

Elysia

BREAKFAST + APERITIF

FOOD BUSINESS - SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST 2020



INTRODUCTION

Elysia is an event catering company with a focus on sustainability. The team sources in-season, natural surplus food from local producers, such as wonky organic fruits & vegetables and imperfect territorial British cheese wheels among many more ingredients. They transform those ingredients into delicious breakfasts and canapés making use of the whole plants and promoting "nose to tail" cooking techniques. And to top it off, they deliver by bicycle all around London.

This document offers some of our best practices at Elysia. Those tips reflect what we have learnt through our experience and perspective and may not apply to all food businesses.

Recommendations focusing on a healthy and sustainable food offering to reduce waste.

Constraints:

- Small / medium scale catering business
- Event catering company
- Canapes & Buffet offering

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Food waste - what is the problem?

The food industry has found itself in a new wasteful system, the likes of which has never been seen before.

10 mn. tonnes (£17bn worth) of food is wasted in the UK

Source - WRAP UK, Jan 2017

20-40% of produce is rejected simply because it looks imperfect

Source - Soil Association via the Telegraph, 2015



TRUE COST OF FOOD WASTE

Externalities of intensive food production:

- Land use & indigenous populations moved
- Deforestation & Soil degradation
- Energy & Water used
- Transportation
- Labour
- Packaging etc.

While 70% of food waste happens at home, as food businesses we have a large responsibility in this outcome. From discounting lots of perishable items (e.g. 3 bags of salad for the price of 2) or refilling continuously buffets at catered events, the industry does not help the consumers value the food and the resources used to grow and transform the produce.

Ingredients selection



Quality

The quality of the food is from our perspective the starting point for reducing food waste. As a consumer or a food business, we tend to value more - and thus waste less - high-quality items which are often slightly more expensive. Here are a few bullet points to help select high-quality ingredients and reduce their wastage.

- ❑ Sourcing natural ingredients (no additives) - actually checking and visiting suppliers to understand how the food is grown and made
- ❑ Sourcing from local producers supporting regenerative farming practices (<https://www.rootsofnature.co.uk/regenerative-agriculture/>)
- ❑ Sourcing produce in season for quality, environmental and costs purpose <http://www.eattheseasons.co.uk/>

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Suppliers - Ordering process

The relationship with the suppliers helps valuing the products as well. Good communication with the suppliers would help sourcing what the producers have in season and in surplus - buying the produce as their best and reducing extra costs.

- Order what you need according to the demand (number of guests on events) rather than ordering the same quantity on a weekly or daily basis. Take into account bank holidays, kids holidays etc that may impact the trading activity.
- Establish a direct relationship with suppliers
- Order directly from suppliers specialised in specific ingredients (e.g. fruits and veg / wheat / meat / fish / dairy etc.)
- More suppliers do not mean more work or confusion when ordering - Order through online platform using [triedandsupplied.com](https://www.triedandsupplied.com) / Foodchain.
- Communicate with suppliers to know what they have in season, what they have in over-production or surplus
- Agree a fair price for the surplus ingredients - taking into account the time, labour, knowledge needed behind the organic/natural/wild production.
- Other ways to source surplus food: Foodchain - <https://www.joinfoodchain.com/> - search for Feast Fairly

Menu creation

Creating a menu from scratch is about knowing all the ingredients used in the recipes, valuing the labour, skills and knowledge in the menu creation. Fewer options on the menu would also help reduce wastage as there would be no need to order too many ingredients which may end up in the bin if the customers don't actually order them.

Simplicity

- Taste, flavours and look** is at the centre of the offering - the food has to be delicious - high-quality ingredients make it easy to do without adding any unhealthy fat, salt and sugar
- Prepare the food **from scratch** - in addition to limit additive in the food, the chef and team members take pride in preparing and serving the meals
- Simple recipes** with less ingredients (less ordering, less suppliers, healthy menu, easier to reuse ingredients across the menu)
- Larder with lots of **spices** > easy and simple way to transform recipes with local ingredients into world cuisine and flavours without the high environmental and costs implications
I.e. dumplings, curry, kimchi etc.
More info on [Elysiacatering.com/blog](https://elysiacatering.com/blog)

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- ❑ **Less menu options** to avoid over stocking ingredients and preparing too many things in advance and risking to waste some of the food. If you have many things on the list, ask yourself why?

Health, Sustainability & Costs

At Elysia, we use the same ingredients in several meals but prepare them in different ways. It helps us use the whole item - root to stems and nose to tail - but also use the ingredients whatever the customers are ordering which help avoid having any surplus in the kitchen.

- ❑ Prepare **healthier recipe options** even with comfort food
I.e. Honey Roasted Potatoes or Gratin Dauphinois rather than French Fries (to reduce salt, unhealthy fats such as palm oil and unnatural sugars).
- ❑ Offer a **meat and fish option - very high-quality** (use premium adjectives) and smaller quantity > still filling and good value for money but more grain/pulses/vegetables on the plates than animal proteins (1/3)
- ❑ **Create recipes that complement each other** in the menu when there is leftover or surplus
I.e. - Lunch menu with quinoa salad left >> use the quinoa to make crispy tartlet base for a canape menu in the evening
 - Sourdough bread left from breakfast and lunch buffet >> turn into crostini or panzanella at lunch time
 - Sable bretons with egg yolks >> make meringue with egg whites for a sweet bite
- ❑ Use the **whole ingredient**
i.e. - Tart with cheese, use the rind in welsh rarebit or fondue ;
 - use carrot greens in pesto ;
 - leave the skin on the fish for the customers to eat or make it into a canape base ;
 - offer green gazpacho or soup with stems & roots, marmalade with banana peels etc.
- ❑ Source **offal** (tongue, brain, heart, liver, bone marrow etc.) and **less noble animal** pieces such as neck, cheek to create Nose to Tail inventive dishes - **cheaper cuts often wasted** (share tips with customers to source high-quality meat at a reasonable price)
- ❑ Offer different vegetables, grain, meat, fish etc to raise the **customer curiosity with new texture, flavours** etc. (British spelt salad, brown crab meat etc.)
- ❑ **Avoid offering snacks** as they are responsible for unhealthy eating behaviours and obesity - or only healthy snacks (no sugar on unhealthy fat) such as sourdough bread topped with goat curd, fresh herbs, nuts & extra virgin olive oil



2. Or...transform your peel into vegetable crisps

When making dishes like mashed potato or corned beef that need a silky texture, why not try turning the excess vegetable peel into vegetable crisps? Once the peelings are dry, toss them lightly in olive oil and seasoning, and bake in the oven at 200C for 12-15 minutes, sitting halfway through. Delicious!

3. Root to stem!

Broccoli stems are just as nutritious as the florets, and are rich in beta-carotene, vitamin C, iron, potassium and fibre. Instead of tossing them on the compost heap, why not try finely slicing the broccoli stems and adding them to pasta sauce or stir-fry? They are also delicious with the leafy leaves in a salad - our recipe here! Other vegetables you can eat root to stem are for instance beetroot, carrots, turnips and chard. Tip: Use the extra leaves to make pesto!



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Recipes available on:
www.elysiacatering.com/blog

Nutrition

Nutrition is also at the heart of sustainability. Providing filling meals that are healthy for the consumers would help reduce snacking during the day - snacks which are often sourced from not so ethical nor healthy products.

- ❑ Create menus that **encourage consumers to eat in a healthy way** without focusing on it when communicating with your clients (80% of our canapes are vegetarian/grain based and 20% with animal proteins) and demonstrate that vegetables are delicious even with simple recipes

“The best pesto I have ever had” Jamie - 53 year old
(Feedback on our leftover herbs and salad pesto made with EV olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper when running a zero-waste cooking workshop. Time of preparation: 2 minutes)



It is estimated that British people should eat about 500 grams of fruits and vegetables per day (a portion is about 80 grams) (i.e. 1 fruit/compote in the morning, 2 vegetables at lunch & at dinner time, 1 fruit portion in the afternoon or as a dessert)

<https://www.foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FF-Veg-Doc-V5.pdf>

- ❑ **Share recipes and cooking tips** on your website for your clients - more engagement and loyalty from the customer base while sharing relevant content

Storage tips

- ❑ Keep the salad, green leaves wrapped into a wet kitchen paper in plastic container (last up to 2 weeks compared to a few days in a plastic bag)

A few examples of leftovers recipes tips

A range of recipes to preserve and transform ingredients are available on our website : www.elysiacatering.com/blog.

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Vegetables

- Roasted vegetables
- Fermented vegetables
- Pesto
- Dehydrated vegetables & peels (can also be used for decorating plates & dishes)
- Leftover rainbow vegetable savoury tart
- Chutney & preserves

Fruits

- Jams & preserves
- Compote
- Curd
- Vinegar with citrus
- Poached fruits
- Fruit cake (like banana bread with any fruits)
- Dehydrated fruits & peels (can also be used for decorating plates & dishes)



Bread

- Croutons
- Panzanella
- Crostinis
- Croquette
- Focaccias

Meat

- Croquette
- Pies
- Cured meat

Fish

- Crab rarebit
- Smoked & cured

Cheese

- Fondue
- Rarebit
- Mousse
- Tarts



Kitchen organisation

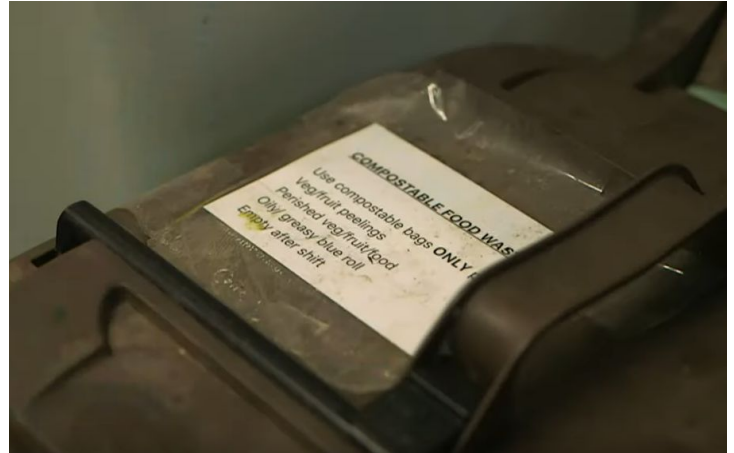
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A clean and well-organised kitchen is time-saving for the staff but also creates a peaceful environment to work in and be creative with the food. The maintenance of the bins, fridge and freezer with well-labeled and clear food containers help the teams know what ingredients are available and avoid any wastage.

- ❑ **3 bins next to each prep section** - food / recycling / general bin with clear signage and **description** of what to put and not put in each bin
- ❑ Look into the **food waste bin once per week** with the kitchen team and look at what has been wasted and how it could have been used. Other resources are available for large organisations and teams - see [Winnow](#)
- ❑ **Fridge check at the end of the day** > any herb/salad left turned into pesto / any fruits & citrus into preserve or vinegar (very quick and simple recipes that can preserve the produce for a long time and be easily reused in recipes)
- ❑ Any leftovers can be put in the **freezer** - not being afraid of using the freezer rather than throwing food away
- ❑ **Check the freezer each week** and create recipes with whatever is left (any surplus veg/meat/fish/cheese into croquettes, into rarebit etc.)



Other resources: WRAP

<https://www.wrap.org.uk/content/your-business-food-don%E2%80%99t-throw-it-away-0>

Waste management

Friends of the Earth estimated that 78% of food waste ends up in landfill which emits gasses such as methane - one of the large contributors to global warming. Making sure that food waste and compostable items are actually composted make a big difference in reducing our impact on the environment.



A 'ball' made up of PET and HDPE bottles ready for collection

- ❑ Visit the site of your local waste management and understand what they actually recycle / compost, where they send the material
- ❑ Bring any recyclable or compostable waste back to your unit to be sorted when not available on-site or schedule a pick-up from the waste company directly at the venue
- ❑ Recommendation: [Quantum waste](#); [Bywaters](#)

More information on our [blog post](#)

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Packaging

Single-use plastic is in the news headlines. To avoid packaging waste, our team comes on-site to most events to display the canapes and buffet on reusable natural equipment.

Canapes

- ❑ **Delivering the food preparation in reusable containers** with a team assembling the canapes on-site to guarantee freshness, look and avoid single-use packaging
- ❑ Using **beautiful reusable platters and boards** to serve canapes on events - it is more qualitative and gives an incentive to the client to have service on events rather than delivered in single used plastic. We source our boards from off-cuts of olive wood



Breakfast & Lunch Buffet

- ❑ Using ceramic/china plates when available ; if not, **compostable plates and cutlery** making sure they actually get composted (scheduling a pick-up from the compost waste management company at the end of the event)

Recommendation: [LondonBioPackaging](#) and [Quantum Waste](#)

Delivery

When starting up the sustainable catering company, we received a grant from ZEN and acquired our beautiful Bicapace cargo bike. Other funding is available for cargo bikes, electric bikes and vans.

- ❑ If your food business is not too far from your regular clients (within 6 miles), look into buying your **own fleet of cargo bikes**. Grants available: <https://zeroemissionsnetwork.com/>
- ❑ Look into bicycle delivery with a **courier company**: Pedalme / e-cargobike / etc.
- ❑ Petrol/diesel delivery - look at the **route optimisation** so that there is no deliveries in same areas several times a day



Presentation

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On events the aesthetic of the food will make the guests decide whether they are going to eat at home or not! Clean and eye-catching food presentations help the guests appreciate the food even more. We found that the layout of the canapes, aesthetic of our equipment and attention to details in the presentation considerably help reduce having leftovers at the end of an event.

General

- ❑ Beautiful food with lots of colours: make each **dish vibrant and full of flavours** with a combination of ingredients

Buffet

- ❑ Use **plates that are not too big** : 23 cm rather than 27 and offer the guests to help themselves a second time if they are still hungry and reduce plate's food waste
- ❑ Display **large bowls but not too full and not too big to refill them** as the food go rather than displaying all the food in one go >> we know what goes first, more popular and serve the guests with whatever there is left before refilling the bowls/buffet display



Canapes

- ❑ Don't start serving the sweet bites until the savoury ones are gone
- ❑ **Pack the sweet bites into containers / brown paper bags** if the guests start leaving and won't have time to eat them at the venue and give them away as a treat.
- ❑ **Decorate the boards with natural elements** - dried fruits, vegetables, leaves etc. according to what is being served

Communication with clients

To prepare an event we tend to suggest a menu to our customers - it helps us select a mix of both vegetarian and non vegetarian options but also enables us to use the ingredients we have in stock first. We are able to pleasantly surprise the customers with an innovative selection and reduce any surplus in our production space.

Digital Menu (or quote) prior to the event

- ❑ **No difference in the menu layout with the vegetarian, vegan and meat/fish options** (digital or paper menu)> by treating the options on equal terms customers are more likely to pick a little bit of everything (don't separate veggie dishes in a different section)
- ❑ **Use adjectives and key words in the menu description highlighting the flavours and quality** of the menu/ingredients and especially for the dishes you want to highlight - don't use "healthy", "Vegetarian" vocabulary that turn off consumers wanting comfort food
I.e. - Simple description with provenance- i.e. Fire-Grilled Brown Meat Crab Rarebit from the Dorset Coast

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- “Chef’s Special - Creamy Chanterelle Mushrooms & Spelt with Melting Territorial Cheeses from the British Isles”
 - Crispy Greens & Sun-Kissed Tomatoes from the Isle of Wight with Preserve Lemons & Toasted Spices (healthy options without mentioning it directly)
- Suggest and highlight menu options according to current food stock.** i.e. many vegetables left > prepare roasted vegetables menu; sourdough bread left - suggest cheese platters with sourdough bread or panzanella to avoid any kitchen waste or keeping stock for too long
 - Do not overuse healthy wording** which may scare some people
 - Make suggestions to clients** - most of them will follow your suggestions rather than ask for something very specific that may not be local, sustainable and cost effective

Printed Menu on events

- Add the **story of the ingredients in the menu**, name of suppliers (and a map) as well as some key food facts to make people think more about their consumption in a constructive non patronising way
- Offer free sourdough bread with EV olive oil rather than crisps & nuts (salty, saturated fatty foods which encourage more consumption of drinks and alcohol)



Service

Raising the curiosity of the guests with the food we serve is key to tell the story of the ingredients but also make sure all the food goes by the end of the event. From Bone Marrow and Fish Skins to Kimchi, the knowledge of our serving staff makes a big difference to facilitate the adhesion of the guests who can experience new flavours and texture.

- Assembling the food **from scratch** - in addition to the quality of the presentation, freshness of the canapes, the event team takes pride in preparing and serving the canapes/meals and better understand the business
- Make sure the **staff have tasted the food, know the ingredients, allergens, story of the food**
- They should be able to **talk about the canapes/dish** with the consumers
- For special dishes that may look a bit too healthy or unusual (e.g bone marrow) - the staff can introduce the canape and add **“it is my favourite!”**, “Our chef’s special and very popular bite” or “Let me know what you think?” Once one person in the group taste the canapes and approve the taste, more people will try and may even start a discussion about it

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Additional information

We can help you assess your current practices, advise on developing pillars of sustainability within your organisation and help for selecting suppliers (food, equipment, waste, delivery etc.)

- > sourcing of the ingredients, material etc
- > staff (good relationship with their team members, staff well-treated etc.)
- > production techniques
- > delivery
- > economic viability
- > Internally logging food that has been thrown away, including the reason!

Other resources:

Food waste research & reduction tips: [Wrap](#)

Cookbook: "Bread is Gold" by Massimo Bottura

Chef's best practices: [Chef Manifesto](#)

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