

Green your Catering @MIT

Catered events can generate a lot of waste, such as catering platters and lids, disposable plates and utensils, cans and bottles, and more. When planning an event, luncheon, or conference, consider the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle).

Reduce

- » Ask your guests to RSVP so you can buy the appropriate amount of food based on the number of guests you expect. (28 billion pounds of edible food is thrown away during the holiday season alone. Source: Center for a New American Dream.)
- » Avoid the wasteful "box lunches" that many caterers offer. These individual servings create piles of wasteful packaging. Often the attendees do not take the time to recycle items individually and then the whole mess gets trashed. Instead, opt for large platters of sandwiches and salads and make sure the containers get reused or recycled.
- » Request that beverages, condiments, and other items be provided in bulk instead of individually packaged.
- » Use cloth napkins and table cloths or buy paper products made with recycled content. Ask your caterer to do the same.
- » Avoid "Styrofoam" plates: they cannot be recycled. If you can't use paper plates or reusable ones, use plastic plates and recycle them in any MIT "cans and bottles" recycling bin.
- » Some caterers offer biodegradable plates, utensils, and cups. These should all go in the trash after your event, not the recycling bin. Basil Tree Catering is one company which offers biodegradables: www.basiltree.com
- » Go organic! If organic is not available, the next best choice is local produce. Not only will you be supporting local farmers, but less energy and fossil fuels will be expended in transportation. Also, vegetarian options are more earth friendly than meat options and require less of the earth's resources to produce.

Reuse

- » Rent dishes and silverware. Dishes do not have to be returned clean, just scraped free of food. Try Peterson Partycenter: 781-729-4000, Email: sales@ppcinc.com or Be Our Guest Party Rentals: 617-427-2700.
- » Request that your caterer take back their catering platters and lids and reuse them.
- » Request that your caterer green their operations by recycling as much as possible, composting food scraps, reducing wasteful disposables, and donating leftovers to food pantries.
- » Instead of using disposables, rent or borrow infrequently used items like punchbowls or large platters. If you must use disposables, reuse or recycle them afterwards. Catering

containers are perfect for bringing a dish to your next potluck. Large catering platters make perfect saucers for large houseplants.

- » Post leftovers to free-food@mit.edu, giving the location, the quantity, and the type of leftovers.

Recycle

- » Recycle ALL plastics in your local "cans and bottles" bin: including catering platters and lids, plastic plates, and plastic utensils.
- » These items do not have to be perfectly clean, just wipe or scrape them free of food and drop them in the bin.
- » Please note: plastic bags are recyclable at MIT, but cling wrap is not recyclable at MIT.
- » Make a friendly announcement at the beginning of the event, instructing attendees which items are recyclable and which items are trash, and what bin each item should go in.
- » When planning your event, consider your trash can and recycling bin needs. For additional recycling bins, please contact MIT Recycling at 3-6360. Each trash bin should have a recycling bin next to it. Make it easy for your guests to recycle by identifying the recycling bin (and the trash bin!) with a sign.

Green the transportation

- » Encourage attendees to take public transportation. Directions for getting to the MIT campus via public transportation: http://whereis.mit.edu/map-jpg?section=directions#by_t
- » MIT has a partnership with PlanetTran, a taxi service based exclusively on the hybrid electric/gas Toyota Prius. Round trips from MIT to Logan Airport are \$64 including tips and tolls, while other destinations provide the MIT Community a 15% discount and MIT students receive a 25% discount. Payment options include cash, credit card, or monthly billing. For MIT-specific quotes or reservations, call 877-ECO-TAXI (326-8294) or visit <http://mit.planettran.com/>
- » Purchase carbon offsets for attendees traveling to/from a conference or event: <http://cee.uiuc.edu/research/bondresearch/carbon-neutral.htm>

Green your promotion

- » Rather than sending paper invitations, send email and/or set up a website. If you must use paper invitations, print them on recycled content paper. (Kinko's has a good selection.)
- » For handouts and agendas, use recycled content paper with post consumer content, (we recommend Office Depot Item # 940650) and identify the recycled content percentage on the handouts. Print and copy double sided.

Working Group Recycling (WGR)
<http://web.mit.edu/workinggreen/>