) 321- 4236 or for advice on pick-up services for recyclables and compostable materials.
- 2. Purchase Wisely:** Purchase supplies in bulk-sized containers to reduce packaging waste. Choose products with very little or no packaging. Buy things in packaging that can be recycled. Rent—don't buy—equipment and tools. Ask for deliveries like bread in returnable trays. Precut vegetables and meat save time and leave less waste. For example, when buying single use products, such as cups, plates, bowls, bags, napkins, towels, and food wrappers, don't choose nonrecyclable plastics instead, pick products made from paper, cardboard, or other compostable products like corn, potato, or sugar cane. (see Biodegradable Products Institute for approved list of compostable serviceware (<http://bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved.html>)). Close the recycling loop by making sure the products you buy are made with recycled materials.
- 3. Recycle:** Typical materials to collect include beverage bottles and cans and cardboard. Plan ahead to donate leftover unserved food, paper napkins, plates, condiments, and decorations to local food banks and charities. Contact PSSI/Stanford Recycling or visit their website: http://bgm.stanford.edu/pssi_special_events to determine what is recyclable and for recycling bins. For best results, be sure to put a well-marked recycling collection can next to each trashcan. If liners are needed, use clear plastic bags to make it easy to check for unrecyclable waste.
- 4. Compost:** Typical materials for compost are food scraps and plate scrapings. Stanford also accepts compostable service for composting (see #2 above). Be sure to keep plastic, metal and glass out of the compost bin. Contact PSSI/Stanford Recycling (see #3 above) to determine what is compostable and for compost bins.
- 5. Educate Event Workers and Guests:** Tell guests about your "green event" and ask for their help in making it a success by recycling right. Train all your event staff and volunteers in how to reduce waste and collect the recyclables. Celebrate your success by announcing during the event, and in thank you notes later, how much waste was kept out of the landfill.