



CITY OF SANTA MARIA

November 2023

Keeping Organic Waste Out of the Landfill

Newsletter

How can you reduce the amount of food waste you generate?

According to CalRecycle, the average family of four in California disposes \$1,500 worth of uneaten food per year. In the City of Santa Maria ("City"), it is estimated that over 860,000 pounds of potentially donatable edible food is disposed by businesses such as wholesale food vendors, grocery stores and supermarkets, food distributors, and large restaurants.

Source reduction is an important part of preventing organic waste (food waste) from ending up in the Landfill. Source reduction is a method of reducing the amount of organic waste that is disposed of in the trash by only purchasing what you need, eating more parts of the food item, and meal prepping and planning.

If you are a food-producing commercial business, you can assist with source reduction.

Performing a waste audit will help you learn what and why you may be wasting food. During an audit, you monitor your waste containers and record how much food is being discarded and the reason the food is being disposed of.

Here are other methods your business can use to reduce food waste:

- Reduce batch sizes.
- Train staff on knife skills to make

more efficient cuts and prevent waste.

- Freeze surplus fruits and veggies near the end of peak freshness for later use.
- Marinate meats to extend their shelf life for a few more days.
- Use see-through storage containers to allow staff to see what is available and keep an eye on freshness.
- Provide samples to allow customers to taste before they buy.
- Clarify date labeling and encoding to reduce customer confusion.
- Take accurate inventories before ordering more food and base orders on what you currently have in stock.
- Incorporate leftovers.

If you are a resident, you can take part in source reduction at home. There are smartphone apps for recovering edible food in your neighborhood by sharing food that you don't plan on eating with someone who will, such as OLIO and FoodFinder. If you have fruit or vegetable plants that produce more than your household can eat, you can also contact local gleaning programs, like Veggie Rescue, to have them harvest your food.



WHAT IS EDIBLE FOOD RECOVERY?

Another important method of diverting organic waste from the Landfill is to recover edible food that would otherwise be disposed of and use it for human consumption. The City has developed an Edible Food Recovery Program that connects local Commercial Edible Food Generators, such as wholesale food vendors, grocery stores/supermarkets, food distributors, and large restaurants, with local Food Recovery Services and Organizations. A list of the local Food Recovery Services and Organizations that are operating in Santa Maria is available on our website: <http://bit.ly/3hPNogz>.

To learn more about how to donate recovered edible food and the City's Edible Food Recovery Program, visit the following links: website: <https://bit.ly/405xwsv> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lVnqy4sTH8>.

Want to learn more about organic waste recycling?

The main option for recycling organic waste is to put it in your outdoor organics container to be collected by the City. In 2022, the City recycled over 14,000,000 pounds of organic waste through the curbside collection program. This method allows for all organic waste, including unlined food-soiled paper, to be collected and recycled into compost. However, neither residents nor commercial businesses are allowed to put their organic waste into plastic bags, even if they are compostable.

Another option for residents and businesses is to self-haul organic waste. To properly self-haul organic waste, all self-haulers are required to separate organic waste from blue recyclable and trash containers and haul it to a facility that can properly recycle the organic waste, as per Santa Maria City Ordinance No. 2021-10, such as the Santa Maria Regional Landfill Recycling Park. If you would like more information about the self-hauler requirements, please email utrecycling@cityofsantamaria.org.

Another way to recycle organic waste is by recycling it on-site. At home, you can create a backyard composting setup or purchase an indoor composting machine. There are three different methods for backyard composting: vermicompost (with worms), aerobic (leaving the pile open to air), and anaerobic (covering the pile to prevent air from entering). There are many resources online and at the Santa Maria Public Library that can help you learn about each method. For community composting, ask around in your neighborhood to find out if



someone has a compost pile you can contribute to or find out if there is a community composting site near you. If you are interested in starting a community composting site, please contact the Utilities Department at utrecycling@cityofsantamaria.org. Unfortunately, not all types of organic waste can go into backyard, community, or indoor composting. Bones, fruit pits, meat, dairy, and food-soiled paper are examples of items that cannot be recycled using those methods. To recycle those items, you will still have to put them into your outdoor organics container or self-haul the organic waste per the previously stated requirements.

If you are a business looking to recycle your organic waste on-site, there are several different methods. Please visit the City's Commercial Organics Recycling page for more information: <https://bit.ly/3M669Ze>.

No matter how you recycle your organic waste, in Santa Maria you are required to separate all organic waste from blue recyclables and trash. For more information on separation and disposal techniques, watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MesJwPBakeI&t=1s>.

WHERE DOES MY ORGANIC WASTE GO TO BE RECYCLED?

When the organic waste in your organics container is collected, it goes to the local composting facility where it is turned into compost. Compost is a nutrient rich soil amendment that can be used to increase the health of soil and plants. Diverting organic waste from the Landfill also saves Landfill space.

When organic waste is not recycled and instead disposed of in the Landfill, it decomposes and produces a harmful greenhouse gas, methane. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that not only affects air quality, but also contributes to the overall warming of the climate, causing more fires, more extreme droughts, and rising sea levels. To learn more about the negative effects of methane and how recycling organic waste can help mitigate climate change, visit the CalRecycle website: <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/>.

Below is a list of solid waste haulers that are permitted to haul solid waste, including organic waste, in the City:

- R&R Roll-off Service
- Health Sanitation Service
- Coastal Rolloff Services
- BINZ 2 YOU
- Bedford Enterprises
- B&B Construction Cleanup
- Atlas Performance Industries, Inc.
- Engel & Gray Inc.

For more information about the organic waste recycling, Edible Food Recovery, and solid waste services, please visit our website at <https://bit.ly/46tDk1b>.

