

WASTE IN CATERING

According to the USDA, in 2008 families and food services (canteens, catering, fast foods, restaurants etc.), wasted in the USA about 39 millions of tons of food, which is equal to 19% of the food retail supplies.

Between 4% and 10% of the food bought for food services is lost in the kitchen before it reaches the consumer (LeanPath, 2008). Another significant, but unspecified, quantity is served but not eaten. Among other reasons that generate waste in this sector, we can count big portions, the qualitative standards required by some restaurant chains, and also the need to keep full stocks in order to offer varied menus anytime (Kantor, 1997). The behaviour and the culture of kitchen staff can also influence the production of waste.

In the USA, waste in the plate make the larger fraction of losses in the food services sector. The losses are mostly linked to very large portions or to combinations of food not welcomed by customers. On average, customers leave 17% of their food (Bloom, 2010) and 55% of these leftovers are not taken home. The size of portions have greatly increased in the last 30 years. In the USA, from 1982 to 2002, the average pizza slice has grown 70% in terms of calories; caesar salad with chicken has doubled its calories intake, and the chocolate cookie has quadrupled it (National Heart, 2011). Today, portions' sizes are from 2 to 8 times bigger than those recommended by USDA and FDA (Young, 2003).

Buffets are great generators of waste. Because of health and safety restrictions, it is not always possible to reuse or donate the food that has been on display. In chains, the centralised management can make waste prevention difficult because the local restaurants lack the flexibility to reuse food and leftovers in a creative way.

Besides, fast-foods must respect their qualitative standards. For example, chips at McDonald must be eliminated 7 minutes after they have been prepared, hamburgers after 20 minutes. These time constraints cause a waste generation equal to 10% of their output (Bloom 2010).

From a survey of the University of Bologna carried out on a group of school's canteens in the City of Verona, it has emerged that a little bit more than 15% of the food prepared, equal to 6.523,35 kg, is not served and is handled as waste. With this waste it would have been possible to serve 64 complete meals and 62 incomplete meals, for every day of the school year.