Assessment of Food Waste Behaviors In Residential Restaurants

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Objectives
- Decrease food waste in UCLA dining establishments
- Educating students and staff on food waste issues on campus
- Research demographic trends among dining patrons
- Gauge opinions of students of food waste and possible solutions

Survey Data

Methodology and Results

Student Demographic Surveys
- Approximately 400 surveys
- Two dining halls, De Neve and Bruin Plate
- Survey questions included:
  - Students’ year in school
  - Dietary preferences
  - Preferred residential restaurant location,
  - Whether they believed most waste was pre or post consumer
  - Their meal plan

Results
- We identified three demographics across both dining locations as having the same trend of wasting less food:
  - Food allergies
  - Dietary preferences (vegan, gluten free etc.)
  - Students who obtained their food in stages
- We also found that diners who believed more food on campus is wasted due to consumption issues as opposed to production issues were more likely to waste food.

Focus Groups
- Facilitated a focus group amongst students living in the dorms to find the most effective means of providing informational signage and messaging on campus.
- Four main questions:
  1. What type of food do you think students waste the most of? Why?
  2. When it comes to food waste, getting the message out makes a difference. What kind of messages typically catch your attention?
  3. What media works best for you?
  4. Do long waits in line affect how much food you take?

Results
- 1) Bananas/other fruits or the last plate of food they can grab
- 2) Humorous, emotional, or shocking. Bright colored visuals; proper and effective placement
- 3) Participants felt social media is the best form of media to educate students. Rather, they appreciated table tents and signage in areas that are frequently trafficked.
- 4) Yes, students felt they were more inclined to get food from stations with shorter lines. Sometimes, this results in students getting foods that they are less inclined to enjoy

Overall trend: many students had the common misconception that food waste occurs mostly on the production end

Discussion with Dining Employees
- Received preliminary information about the topic of food waste:
  - Fruits and napkins were most commonly to be seen wasted at Bruin Plate
  - Average student counts:
    - De Neve (Wednesday, Lunch, Winter Quarter): 1030
    - Bruin Plate (Wednesday, Lunch, Winter Quarter): 1484
  - Peak times for De Neve and Bruin Plate:
    - Wednesday, Lunch: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

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