Reducing Food Waste in Colleges by Reducing Tray Size or Removing Trays

By removing trays, college dining halls can reduce about 30% food waste as well as the water needed to clean them.

Tag Word: food waste, removing trays, reducing tray sizes, college, dining hall

Author: BinXi Wu, James Kuo with Julie M. Fagan

Summary

Using trays in buffet style college dining hall encourages students to take more food than they can consume. Therefore, removing trays or reducing tray size could potentially reduce the amount of food waste generated by the student. In our service project, we wrote to the school newspaper and spoke to Dining Hall managers, in attempt to inform the student of this option and change the administrator’s mind to remove or to reduce tray size. In addition, we plan to spread this information to other publications, so more people, specifically students, know about it.
The Issue: Wasting Food (WBX)

Wasting food is a major problem in the United States, especially in college. When one walk into a college dining hall, one would often see students with piles of food on their tray and dumping steak, pasta and other food intact. Why? This is the ruminant of our primal instinct, where food is always scarce and when we did not know when our next meal will be. So, we would try to get as much food as we can without considering if we could finish the food. However, today’s world is different, food is abundant, at least for the student who pays the meal plan, and the same behavior adversely affects our society. Furthermore, this problem is exacerbated in the college cafeteria because of the students’ sense of entitlement (after all, we, or rather our parents, paid for it and we get to decide what goes into garbage). Tons of the wastes are preventable, and they need to be transported, and processed. All, these cost money, specifically, students’ and tax payers’ money. Therefore, it is not only in the interest of the world, but also in the interest of the students themselves to solve this rampart problem.

One method to solve this problem is to remove trays from dining halls. According to Times Magazine, many universities already adapted this method which reduced estimated 25%-30% food waste and water usage (no trays to wash). The idea is that without trays, students can only carry so much plate, would not overload the plates, and there will be time for students to re-evaluate their hunger when they decide to go back to get more food. As a result, this reduces overall food waste.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to this solution. This method would increase dining hall traffic, and increase ‘accident’ rate where the students drop their plates. Therefore I propose this solution, instead of removing trays, reduce tray size to one plate, one glass and one soup bowl. Although this method would not provide the benefit of saving water, it could counter both the traffic problem and the ‘accident’ problem.

The Service Project: Smaller Food Trays (JK)

For the community service project to make the changes a reality, we wrote letters to school publications. In addition, we propose our project, in written form, to dining hall managers and administrators in attempt to convince them to change. They are very hard to contact to over the phone, but we were able to catch managers in person. However, it was still very hard to convince them. Other than these, we are planning to send letters to other schools’ publications to inform the students elsewhere. Hopefully there will be a movement nationwide to change the current system.

We proposed to the school dining hall that reducing the tray size will reduce food waste and save school money in the long run. Our idea is that make a tray can only fit a plate, a drink and maybe a blow. So that students can only take limited amount of food, as the result, the food waste will be less. There are other school doing “Remove tray project” but the traffic in the dining hall will increase because students are walking back and forth to get more food. Also it also cost food splash over the floor. It is also a kind of food waste and on top of that people need to clean, result in another way of waste. Therefore, we do not want to suggest complete removal of tray. On top of food spill, we believe that student will have strong reaction of no tray project, many complains might rise. If we only reduce the tray size, it can maintain the traffic in the dining hall and reduce the food spill. And we can have the same outcome which is that people will take less food.
On average, every week 24,000 count of student go to Neilson dinner hall. The main source of food wasting is from students who take too much food and cannot finish them. As a result, 2,500 gallons of dry food waste is produced weekly. This is just one of the four dinner hall in the Rutgers New Brunswick Campus. If each dining hall produces 2,500 gallons food waste weekly, the whole New Brunswick Campus is making 10,000 gallons of food waste every single week that is 834540 pounds or 372.6 tons. Think about how much money, time and space the whole environment need to suffer just because the Rutgers New Brunswick food wastes.

The idea of reduce the size of tray our group though about and we were trying to reach the Rutgers dinning director. We call him many times but every time his secretary always says he is not available and he will call us back. However, he never did. Therefore, some idea which is that. There are many ways we can reduce the food waste. There are ways to prevent people to take less food, and there are ways to let people understand how to reduce food waste. But he said that, in his point of view, they way our school dining hall reduce food waste is that they want their food to be consistent. Because if the food quality is consistent. In the long run, students will know which food they like and how much they can take without going to waste.

Also, another idea is that we can put many small signs on the dining table to let the students be aware of the problem in our school. Not only the food going to be wasted, there are many consequence fellow. Much money needed to just pay someone to pick the food waste up. Not to discuss the problems that all these food waste on the environment. Therefore, our service project is to propose to our school dining hall to reduce the tray size and reduce the food waste.

Proposal: Eliminate Trays / Reduce Tray Size in Rutgers Dining Halls
BinXi Wu, James Kuo

Problem:
Wasting food is a major problem in the United States, especially in college. When one walk into a college dining hall, one would often see students with piles of food on their tray and dumping steak, pasta and other food intact. Why? This is the ruminant of our primal instinct, where food is always scarce and when we did not know when our next meal will be. So, we would try to get as much food as we can without considering if we could finish the food. However, today’s world is different, food is abundant, at least for the student who pays the meal plan, and the same behavior adversely affects our society. Furthermore, this problem is exacerbated in the college cafeteria because of the students’ sense of entitlement (after all, we, or rather our parents, paid for it and we get to decide what goes into garbage). Tons of the waste are preventable, and they need to be transported, and processed. All, these cost money, specifically, students’ and tax payers’ money. Therefore, it is not only in the interest of the world, in the interest of the school, but also in the interest of the students themselves to solve this rampant problem.

Proposed Solution:
One method to solve this problem is to remove trays from dining halls. According to Times Magazine, many universities already adapted this method which reduced estimated 25%-30% food waste and water usage (no trays to wash). The idea is that without trays, students can only carry so much plate, would not overload the plates, and there will be time for students to re-evaluate their hunger when they decide to go back to get more food. As a result, this reduces overall food waste.
There are, of course, some drawbacks to this solution. This method would increase dining hall traffic, and increase ‘accident’ rate where the students drop their plates. Therefore I propose another solution, instead of removing trays, reduce tray size to one plate, one glass and one soup bowl. Although this method would not provide the benefit of saving water, it could counter both the traffic problem and the ‘accident’ problem.
References

1. Maya Curry, *The War on College Cafeteria Trays*, (Aug 2008), TIME http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1834403,00.html#ixzz0l3q7Hg54

Editorials

BinXi’s Editorial
Wasting food is a major problem in the United States, especially in college. When one walk into a college dining hall, one would often see students with piles of food on their tray and dumping steak, pasta and other food intact. Why? This is the ruminant of our primal instinct, where food is always scarce and when we did not know when our next meal will be. So, we would try to get as much food as we can without considering if we could finish the food. However, today’s world is different, food is abundant, at least for the student who pays the meal plan, and the same behavior adversely affects our society. Furthermore, this problem is exacerbated in the college cafeteria because of the students’ sense of entitlement (after all, we, or rather our parents, paid for it and we get to decide what goes into garbage). Tons of the wastes are preventable, and they need to be transported, and processed. All, these cost money, specifically, students’ and tax payers’ money. Therefore, it is not only in the interest of the world, but also in the interest of the students themselves to solve this rampart problem.

One method to solve this problem is to remove trays from dining halls. According to Times Magazine, many universities already adapted this method which reduced estimated 25%-30% food waste and water usage (no trays to wash). The idea is that without trays, students can only carry so much plate, would not overload the plates, and there will be time for students to re-evaluate their hunger when they decide to go back to get more food. As a result, this reduces overall food waste.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to this solution. This method would increase dining hall traffic, and increase ‘accident’ rate where the students drop their plates. Therefore I propose this solution, instead of removing trays, reduce tray size to one plate, one glass and one soup bowl. Although this method would not provide the benefit of saving water, it could counter both the traffic problem and the ‘accident’ problem.

Finally, there is the problem of students’ reaction. After all, these changes affect them and the solution would not be effective with student cooperation. However, I believe that our student body would make these small sacrifices to protect our environment and help reduce world hunger.

________________________________________________________________________

TaiChi Kuo Editorial:
Definition
Food wasting includes martial which is raw or cooked, which is discarded. It is also cover with uneatable substance.

Sources
*Production and processing in the kitchen*
There are four dinner hall in Rutgers New Brunswick and Nielsen is one of them. By Nielsen dinner hall alone spends 90,000 on food every food. It ranges from meat, pasta, cereal and vegetable. No one really knows how much food our dinner hall waste while they are preparing the food.

*Food Wastes from students*

On average, every week 24,000 count of student go to Neilson dinner hall. The main source of food wasting is from students who take too much food and cannot finish them. As a result, 2,500 gallons of dry food waste is produced. (JK)