

Flexible portions are a “win-win-win” for restaurant owners and operators, providing a solution that decreases food waste, improves the customer experience, and strengthens the P&L statement.

Two recent research projects from ReFED and partners—including Datassential, Georgetown University\*, and the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative—show that restaurant owners and operators who offer portion customization have an opportunity to cut costs and attract new segments of customers who are looking for more control over their portions and menu options.

ReFED’s modeling estimates that offering different portion sizes at restaurants has the potential to reduce **2.35 million tons** of food waste annually while saving the foodservice sector \$547 million. Here are three key things to know:

**> Plate waste represents 70% of restaurant food waste, and giving customers more of what they want (and less of what they’ll leave behind) is a way to address it.**

The restaurant and foodservice industries produce **12.5 million tons** of uneaten food every year, and one of the most impactful solutions to that isn’t a fancy new gadget, but rather offering portions that meet customers’ needs.

**> Consumers, both the general population and the (quickly growing) GLP-1 segment, want flexible portions.**

A quarter of consumers [leave food behind](#) always or most of the time, and **more than 60%** feel guilty about that. That’s a driver behind the **60% of American diners**—and **almost 75% of GLP-1** users—who are more likely to visit restaurants that offer flexible, customizable, or innovative portion options. In fact, portion sizes can actually dictate diner satisfaction. The same survey found that one in three diners overate due to oversized portions, and **nearly 30%** wished at least one restaurant meal they ordered had been smaller.

**> The benefits of taking action far outweigh the costs.**

New research found **only 20%** of restaurant owners and operators report measuring plate waste, and **only 40%** offer any type of customizable portions. There is a significant opportunity to lean in, creating triple-bottom-line benefits.

## What Restaurant Owners and Operators Can Do

- Identify plate waste hotspots through measurement
- Review menu offerings and optimize items consistently left behind
- Price fairly—cover costs while creating value for the guest
- Train employees to look for food waste hot spots and provide feedback
- Promote customization and food waste reduction to engage with customers

## Where to Learn More

- [Research](#) from ReFED and Datassential shows consumer demand for portion options.
- A recent [report](#) from ReFED, Georgetown University\*, and Menus of Change University Research Collaborative highlights the business case to deliver value to diners and operators.

\* The Portion Balance Coalition and The Earth Commons Institute were the research partners at Georgetown University.