

## Re-Defining Food Waste and Food Waste Management in the Food Service Sector: A Case Study in a University Food Service Unit

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**Abstract :** The food service sector wastes staggering quantities of food. More than one-third of food produced today gets wasted. This is both perplexing and daunting given that not all that is wasted is accounted for when measuring food waste. It is recognised that the present food waste definitions are ambiguous and do not really take into account all food waste generated. The contention is that food waste in the food service sector can be prevented or reduced if we have an explicit food waste definition in the context of food service. This study, therefore, explores the definition of the concept of food waste in the food service sector and its implications on sustainable food waste management strategies. An ethnographic research approach was adopted. A university food service unit was selected as a research site. Data collection techniques employed included document analyses, participant observations, focus group discussions with front-of-house and back-of-house staff, and one-on-one interviews with staff on managerial positions. A grounded theory approach was applied to analyse data. The concept of food waste was constructed differently by different levels of staff. Whereas managers raised discussion from a financial perspective, BOH and FOH staff drew upon socio-cultural implications. This study lays the foundation for a harmonised definition of the concept of food waste in food service.

**Keywords :** food service, food waste, food waste management, sustainability

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