

Using surplus food stock to make incredible food



Background

At the start of 2016, Alice Gilsenan and her business partners launched a restaurant in London like no other. Tiny Leaf was the capital's only organic, zero waste vegetarian restaurant. The site's diverse and delicious menu used products from surplus food stock, all provided from local suppliers such as Planet Organic and Abel & Cole.

With the vast majority of Tiny Leaf's produce being donated, the team only had a rough idea what was coming their way. For others this would seem daunting, but for the Tiny Leaf team, this just made each day more exciting and the team of chefs gladly embraced the creative challenge by designing a menu with flexible ingredients at its core. And that's what Tiny Leaf is about, getting excited about sustainability in food. An excitement they instil in their customers.



Key facts

Food waste is a global issue – when Tiny Leaf first launched in January 2016, Alice was inundated with messages from customers, bloggers and journalists from around the world. Everyone wanted to find out more about Tiny Leaf, from what was on the menu to how it was being run. It became clear this is a key global environmental issue.

Send the message home – Alice doesn't want the message to begin and end at Tiny Leaf. The space which was largely designed using upcycled and recycled materials encourages conversation, making customers a part of their ethos. The hope then is that every customer takes the Tiny Leaf attitude home with them to change the way they feel about food for good.

Build a menu around your ethos – Being sustainable isn't easy, but Tiny Leaf's smart menu makes sure meals are always fresh and delicious. A number of the meals can interchange key ingredients, so the space can use what's available and what's in season, further reducing the potential for waste.



"Make your customers a part of the process and the experience. Let them know about the work you're doing to save food from being thrown away. Then, they'll take the same attitudes home with them, which helps the sustainable cause further."

Alice Gilsenan



T I N Y
L E A F

<http://www.tinyleafondon.com/>

Key actions 1

Be smart with seasonal sourcing – whether your produce changes on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis, some clever menu planning can make it easy for you to always produce exceptional food. Think seasonally and find the components in each meal that could be swapped out with ease. Then, whatever comes through the kitchen door, you know you can maximise its use.

Key actions 2

Let your customers know everything – Tiny Leaf is proof that people really care about the fight against food waste. So, talk to them. Talk them through your menu, explain your process for fighting waste, and discuss ways to cut food at home. To fight food waste once and for all, everyone needs to work together.

Key actions 3

Don't forget about your drinks – Tiny Leaf isn't just clever with food, it thinks sustainably with drinks as well. Its wines are organic and biodynamic, while the in-house pale ale by Toast Ale is created using surplus bread. For a completely sustainable approach, never neglect the tipple.

Results

The buzz around Tiny Leaf didn't end after that first influx of journalists on launch. After spending its initial months in its original four-floored home at Westbourne Park Road, Tiny Leaf took its unique offer to the streets, making Mercato Metropolitan in Borough its new home.

This new location allowed Alice and the Tiny Leaf team to spread the good food and inspiration to even more people.

What Tiny Leaf is doing next

Tiny Leaf is a one-of-a-kind restaurant. But by continuing to spread the word, and by showing the industry how its way of doing things is viable and profitable, the hope is it won't be alone for long.

Tiny Leaf will be launching the third chapter in an exciting new location soon. When it opens, the team will continue to inspire, innovate and, above all, make incredible food.

Summary

Alice and Tiny Leaf prove that sustainability and great tasting food aren't mutually exclusive. With smart planning, good local relationships and enough drive, it can be possible to deliver both at the highest level.

Tips

If you're fighting food waste, take pride and spread the word. Customers care, and the more you can advise them to improve their own habits at home, the better. Let them take the good message home with them.

To help get started on measuring food waste and making changes in your business, you can download the free 'Your Business is Food, don't throw it away' tools at: <http://www.wrap.org.uk/ybifbusiness>

While we have tried to make sure this information sheet is accurate, we cannot accept responsibility or be held legally responsible for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with this information being inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. This material is copyrighted. You can copy it free of charge as long as the material is accurate and not used in a misleading context. You must identify the source of the material and acknowledge our copyright. You must not use material to endorse or suggest we have endorsed a commercial product or service. For more details please see our terms and conditions on our website www.wrap.org.uk. 'Your Business is Food; don't throw it away' has been developed by WRAP under the Courtauld Commitment 2025. Find out more at www.wrap.org.uk/ybifbusiness



Project supported by LIFE funding LIFE15 GIE/UK/000867