

a. Match the words (1-20) with their definitions (a-t). Then find and highlight the words in the article.

1. composted _____

a. a natural process where bacteria or yeast break down food or drink to preserve it or change its flavour (e.g. making kimchi, beer or yoghurt)

2. decomposes _____

b. a smooth, white, ceramic material used to make plates, cups or tiles

3. depleting _____

c. breaks down naturally over time, especially organic material like food or plants

4. emit _____

d. morally fair and right; treating people or the environment in a fair way

5. ethos _____

e. very new and different; doing something that has never been done before

6. fermentation _____

f. bending forward with your back rounded, often when concentrating or working

7. groundbreaking _____

g. the beliefs or values of a person, group or organisation

8. hunched over _____

h. watered using a system or method, especially for farming

9. irrigated _____

i. a place where rubbish is buried underground as a way of disposal

10. just _____

j. a close connection between two different things or groups where both benefit from the relationship

11. landfill _____

k. birds that travel long distances from one place to another at different times of the year

12. malnourished _____

l. turned into natural fertiliser by allowing food or plants to break down in a controlled way

13. migratory birds _____

m. to reuse waste materials to create something better or more valuable than the original

14. negligence _____

n. to release or send out something, especially gas, light or heat

15. porcelain _____

o. not getting enough food or the right kind of food to stay healthy

16. regenerative _____

p. in a restaurant kitchen, the area where dishes are placed when ready to be served

17. remnant _____

q. able to restore, renew or improve something – especially the environment or land

18. symbiotic relationship _____

r. using something so that there's less of it, especially natural resources

19. the pass _____

s. the state of not taking care or paying attention, often causing harm or problems

20. upcycle _____

t. a small part or piece of something that is left over from the past

Complete the sentences with the words in the correct form.

1. _____ in a busy restaurant kitchen can be a hot and stressful place to work.
2. The valley was once _____ by hand using ancient methods of channelling water.
3. Our team is working on a(n) _____ solution to reduce food packaging waste.
4. Instead of throwing away old furniture, why not _____ it and sell it online?
5. That fashion brand's _____ is rooted in sustainability and having a low environmental impact.
6. When organic matter _____ and breaks down, it produces a gas called methane.
7. Millions of people around the world remain _____, even in food-rich countries.
8. Only a small _____ of this ancient forest still exists.
9. The _____ process popular in China and Japan enhances the flavour and prolongs the life of different fruits and vegetables.
10. Volcanic eruptions _____ toxic gases that affect global temperature.
11. Harry sat _____ his desk, desperately looking for some inspiration.
12. Most jurors believed the sentence was a(n) _____ punishment for the severity of the crime.
13. The wetlands of Northern Greece are home to several _____ each year, including flamingos and pelicans.
14. The farm employs modern _____ methods to improve the quality of the soil.
15. Structural damage to the building was due to _____ on the part of the contractor.
16. Handle the _____ plates with care as they can be easily chipped or broken.
17. The constant use of fossil fuels is _____ the Earth's natural resources.
18. All food scraps from the café are _____ and returned to the land.
19. In some oceans, crabs form a(n) _____ with corals by protecting them from predators and getting shelter in return.
20. Urban _____ sites give off large amounts of greenhouse gas.

It really is possible to be zero waste: the restaurant with no bin

Food waste is one of the main environmental, social and economic challenges facing the world today. According to official data, in the European Union region, around 58-60 million tonnes of food is estimated to be wasted every year, the equivalent of 130-132 kg per person, which represents a huge economic and ecological impact (data based mainly on 2022 and 2023 statistics). This phenomenon has direct consequences on climate change, biodiversity loss, water use and food security. But it also represents a unique educational opportunity to train new generations of catering professionals with a critical, innovative and committed approach to sustainability.

Household waste accounted for more than half of all food waste (53%), the equivalent of 69 kg per inhabitant. The remaining 47% was waste created upwards in the food supply chain: 19% by the manufacture of food products and beverages (24 kg per inhabitant), 11% by restaurants and food services (14 kg per inhabitant), 10% in the primary production (12 kg per inhabitant), and 8% in retail and other distribution of food (10 kg per inhabitant).

Food waste not only has negative effects at an emissions level but also entails a huge waste of water resources. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO, 2024), food loss and waste account for up to 21% of freshwater worldwide.

Cooking with leftovers offers multiple benefits for the environment, the house, and personal economy. By using each part of the food, including leftovers, carcasses and scraps, we reduce waste considerably, which is translated into economic savings by maximising the use of ingredients. Also, this practice promotes culinary creativity, as a source of inspiration when experimenting with new recipes that transform what you would usually discard into innovative and nutritious dishes.

Baldío in Mexico City is part of a new wave of restaurants embracing a regenerative ethos – with delicious results

Hunched over the pass in the open restaurant kitchen, a team of chefs are dusting ceviche with a powder made from lime skins that would, in most cases, have been thrown away. The Mexico City restaurant where they work looks like most restaurant kitchens, but it lacks one key element: there is no bin.

Baldío was co-founded by brothers Lucio and Pablo Usobiaga and chef Doug McMaster, best known for his groundbreaking zero-waste spot Silo London. “In my eyes, bins are coffins for things that have been badly designed,” says McMaster. “If there was a trophy for negligence, it would be bin-shaped.”

The food, which recently earned a Michelin green star, is creative but still essentially Mexican. Significant planning is needed from sourcing to preparation, and the founders are also behind Arca Tierra, a regenerative agriculture project that includes a network of 50 farmers in central Mexico as well as the organisation’s own farm in the pre-Aztec canal system at Xochimilco, an ancient neighbourhood in the south of Mexico City.

“Restaurants can have a big environmental impact but they also have a big reach,” says Lucio Usobiaga. “We want Baldío to be a model that shows it’s possible to be both zero waste and to rely on farmers rather than supermarkets.”

Although the food is finished off in the restaurant’s open kitchen, most preparation happens at La Baldega, a workshop where the team operates a fermentation programme that helps preserve ingredients as well as upcycle byproducts such as peel and fat. This includes pre-Hispanic Mexican drinks such as tepache and pulque, as well as koji fermentation – popular in Japan and China for thousands of years – to transform fish guts into sauce.

Globally, one-fifth of food is lost or wasted, according to the UN, equivalent to 1 billion meals a day, at a time when one in every nine people is malnourished. When food decomposes in landfill it releases methane, which has 25-times higher global warming potential than carbon dioxide.

Silo, when it opened in 2014, became the first restaurant in the world not to have a bin, raising the bar on what zero waste means. Less than 1% of food is composted and no single-use materials are used. A dedicated pottery transforms glass into porcelain that is used for tableware, light fixtures and tiles.

Baldío is part of a new wave of restaurants that are moving beyond vague claims of sustainability to embrace a regenerative ethos. Baldío goes one step further through its symbiotic relationship with Xochimilco, the last remnant of the network of blue-green waterways that dazzled Spanish invaders when they arrived 500 years ago. The UNESCO heritage site is a key stopover for migratory birds and the only place where axolotls still live in the wild.

Although the unique ecosystem is severely threatened by urban sprawl, many Indigenous residents still farm chinampas (a pre-Aztec technique consisting of islands formed from trees, flowers and mud), gliding through the blue-green canals on canoes filled with lettuce, radish and verdolagas (Mexican parsley).

"In agriculture, how you go about production really determines how much carbon you emit," says Melanie Kolb, a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

As well as buying from five local families, Arca Tierra farms 18 chinampas. The farming team led by Sonia Tapia Garcés combines ancestral techniques with compost from Baldío's kitchen which contributes to the soil's potential for capturing and storing carbon.

The result is a crop that is irrigated with bio-filtered canal water and can be harvested 365 days a year without depleting the soil's nutrients. It is enough to supply half of Baldío's needs. The restaurant's chefs, who visit every Monday to plan that week's menus, have a continuing dialogue with the growers and often help with harvesting.

Ingredients are carried by boat to downtown Xochimilco and driven 8 kilometres to La Baldega. Reducing distance travelled and the need for refrigeration on longer journeys results in a fraction of the carbon emissions associated with typical restaurant supply chains.

For 74-year-old Noy Coquis Saldedo, who rents land to Arca Tierra, the project offers an opportunity to preserve his identity at a time when just 2.5 per cent of the chinampas are still used for traditional agriculture. "It's very sad that young people don't want to farm anymore," he says. "But now we are delivering food to the great city like my ancestors did."

For Lucio Usobiaga, closing the loop between the chinampas and Baldío could be a blueprint for the future. "Ultimately, I hope the project shows people that a more just and better food system is possible." And the food? When the Guardian tasted it, it was delicious: flame-licked, spiked with salsas and texturally balanced, it is Mexican – yet also something entirely its own.

Sources:

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<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/13/zero-waste-restaurant-with-no-bin-baldio-mexico-city>

Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20251016-2>

Zero Waste Chefs EU: a proposal for the kitchens of the future:

https://ibizapreservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Zero-Waste-Chefs-EU_EN.pdf

Discuss the following questions.

1. Do you think people worry enough about food waste? Why / why not? What small changes can reduce food waste?
2. Should reducing food waste be a moral obligation in wealthy societies? Why?
3. What role does consumer behaviour play in waste creation? Is consumer education enough to solve the problem of food waste? Who should bear the greatest responsibility for change: governments, businesses, or individuals?
4. Is it better to waste less food or to produce more efficiently? Should governments impose stricter regulations on businesses that generate large amounts of food waste?
5. Do you think 'zero waste' is a realistic goal for restaurants or just an ideal? Can zero-waste restaurants remain competitive in a profit-driven industry?
6. Do sustainability practices genuinely transform the food industry, or are they sometimes just marketing strategies?
7. How might the 'zero waste' philosophy be applied to other industries beyond hospitality?
8. Do you think zero-waste living will become more common in the future?
9. Could technology realistically solve the food waste crisis?
10. Would you like to eat in a sustainable restaurant? Would you pay more for food from it?



Left to right: Lucio Usobiaga, Douglas McMaster and Pablo Usobiaga of Baldío. Photograph: Bénédicte Desrus



Diners at Baldío. Photograph: Bénédicte Desrus



▣ Dishes including grassfed pork loin at Baldío. Photograph: Bénédicte Desrus



▣ Fermentation of leftover limes, lemons and tangerine peels. Photograph: Bénédicte Desrus