Sofitel Dubai The Obelisk: ‘surplus into purpose’, reducing 42% of food waste

Overview

Organization: Sofitel Dubai (Accor)
Segment: Luxury, Premium Hotel
Region: Middle East (Dubai)
Years: 2023 and 2024
Target audience: Front line and middle management/ executive
Evidence: Quantitative and qualitative outputs

Executive Summary

Sofitel Dubai The Obelisk reduced food waste by 42% in one year, from 180 g to 126 g per cover, through a comprehensive program combining measurement, staff training, and guest engagement. By leveraging data-driven insights, optimising production, and implementing initiatives such as composting and food donation, the hotel embedded a “surplus into purpose” approach across its operations.

The initiative generated approximately $50,000 in cost savings while diverting waste from landfill and supporting local communities, demonstrating that integrated, whole-system approaches can deliver strong environmental, social, and financial outcomes in luxury hospitality.

Context

The Sofitel Dubai the Obelisk boasts 500 rooms and 95 luxurious apartments, catering to business travellers, seasonal vacationers, and families alike. It offers five restaurants and bars, serving around 1,000 guests daily with cuisine that is predominantly homemade.

In 2023, the hotel received the Green Key Certification for excellence in sustainable operations within the tourism industry.

Actions Implemented

The initial challenge in tackling food waste was to persuade and inform the staff about its significance and how they could contribute. The breakfast pilot program played a crucial role by measuring daily food waste, which facilitated a new approach focused on reducing food quantities, enhancing quality,

and utilizing locally sourced ingredients. Consequently, plate waste dropped from 190 grams to 100 grams within three months, equivalent to a food waste reduction of 47% since 2022.

The hotel has utilised training and awareness for their food waste reduction, including a Vision and Mission statement to gain team buy-in. Kitchen staff work diligently on recipe management to create basic changes which are effective in waste-minimisation. Hotel Executive chef Russell Impiazzi also works with local purveyors to source local, organic, fairtrade and high-quality ingredients. In 2023, 30% of all food and beverage at the hotel was sourced locally and organically. Additionally, the hotel has installed a food waste tracking system 'Chef's Eye', which weighs waste daily to highlight reduction opportunities. The data from the food waste tracking system allows the team to implement solutions to achieve their food waste reduction goals including 'zero food waste to landfill'.

The hotel segregates food waste using proper bins to improve the monitoring of waste. 'No bin days' and 'Plant-powered days' are also utilised to encourage staff to waste less in the canteen, engaging the entire hotel team. The hotel has also partnered with Reloop to compost 100% of food leftovers, contributing to the circular economy in a 'root to stem' approach. Since 2022, the hotel has created over 365,000 kgs of compost through this partnership. The teams also send used cooking oils for biofuel recycling.

Lastly, **the hotel partners with local suppliers,** turning food 'surplus into purpose' in support of the UAE Food Bank, having donated 22,000 meals to date. The teams work to promote the idea of donating surplus food instead of discarding. Within the hotel, guest engagement is achieved through communication in lifts, check-in iPads and website landing pages.

Impact & Lessons Learned

Before acting, the overall hotel's food waste baseline was determined to be 180 grams per cover in 2023. It has now decreased to 126 grams per cover, representing a 42% reduction within one year, resulting in estimated cost savings of $50,000 for the year.

Way Forward

The overarching goal remains focused on fostering a culture of waste reduction, ensuring it becomes a fundamental part of daily routines. Simultaneously, the hotel aims to engage guests in the journey of minimizing food waste by fostering behaviour changes.

Quotes

“We made a commitment a while ago to ensure that no food waste goes to landfill. The number one aim is and will continue to reduce the amount of food waste we create.” – ***Russell Impiazzi, Executive Chef at Sofitel Dubai the Obelisk***

Additional Information

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“Sofitel Dubai The Obelisk is committed to providing our guests with a luxurious yet eco-friendly experience with every stay. Our team actively participates in ongoing initiatives to reduce our environmental impact in our daily operations” – Sofitel Dubai the Obelisk.

Through a detailed program of food measurement, staff training, guest engagement, composting and their ‘surplus to purpose’ initiative, the hotel has achieved a 42% reduction in food waste within one year, resulting in estimated cost savings of $50,000 for the year.