



EAT, DRINK AND BE WARY

HOW TO REDUCE OUR APPETITE FOR PAPER, PLASTIC AND LEFTOVERS

WRITTEN BY LENDI SLOVER

For producers, the scenery is always changing. We're moving fast from set to set, to airplanes, to myriad interior and exterior locations. Sets pop up and get torn down, but one thing remains constant—all the stuff we leave behind. What happens to the trash and food waste we produce? With our domestic recycling system in turmoil, and China refusing to take our plastic waste, it mostly ends up just where we didn't want it—in landfills, again.

Tackling the food and beverage waste problem on sets should be as easy as getting your latte hand-delivered. Think about how many coffee cups, water bottles, utensils and plastic clamshells you used on your last production. What about the mounds of leftover food? Like all the challenges we face, this one starts with you, the producer.

Being thoughtful about the aftermath of craft and catering reduces your environmental impact and might even save you money. First and foremost, by limiting the amount of items that make it to your set, you are reducing costs. Let's talk bottled water. One look at those seabirds with stomachs full of plastic waste or sea turtles doomed by the same should be enough to make you think twice. Try to replace those countless plastic bottles with five-gallon refillable water jugs. The estimated cost to fill one jug is just 50 cents. Indicate on call sheets that crew should bring their own bottles—or for cups, choose biodegradable, compostable or reusable options.

A great example is 20th Century Fox (now Disney). They have eliminated nearly 3 million plastic water bottles since 2009. Their recent film *Call of the Wild* banned single-use plastic water bottles



An affordable, pop-up recycle bin is an easy way to keep bottles and cans out of landfills.

By simply working with the caterer or taking your own stand on what food packaging/utensils are allowed on your set, you've tackled a good portion of the problem.

Now what do you do with the food waste? Compost. Compost. Compost. For those productions reluctant to go the distance and compost, here's the good news: You can save money there too. Ask people to dump the food before dumping their trash. Find a local composter in your area and hand over those methane-emitting leftovers. They might even arrange to pick it up from you if there is a large enough quantity and return the favor with some new composting bags. If you work with a local organic farm, you can sometimes trade compost for fresh, organic produce!

For leftovers that are still in good shape and fresh, consider donating them. *The Amazing Spiderman 2* donated more than 5,000 meals and prevented 5,715 pounds of greenhouse gases from going into the atmosphere.

Here's what the Green Production Guide recommends: During pre-production, connect with a local food bank or food rescue organization in each filming location. They must be nonprofit organizations operating for religious, charitable or educational purposes. You must prepare and provide a Food Donation Agreement to be signed by an authorized rep on both sides prior to the first pickup. See greenproductionguide.com for a sample agreement you can download.

Put the food organization's contact information on the Call Sheet distribution list and keep them informed of catering schedule changes to ensure timely pickup. Ask them to provide daily or wrap reports indicating the quantity and value donated, so the production and studio can keep track. Feeding America is a national network of food banks, the largest charitable hunger relief organization in the U.S. They can help you find a local food bank at feedingamerica.org.

According to the MPAA, studios donated the equivalent of more than 130,000 meals from production and commissary donations throughout the country last year. Member companies also continued to prevent studio sets and other solid waste from entering landfills, achieving a 64% diversion rate in 2018.

On *Call of the Wild*, craft services provided biodegradable, compostable plates and cutlery. More than 30,750 pounds of food and cutlery were composted. Leftover food was donated to those in need in the California communities where the movie filmed, through partnerships with the Hollywood Food Coalition and Rock and Wrap It Up.

Producing movies requires a lot of creativity and innovation to make the impossible possible. We've seen epic battle scenes come to life, had dinosaurs roam the Earth and created immersive alternative universes. If we can handle that, I think we can figure out how to be conscious creators who realize the very real environmental impacts of our productions. ■

at each of the film's six locations in favor of refillable ones, which were gifted to the cast and crew. This practice avoided the use of 201,920 plastic bottles, saving more than \$33,000—and countless marine creatures too, we hope.

As for coffee cups, that divine fuel for your day always calls for refills. Again, reusable is the way to go. Hopefully you'll get some eco-conscious crew members willing to bring their fave coffee mug to work. Perhaps catering could provide *real* coffee mugs. If that's not feasible, go with the biodegradable/compostable option. For smaller productions, get the coffee travelers but buy your own cups. Starbucks cups have a plastic liner making them non-recyclable. In fact most paper cups used for hot beverages contain a plastic liner. Look to provide biodegradable cups, and everybody can enjoy their joe with little to no environmental impact.

Let's talk catering—notably, utensils. You have the choice as to *what* you use and *how much* you use. The solutions range from real silverware to fully compostable/biodegradable options, both drastically impacting your carbon footprint. On smaller sets, sometimes real silverware isn't an option. That said, avoid buying huge boxes of plastic tableware nobody uses. Buy eco-friendly options for the correct number of crew members or buy in bulk and continue to use for future productions. It won't break your budget, and it won't remain on Earth for hundreds of years.

Finally, let's get to recycling. What do you do on set when you're moving locations so often? I imagine the trash cans go with you, so take the recycle and composting bins, too. Make sure they are clearly labeled and announce to the crew you'll be recycling and composting. Place the bins next to the regular trash cans, including if possible pictures of what is supposed to go in them.

To make things even easier, you can purchase an affordable, portable, pop-up recycle bin that takes up virtually no space. Just pop that puppy up on set and you have instant recycling. This will keep bottles and cans from going into the landfills. All U.S. cities should offer some form of recycling where you can empty your bin after the shoot. So use those easy-to-assemble bins and turn in the bottles and cans for some cold, hard cash. It might just pay for your jugs and water—and you can consider that a wash.