

Managing Food Scraps

At Resorts, Hotels, & Other Lodging



State law bans food scraps from the trash.

Resorts need a food scrap management system for residents, guests, and staff.

Systems vary widely, and each establishment may place food scrap bins where it makes sense for their residents, guests, and staff. Staff must be trained to use the food scrap system properly.



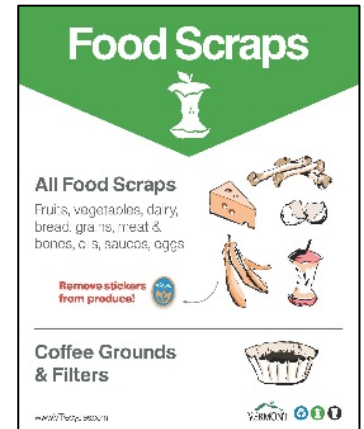
Many resorts hire a food scrap hauler to pick up their food scraps, just like trash and recycling collection. Ask your hauler if they offer food scrap pick-up or find a food scrap hauler at VTrecycles.com. Food scrap haulers usually provide collection containers and can tell you if anything other than food scraps can go in the container (e.g. if they allow paper napkins or compostable bags, etc.).

Establishments with a small amount of food scraps may drop the scraps off at transfer stations or compost sites. Others compost their scraps on-site in bins or use solar digesters. Learn more about these options at VTrecycles.com or [in the FAQ for small businesses](#).

General Strategies & Tips:

Just like for recycling and trash, **provide clear instructions on what to put in food scrap collection bins**. Have a marketing team? See if they can help!

1. **Label** recycling and food scrap bins with informative signs that use pictures of the items that go in each bin. Your hauler or [local waste district or town](#) may be able to provide signs, or you can use the free signs on VTrecycles.com (click the “download materials” button or ask us for the design file to make it your own).
2. Regularly **train staff** on the system and ask them if they have ideas to make it work better.



Ideally, build an outdoor enclosure that is large enough for trash, recycling, and food scrap containers. This looks tidy, helps keep animals away, and reduces the chance that a passerby will put materials in the wrong dumpster or cart. Consider consulting with your hauler(s) before installing something new, to make sure it works for their trucks.



Monitor food scrap bins to keep trash out. To fix any issues, tweak the system, re-train staff, and communicate with guests or residents. In most cases, food scraps are fed to livestock or turned into nutrient-rich compost. This compost is spread across the land, including gardens and farms, to improve soils and grow healthy plants. Composters try to screen out materials that do not compost, like plastic, adding cost to their process. Pieces of plastic that remain pollute the soil.

Place a bin of saw dust, wood shavings, or other dry plant material next to the food scrap bin and cover food scraps with a few scoops.

This will keep the food scrap bin cleaner and will create a more pleasant food-scrap-dumping experience, especially in the summer. Some haulers provide this cover material. If yours does not, ask them what cover material you should use.



Regularly evaluate your system. Are there ways to make it more efficient or work better? What is working well? Experiment to figure out what works best.

Download free signs and graphics at VTrecycles.com (click the “download materials” & “food scrap” buttons).



Get Free Assistance. We are here to help! Contact your local waste district or town at 802recycles.com or our team at the Vermont DEC: 802-828-1138; anr.scrapfoodwaste@vermont.gov

In guest rooms, apartments, or condos:

Provide well-labeled containers for food scrap collection. For example, provide a small container:

- **In each room or unit** (e.g. condos, rooms with kitchenettes, etc.).
- **On each floor**, such as near the ice machine or kitchenette (e.g. bed & breakfasts).



Consolidate the food scraps. Once consolidated, the food scraps are ready to be picked-up or dropped off. For example,

- If guests/residents take out their trash & recycling, provide a food scrap collection bin at each outdoor trash & recycling consolidation area (e.g. for condos).
- If staff collect trash and recycling from guest rooms or units, and there are food scrap containers in each unit, have staff collect food scraps as well. This system can work well because **staff can look in the food scraps and make sure they are not full of trash** before adding them to the consolidated food scrap container.



Guests need detailed instructions for systems to work, so think about what works for your establishment—explaining during check-in, via a handout in rooms, etc. If all food scrap, recycling, and trash containers have the same color coding, labeling, and setup, people will be less confused and use them correctly more often. [Customers prefer sustainable businesses.](#)



Train staff to monitor food scrap bins. Teach staff which items do not belong in, or contaminate, the food scrap bins. Train staff to use tongs or other tools to pull contamination out of the food scraps—store these tools conveniently. Train staff to empty food scrap buckets full of trash into trash cans.

In a restaurant or cafe:

Collect food scraps in labeled, washable containers like 5-gallon buckets, and empty them into the food scrap totes or dumpster.

Teach your staff to compost properly, including making sure trash, like plastic produce stickers, stays out of the food scraps.

Restaurant Tips:

- To keep trash out of your food scraps, **have staff collect plates or have customers drop full plates or trays off at a kitchen window**, so trained staff can properly separate food scraps from trash.
- If guests bus their own dishes, **place signs** with recycling and composting instructions **where guests wait in line** to get their food, pay, and/or bus their dishes.
- It helps to serve fewer plastic items that could end up in the food scraps—**consider providing only durable & reusable service ware or certified compostable items (if your food scrap hauler allows them).**



Save money and help your community!

- Contact VT DEC [to learn how to save money by reducing food waste](#). You also end up with fewer food scraps to manage.
- Donate quality food to staff or the local food shelf.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we use compostable bags to keep the containers clean?



It depends where your scraps end up. Ask your hauler or composter if they accept compostable bags. If they do, ask what brand you should use—some products that say they are compostable do not actually break down in a compost pile, so composters must be careful about which they accept (some only accept [BPI-certified](#) compostable bags). Some composters may accept paper bags or newspaper liners.

Is it okay to give food scraps to pig farmers or chicken farmers?

Only food scraps that have not touched meat/fish or their oils/juices may be fed to pigs. To learn more, read the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's [Guidance on Feeding Food Scraps to Pigs](#). Chickens may be given any food scraps, including meat.

Can we put food scraps down the drain using our in-sink garbage disposal?

Yes, but this is not advised, as food scraps can create costly problems for municipal sewer systems. Septic systems are not designed to handle large amounts of food scraps either, particularly fats, so putting them down the drain can clog pipes and lead to a need to pump septic tanks more often.

What if I am worried about bears?

If your business is located in bear country, check out VT DEC's [tips for keeping bears away from food scrap \(and trash\) collection containers](#) before you have a problem. Ideally, place collection containers where bears cannot access them. If this is not possible, [place an electric fence around the containers](#) to deter bears—rub peanut butter or bacon grease on the fence so a curious bear would get a zap to the nose and be scared away. If a bear disturbs your garbage or food scrap containers, try to scare the bear away and contact VT Fish and Wildlife for more advice on deterring the bear before it becomes a recurring problem. Fill out [this form](#) to get in touch.

Can we use compostable dishes?

- 1) Ask your [food scrap hauler](#).
- 2) If your food scrap hauler accepts compostable dishes, ask 1) what types and 2) if compostable plastics need to be certified compostable (e.g. see BPI certified compostable label on right). **Not all products labeled “compostable” or “biodegradable” break down completely, so composters must be careful about what they accept.**
- 3) If you use compostable dishes, post clear signs so people know what to compost and what to trash. Train staff and develop strategies to keep the compost bin free of trash.
- 4) Compostable dishes are not recyclable, unless they are 100% paper/cardboard and clean.

**How can we discourage insects from the outside cart in the summer?**

Especially when it is warm out, cover food scraps with several inches of dry plant material (e.g. wood shavings, sawdust, etc.) or dried coffee grounds. Many people like to do this all year long, for a cleaner food scrap collection experience.

Is anyone going to enforce the law's requirements?

Yes. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has enforcement authority. However, education and outreach are the initial methods of implementation. Solid waste districts and towns may have enforcement authority under local ordinances.

How much does food scrap collection cost?

Costs vary, as they do for trash and recycling services, and must be negotiated with your hauler. Find haulers in your region at [VTrecycles.com](#). When comparing quotes, consider how often the hauler would empty and clean your containers and whether they provide a cover material for the food scraps.

We cannot control our guests' behavior—are we responsible for what they put in the trash?

Your business or institution is responsible for all solid waste materials produced during normal operations. To help customers and staff properly separate their materials, teach them how to use the food scrap and recycling system and use the standardized Vermont Universal Recycling symbols (download at VTrecycles.com) to create signs for your facility.

Overall, businesses must have a food scrap collection system, regularly train staff to use the system properly, and manage the food scraps separately from the trash. The Universal Recycling Law allows business that meet these requirements to trash a “de minimis”, or insignificant, amount of food scraps that occasionally end up in the trash by accident.

What should we do with meat and bones?

If you get your food scraps picked up or take them to a drop-off, include meat and bones with the rest of the food scraps.

I have more questions!

At VTrecycles.com, click the “[food scraps](#)” button and then scroll down to the links on the bottom. On the right, there are resources especially for businesses. Or give us call us at 802-828-1138.

Resources

[UVM Dorms Case Study](#). In their dorms, UVM students put their food scraps in brown paper bags with a compostable cellulose lining (their composter accepts these bags). Students bring the bags to a collection tote near the front desk of the dorm.

[Hotel Kitchen](#). A toolkit and case studies for reducing food waste and saving money in hotel food service. Created by the World Wildlife Fund and the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

[Managing Food Scrap Carts in Bear Country](#). Tips for keeping bears away from food scrap (and trash) collection containers. Created by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and DEC.

[Living with Black Bears](#). General resources from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Learn more about Vermont's Universal Recycling Law, composting, and waste management at VTrecycles.com or by calling VT DEC at 802-828-1138.