

The Waste Log

Most owners underestimate what they throw away by half. A waste log turns invisible losses into a number you can act on. Run it for two weeks, total the dollars, sort by reason - the pattern almost always points to a few big, fixable leaks.

What to record

Date & time	When it hit the bin, not from memory at close
Item	Salmon fillet
Quantity + unit	3 lb
Value	\$42, priced at your current unit cost
Reason code	Spoilage, over-prep, cook error, plate return, expired, dropped

How to run the two-week log

- 1 Put a sheet at every station.** Line, prep, walk-in, bar. One central sheet gets ignored.
- 2 Log at the moment of the toss.** Memory at close captures a fraction of it.
- 3 Price every line.** Use current unit costs so the dollar column is real.
- 4 Total daily and weekly.** Then sort by reason, and again by item.
- 5 Read the pattern, fix the top three.** Spoilage means pars are too high. Over-prep means forecasting. Cook errors mean spec cards and training.

Getting the team to actually use it

- **Keep it to five fields.** Every column you add cuts the number of lines that get written down.
- **Clipboard and pen at the station.** If someone has to walk to find the sheet, the toss goes unlogged.
- **Total it nightly, post the weekly number.** A number nobody sees is a number nobody moves.
- **Never use the log to discipline.** The moment it becomes evidence, reporting stops and the data is worthless.

What good looks like

Under 4% of food purchases is tight. 8% or more means real money is leaking.

After two weeks, keep a lighter log - one shift a week - so the number does not climb back.

A paper log costs a clipboard and two weeks of discipline, and routinely uncovers thousands in recoverable margin. The next step is connecting waste to sales and inventory automatically, so prep and ordering track what you actually sell.

Daily Waste Log

Log every toss as it happens.

Date _____

Station _____

Shift _____

[illegible]

TOTAL FOR THE DAY

REASON CODES SP spoilage | OP over-prep | CE cook error | PR plate return | EX expired | DR dropped