

## Brewery Case Study

# Apponaug Brewing Company

[Apponaug Brewing Company](#) (Apponaug) is a brewery and taproom located in Warwick, Rhode Island. Located in the historic Pontiac Mill, the business generates a variety of materials, such as spent grains and yeast byproduct from the brewing process, food waste from their taproom and dining areas, bottles, cans, and cardboard. In the summer of 2021, BrewEO Tamara McKenney worked with the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) to conduct a site visit at Apponaug and provide additional food waste reduction and recovery assistance. Apponaug immediately recognized the financial and environmental value in prioritizing prevention initiatives at their brewpub.

### At A Glance

- Apponaug Brewing Company in Warwick, Rhode Island has identified strategies to prevent wasted food, donate surplus, and repurpose ingredients.
- Noticing the volume of fries that were regularly uneaten, the business implemented new portion standards and employee training to decrease waste.
- Repurposing ingredients and helping customers focus on order sizes has further resulted in a reduction in wasted food.
- The business has also implemented a reuse program for can toppers, since these materials cannot be included in recycling bins at home.





## Diversion Programs

To date, the brewery has adopted several initiatives to reduce and recycle organic material. Prevention efforts focus on eliminating waste before it is created, reducing portion sizes, repurposing ingredients, and honing menu planning to only prepare what is needed. Surplus food is redirected to employees or local rescue agencies. Spent grains are collected by several local farms to feed pigs. The business is also exploring opportunities to divert food scraps as animal feed. Can toppers, an item that is currently not accepted in home recycling bins, are also collected and reused.

## Program Logistics

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Apponaug let staff shop in the kitchen for food and supplies to prevent items from going to waste. This has been an effective strategy that the brewery has employed at various times when a break in operations is expected and reinforces a business culture that values its employees. Apponaug has created a shelf that staff can take food from during the week to reduce this waste. Surplus that is not utilized by staff is directed to food donation contacts that were coordinated in partnership with CET. After canning runs, the brewery is sometimes left with underweight cans, which cannot be sold as is. Staff are also encouraged to take these "low fills" home as another waste reduction measure.

During the summer of 2021, Tamara began working more closely with the kitchen staff. She was astounded by the amount of food being wasted and was eager to implement changes. After this realization, Tamara launched an experiment to track the quantity of french fries that were returned as plate waste by sorting them into a large clear tub each shift. By separating this material, Tamara highlighted the volume of fries that were uneaten and sparked an initiative to reduce wasted food by offering smaller portions.



## Lessons Learned

Since Tamara's experiment, the business has focused on portion control to reduce the volume of fries that are wasted. Smaller portions have also led to a reduction in the number of take-out containers distributed. With a focus on offering what people will eat, the business strives to avoid oversized portions and excess items that were not requested. Because Apponaug's menu is all about foods that can be shared, another large item that was wasted was pre-portioned sauces.

The brewpub has also increased their repurposing ingredients as well. Wilted arugula is incorporated into pesto, onions and carrots are used for homemade stocks and broths, and any produce that no longer meets freshness standards, like tomatoes, are made into soups. During the winter of 2022, Apponaug will launch a soup program to extend the life of even more ingredients.

Employee engagement has been instrumental in implementing strategies to reduce waste. Re-training staff is an important element for behavior change such as portioning fries. Additionally, the brewery also works with customers to hone how much food should be ordered when planning events. With input from staff on orders and planning, the waste from events can be reduced.



**“Wasted food is equivalent to wasted dollars.”**

- Tamara McKenney, BrewEO of Apponaug



### Program Evaluation

Waste diversion efforts at Apponaug have resulted in numerous benefits for the business. Tamara McKenney notes, “Wasted food is equivalent to wasted dollars.” The business’s emphasis on food waste prevention therefore helps Apponaug keep food costs down, which has been especially important with the recent supply chain disruptions.

By focusing on portion control, the business eliminated waste from surplus food. For example, before new portion sizes were implemented, it was estimated that about 24 quarts of fries were wasted in one week. During weeks with increased activity, the impact of waste prevention strategies that have been adopted is even greater.

“Profits are impacted by waste,” explains Tamara, “If you don’t create it (food waste) you don’t have to get rid of it.” After implementation, the business has reduced costs, empowered staff to reduce waste, and contributed to the community by donating surplus food. Looking ahead, Tamara is working with CET to expand recycling initiatives and work with local farms to collect food scraps for animal feed. Overall, these efforts help provide a competitive edge for the brewery, while creating a win for the community.

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