

Claire Kelloway with Bon Appetit

1. What is food waste? What problems come with it?

To me, food waste is perfectly edible food that is not consumed, it is a form of stored energy and natural resources that is not expended. The problem with food waste is the context in which it occurs, agriculture and food production are the most profound ways humans interact with our environment. Our current food system stresses and exploits precious natural resources like water, topsoil, and biodiversity. It also is a major source of pollutants. Many destructive agricultural practices are couched in a false sense of necessity, that we must prioritize yield above all else in a time when our population is growing faster than environmentally-sound means to feed ourselves. Thus, given that we do face an uncertain future with a growing population and strained food supply, foods, and the natural resources needed to grow them, are incredibly valuable. They are the foundation of life itself. We cannot afford to not consume 40% of our food supply, and yet this is the case in the US. So the issue of food waste touches on some of our largest environmental quandaries as a species, we cannot afford to waste the scarce natural resources that food represents.

2. What made you decide to join Bon Appetit to work with other schools on food waste and recovery?

I applied to become a fellow with Bon Appetit because I saw that institutions, like colleges and universities, can have a major influence on our food system. I initially became interested from the responsible sourcing perspective and the impact a school can have if it invests in local communities. By working on food procurement at an institutional level, it is like changing hundreds of peoples' food choices, and I wanted to learn more about how Bon Appetit leverages institutional purchasing to create food systems change.

The same logic goes for food waste, we know that food service is one of the single largest sources of food waste along our supply chain. We also know that 1 in 6 Americans do not know where their next meal is coming from. While there is a lot that needs to be done in educating students about the plate waste they create and decreasing the demand that can signal overproduction, there is also a lot of food waste inherent in the model of all you care to eat cafeterias, and Bon Appetit as a company is committed to addressing this surplus food supply that we know is currently being wasted. Connecting hungry people with safe, surplus food simply makes sense. I support food recovery because I know that (in most cases) it is a system that can become seamless once established, and food recovery is a program with clear and meaningful environmental and social benefits.

3. What efforts have other schools made in reducing food waste that have proven effective?

In some ways, we cannot address the root causes of food waste without taking a deeper look at the social expectations that have led to our wasteful forms of food production, including expectations of choice, social constructions of "freshness," demands for convenience, and an undervaluation of food itself. There is only so much Bon Appetit can do within the confines of these expectations - for instance, when students expect to come into a café at any hour of the day, up until closing, and have many different food choices to eat, this inherently demands overproduction and creates waste. So Bon Appetit is fighting against a market and expectations that encourage wasteful production. That said, there is still a lot Bon Appetit can do. Making food waste visible to both Bon Appetit staff and students in one way to bring consumers face to face with the results of their choices and make them think critically about the volumes of waste they are producing. Internal waste tracking programs and guest facing efforts like Weigh the Waste can help this. Food Recovery programs are obviously a major way we divert surplus food from being wasted, this takes the form of student groups or unique partnerships with community organizations, like Chefs to End Hunger (<http://www.chefsendhunger.org/>). We've also encouraged trayless dining, which we know reduces plate waste upwards of 20%. We also train chefs in stem to root cooking, encouraging them to use parts of plants that many would not consider edible, like making carrot top pesto for instance, or repurposing kitchen scraps to make homemade stock (which most of our kitchens do).

4. On the topic of food recovery, do you think it's possible that the food surplus be redistributed to feed the world's hungry?

Yes, we see this happening across the country in many different ways to great effect. We know that the volumes of surplus food exist to meet the needs of many. That said, I do not think food recovery alone can solve hunger. Food recovery is a good fit for certain community partners, and there are definitely a lot of hungry people who are not served by these organizations. So I recognize that this is only one potential solution in an incredibly complex issue, but do I think it makes a difference? Yes.

5. What steps do you think Lafayette should take moving forward to reduce food waste? What obstacles still need to be overcome?

Instituting food recovery is a big one! As I mentioned before, there are larger societal issues that need to be addressed in order to significantly address the factors that promote wasteful behavior. But in terms of what can be done within the bounds of one campus, there are a few things. Changing campus culture and awareness of food waste is incredibly important. People begin to see food differently and come up with their own ingenious solutions, and they also begin to demand different things of their food service provider. A major obstacle to overcome is apathy or the sense that food waste is inevitable. Even the simple action of sampling food before you take a portion or starting small and going back for seconds can have an impact. A larger societal change that could reduce food waste is moving away from a culture that expects endless choice and abundance. What if we let certain foods run out near the end of meal periods, and we did not expect many choices? What if it was OK for there not to be

enough food at a catered event? Shifting these expectations would reduce the pressure to overproduce. On the institutional side of things, obviously food recovery is a very important step to take. Tracking food waste can also be helpful, but there are a lot of obstacles to instituting these systems in a way that does not become burdensome for food service staff who are already overworked. Bon Appetit has tried to work with companies that provide food waste tracking apps or services but we have yet to find a system that works well, so designing simple and easy to use food waste tracking programs is another need.

6. Is there anything else you think we should know about addressing food waste and food surplus?

Sometimes as a student it can feel like there is not much you can do as an individual, but addressing food waste is one where you have a lot of power! Never forget that! Always carry your own reusable utensils to reduce disposable waste, this is a small change that has a major difference! Bring your own to-go containers with you to recover foods from catered events or restaurants. Save your food scraps to make stock. When you become an adult, plan your meals for the week and shop less frequently, only buy what you need and eat everything you have before shopping again, really push your limits in terms of creative cooking. These are all consumer shifts to signal to the market to produce less. And then also get involved in the policy perspective, advocate for changes in food donation laws (there is an amendment to the Bill Emerson act proposed right now!!), advocate for a science-based definition of what foods are considered safe to donate, advocate for science-based regulations for sell by dates so less food is preemptively tossed at the supermarket, advocate for food waste to cost money to remove (as it does in South Korea:

http://e360.yale.edu/features/in_south_korea_an_innovative_push_to_cut_back_on_food_waste
) - and encourage your peers to begin seeing food as a valuable resource!