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At a Glance:
Business: Gardner Ale House Restaurant and Brew Pub serving 3,000 meals each week.

Recycling Increase: Owner prioritized food waste diversion as an act of social responsibility.

Savings: 72% of all waste is diverted from the waste stream.

RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts is funded by MassDEP and delivered under contract by the Center for EcoTechnology



Food Waste Diversion program Case Study

Gardner Ale House, Gardner MA

Summary: The Gardner Ale House is a family style brew pub and restaurant located at 74 Parker Street in downtown Gardner. It has been in business since 2006 and is renowned for its house-brewed beers. The restaurant, which serves an average of 3,000 meals per week, has been making continuous progress on its journey toward more sustainable operations. The facility has LED lighting, uses biodegradable take-away containers and diverts 72% of its waste to be recycled or used as animal feed.

Diversion Programs: Spearheaded by owner Rick Walton's belief that diverting food waste in a restaurant "just makes sense" and that capturing this reusable material is the more "appropriate" way to operate the business and to be a better neighbor, the Ale House now diverts more than 52 tons of organics from the kitchen annually. The management team took advantage of the related trainings for these programs to engage staff in improved separation to maximize recycling and its waste reduction goal.

The Gardner Ale House diverts spent barley malt from brewing operations to a local pig farm, used cooking oil is donated to a local environmental group for sustainable projects and they sort single stream recyclables from trash; collecting cardboard, paper, bottles and cans all in one dumpster, which later goes through an automatic sorting process. The Gardner Ale House has twice the capacity for recycling than it does for trash.

In August, 2012, Rick received assistance from the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center and the Center for EcoTechnology, working on a MassDEP funded grant to increase food waste diversion in the Devens area.

Employee Training: The new diversion programs were embraced by employees who viewed the separation activities as a way they could make a difference in their job. At first the staff was challenged by "what goes where" questions, but the separating soon became habit. Walton explains that "they now don't know how to do it any differently and would not be happy if the program stopped!"





Several training sessions were held to provide the Gardner Ale House's 68 employees with the opportunity to learn about the new food and recycling diversion programs, confirm the classification of various waste streams, and offer suggestions for how to streamline separation activities. Signs that list and depict "Compost," "Recycle" and "Trash" materials help to clarify the proper disposal route. The signs are designed to capture all waste streams, which aids in training the new hires.

Food Waste Diversion Logistics: Program champions like Walton, employee education and convenient logistics were instrumental to the program's success. Flat hotel pans and plastic buckets capture food scraps at each prep, cooking and scraping station. The organics are taken out in five-gallon buckets and consolidated into two unlined 64-gallon carts, which the hauler collects three times per week for animal feed. Immediate spill clean-up and frequent emptying of the totes minimizes the need for any additional housekeeping activities.



Program Evaluation: The Gardner Ale House now diverts approximately 15% of its waste for animal feed and 57% for recycling; only 28% of the waste is disposed of as trash. Diverting their food waste helps the Gardner Ale House comply with the Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban, although Walton always cited that he "just wanted to do the right thing". Implementing a food waste diversion program and altering the recycling programs has been cost neutral. Rick is pleased that overall waste management conditions have improved with the implementation of the food waste diversion program. The presence of odors and flies has significantly decreased by keeping the food waste out of the trash and taking it off site more frequently.

Walton encourages other restaurants to divert their organic material, stating that establishing a program is "too easy not to do and it makes such a difference in the amount of trash we send to the landfill." He is proud of the example the Gardner Ale House is setting for others and the difference that his team is making. He also hopes that the restaurant's focus on reducing waste influences the employees' actions at home.

"[Employees] now don't know how to do it any differently and would not be happy if the program stopped!"