

Case Study: Hilton San Diego Bayfront

Executive Sous Chef Ryan Hetherington of The Hilton San Diego Bayfront drove adoption and implementation of the **Smart Kitchens San Diego** initiative, an innovative program developed by the San Diego Food System Alliance. Smart Kitchens San Diego engages 15 of San Diego County's largest institutions, providing them with Leanpath food waste tracking technology and connecting them with local nonprofit recipients for food donation.

The Hilton San Diego Bayfront, a 1,190-room luxury hotel on the city's waterfront, has been tracking food waste for only six months, but has already seen a dramatic reduction in food waste: **a 55% drop in waste by weight and over 4,412 meals recovered through food donation.**

Hetherington admits he was unsure if the Smart Kitchens San Diego model would live up to its promise. "Could this really show a quick turnaround and quick results for us?" he remembers thinking. "Were we going to get full participation from the staff?" After six months: "It's gone great!"

Smart Kitchens San Diego is funded by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) through California Climate Investments.



**SMART
KITCHENS**
SAN DIEGO

RESULTS AS OF DECEMBER 2019

55% reduction in food
waste in 6 months

34,860 pounds of food
waste prevented

4,412 meals donated

A total diversion of 39,272
pounds of food!

These food savings are equivalent to:



36.7 TONS OF
CO2 REDUCED



89,731 MILES
NOT DRIVEN



39,272 BATHTUBS
OF WATER AVOIDED



4,130 GALLONS
OF GAS

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SOURCE REDUCTION

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Hetherington is passionate about food waste prevention, but like many had concerns that he would be able to get full staff engagement, especially on a new project outside of their already assigned duties. He knew that he needed to convey that passion to his team to get their buy-in. “I wasn’t going to be able to tell them; this is how it’s going to run. I needed their help and their buy-in.” He convened a group of his sous chefs, and with support from the [San Diego Food System Alliance](#) and [Leanpath](#), they developed SOPs for ensuring all food waste is weighed. He then took the SOPs to the larger kitchen crew, showed them how all food waste would be weighed, and explained why they were doing it. “We didn’t talk too much about the financial side, but how much it means as an environmental and community service. **We have huge staff engagement.**” Hetherington illustrates just how important passionate and strong leadership is in the success of this program. **“If you can instill the passion your champion has, if they can instill it in team members, the program will be successful.”** This culture of encouragement and support ultimately helped to lead their team to prevent over 30,000 lbs of food from going to waste.



GOAL SETTING

Leanpath food waste tracking data showed Hetherington and the team that they were racking up a lot of fish waste. **The data also showed them why: overproduction.** The team immediately took action. They began by setting a kitchen-wide goal to reduce fish waste by 50%. With the new goal set, the team analyzed potential sources for the excess fish waste. By reexamining catering orders, they found that for one of their largest regular catering groups,

their ratios were off: they were producing too many fish entrees and not enough chicken. Chefs worked with the group to adjust their orders going forward. In addition, the team analyzed waste tracking photos and noticed that a lot of ceviche was being thrown out. The cause was eventually identified: production sheets weren't being followed, and line cooks were producing extra ceviche to ensure they didn't run out. Staff were retrained and ultimately, they surpassed their goal with a 67% reduction in fish waste.

OPEN CONVERSATIONS

The act of food waste tracking helped staff to identify focus areas, but it also quickly spurred a more **food waste-focused culture in the kitchen**. Hetherington and the team will use scans of the cooler as an opportunity to problem solve. “When we see stuff that expired, we’ll sit there and talk about it. What could we have done to avoid that? Why was this in the cooler for four days without being repurposed?” He’ll also intercept staff at the Leanpath tracking station to increase awareness: “I say, ‘What are we going to do in the future to avoid this [going to waste]? You have diced tomatoes that are moldy now and have to be thrown away. We could have easily turned this into salsa.’” Hetherington shares with his team regularly that it is okay to make mistakes, the most important part is that the team continues to learn and improve. He reminds his staff that, **“we don’t need five people doing it perfectly, we need a million people doing it imperfectly.”** It was through open conversations like these that the team came up with a repurposing idea for overproduced pastries: turn them into Bread Pudding French Toast. A delicious zero waste solution!



DONATION PARTNERSHIP

An integral component of the Smart Kitchens San Diego initiative is the development of a food donation partnership at each institution with a local nonprofit recipient. Connecting excess food with community members in need not only diverts food from going to the landfill but motivates staff to engage in the program. With nearly 500,000 San Diegans experiencing food insecurity, **innovative public-private partnerships like this one can help to fill the hunger gap.**

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: PATH SAN DIEGO

PATH San Diego provides the support that homeless individuals and families need in order to successfully **transition from living on the street to thriving in homes of their own.** They believe that supportive services are critical to ensuring that the people they serve are able to not only move into permanent homes, but stay in permanent homes long-term. The services they provide are available to anyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Through innovative partnerships, PATH San Diego provides wrap around service in a ‘one stop shop’ approach at their complex on Sixth Avenue in Downtown San Diego. Services for neighbors experiencing homelessness include employment, outreach, housing navigation, interim housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. Residents staying in PATH’s 223 room interim or permanent housing units are also **served breakfast and dinner daily**, which is where Hilton San Diego Bayfront’s partnership comes in.

“Our residents were raving about the dinner on Tuesday night. They loved the shrimp and the spaghetti and we had pastries for dessert. On Wednesday as I was walking down the street I ran into four residents who stopped me and thanked me for the amazing dinner, they couldn’t get over it. I laughed because it wasn’t me and let them know it was because of our great partnership and your cooking skills. Wonderful, thank you so much.” - Sigrid Struben of PATH San Diego

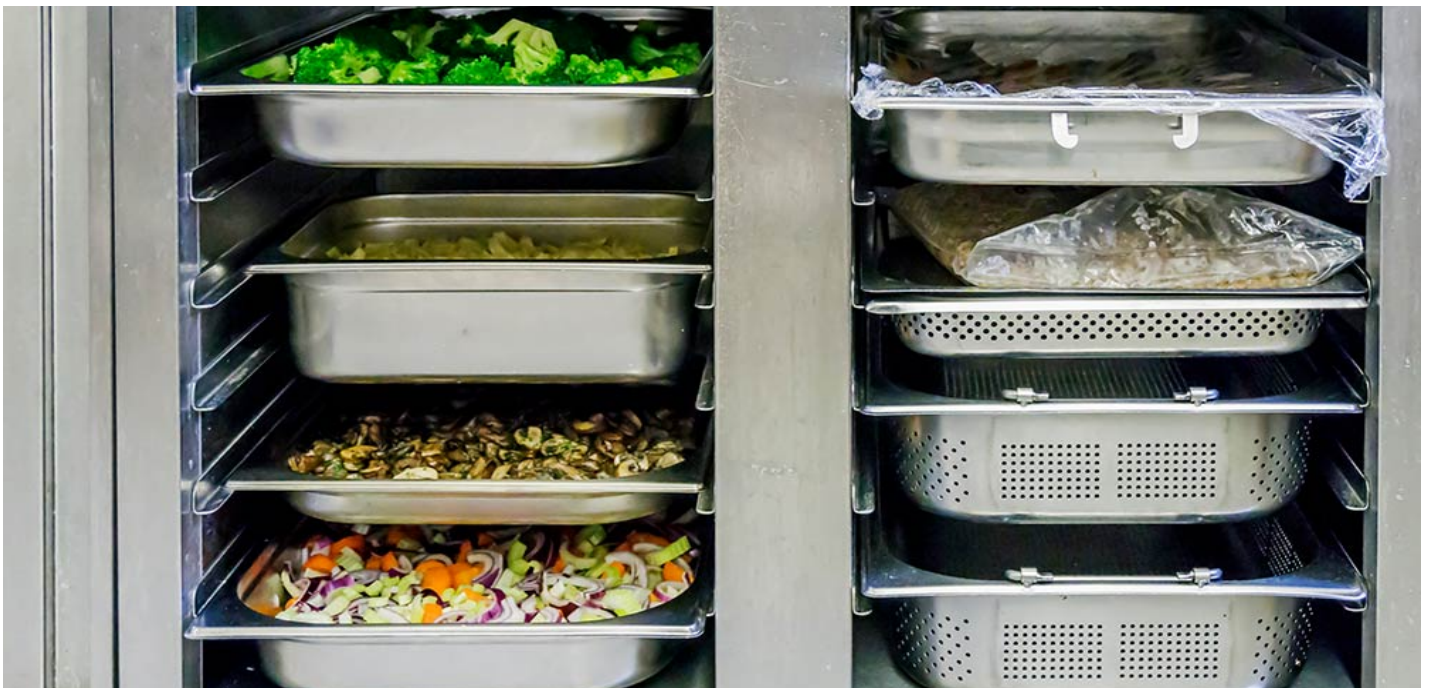




Over 4,400 lbs of food have been donated to PATH San Diego in just 6 months, providing nutritious meals for over 150 residents daily. One such donation of prepared lunches was a special treat for the residents and homeless clients visiting for midday appointments. **“The lunches were served on a day that we did not have a lunch service and we were able to serve not only every resident but every homeless client that came in to meet with a case worker that day”**

(Sigrid Struben of PATH). Hetherington connects with PATH’s team regularly to ensure donation logistics are running smoothly and to gather inspiring stories that he can share with his staff. It is important to him to illustrate the impact their work is having on their community. An example of one such story is when the PATH residents

were treated to “breakfast for dinner”. One afternoon, Struben received a call from Hetherington with the request to rescue surplus food from a morning brunch event. “Breakfast for dinner” was an immediate hit. “Breakfast for dinner was enough not only for dinner but also for breakfast the next day. I came in and the residents were telling me this was the best meal they had had in forever. We have cereal and fruit that we get from the food bank but this was special, and **we thank you for helping them feel good about life first thing in the morning”** (Sigrid Struben of PATH).



BUSINESS BENEFITS

Food waste prevention brings real financial value: kitchens cut back on overproduction, which means they buy less food, lowering food purchase costs. But, as Hilton San Diego Bayfront Executive Chef David Scalise explained, there are also marketing benefits. “Groups will do site visits,” he says. “They’ll visit three hotels and pick which one they’re going to hold their event at. **We have groups that ask specifically about our sustainability efforts.**” Scalise now discusses the hotel’s participation in the Smart Kitchens San Diego food waste prevention program. “We’re a business, and we want to use anything we can to have an advantage over the competition.” Hetherington shared an example from a recent large event. “[The event] had a group of 1,500-1,800 people...the opening lunch was supposed to be 1,800 guests and only 900 came due to weather and flight delays. And so we had hundreds of pounds of ham and all this food (was) donated... When we shared with the client what we did with all that extra food and who it went to... and they shared [this news] with their attendees, **they left here feeling a little bit better that money went to a good cause. It kind of kept giving in many different ways.**” Through its proud participation in the Smart Kitchens San Diego initiative, the Hilton San Diego Bayfront has realized environmental, social, and financial benefits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reach out to Rachel Oporto, Program Coordinator, at rachel@sdfs.org, and visit the Smart Kitchens San Diego webpage at sdfs.org/smart-kitchens-san-diego

