

23 GOURMET BAG PROJECT 2.0

Type: Restaurant, Eco Packaging, Food Waste
Country: Spain, The Basque Country Donostia - San Sebastian



Why it is a good practice?
The concept is to provide the population with a tool to fight against food waste. Eco-friendly receptacles called “Gourmet Bags” are made available to diners in restaurants so they can take away the food they are unable to eat. The idea is to make consumers aware of food wastage and that unwanted portions of food are not just rubbish to be disposed of, while simultaneously using an environmentally friendly approach to do this.

About
This project is a co-operative effort between the Department for the Environment of the Government of Guipúzcoa, the Hotel Industry Association and the Donostia Impact Hub. The project kicked off in the Old Town of San Sebastián and the other main gastro/dining areas in the city. It has now extended its area of operation to Arrásate, Beasain, Éibar, Irún and Tolosa. The aim is to expand the project’s activities to encapsulate the entire province and all its eating establishments.

Problem
Recent research reveals the consequences of food wastage in Guipúzcoa where 123,000 tonnes of food residues are generated each year. The management of these residues is a serious environmental issue as well as a source of greenhouse gas emissions. Prior to the “Gourmet Bags” restaurant staff offered diners plastic receptacles to take away uneaten food. This solved one problem but created another: the generation of plastic residues, which, as is well known, are highly damaging to our environment.

Action
Waiting staff, are made aware of their responsibility, in that they are in fact the front-line promoters of the “Gourmet Bag”. It is their duty to offer and encourage the use of this tool to diners. A distinctive ‘bag’ stand is placed in the participating establishments. This heightens the initiative’s visibility and provides the public with information on it. The “gourmet bags” are supplied free of charge to restaurants.

Result
More and more people are using the Gourmet Bags and there is a significant rise in the number of restaurants that are putting the initiative into practice all year round. This heightens awareness of the issue and subsequently promotes the need for the public at large to become involved in the problem of food and plastic residues.

Impact
This project contributes to the reduction of food wastage in Guipúzcoa. Diners take uneaten food home, rather than leaving behind for it to be subsequently disposed of, thus reducing garbage. This is a serious issue as Spain generates the third largest amount of garbage in the world behind China and the U.S.A.

Sustainable
The “Gourmet Bags” are made from recycled paper and may be placed in microwave ovens. They are totally compostable and when they are no longer required, they may be deposited in the organic waste recycling container thus closing the economic circle.

Ethical
One of the aims of the bags is to highlight the importance of community commitment to the issue of food wastage. They also encourage the public to reflect on the issue of worldwide food shortage and remind them that a significant proportion of the world’s population do not receive adequate nutrition. According to the United Nations a third of the world’s food production goes to waste. One of the goals of sustainable growth for 2030 is to reduce this wastage by half; this initiative therefore contributes to meeting this goal.

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