

THE SUSTAINABLE CATERING GUIDE FOR FILM & TV

A GUIDE TO DECARBONISING YOUR SHOOT FOR LINE PRODUCERS AND PRODUCTION MANAGERS

Of the initiatives laid out in the Screen New Deal Transformation Plan for Wales, addressing food and circularity has been highlighted as one of the core recommendations needed to transform the film and high-end television (HETV) industry in Wales to a zero-carbon, zero-waste sector by 2030.

In a 2022 study carried out by Severn Screen on their Production of Havoc, with funding from the Green Cymru Challenge Fund, they identified catering as one of 4 areas of highest environmental impact on the production.

At the Occasional Kitchen, sustainability and ethics sits at the heart of our business and informs everything we do. We strive to be the UK's most sustainable location caterer and our sustainable practices go way deeper than the easy wins of 'no single use plastics' and donating food waste to food banks (although we do that as standard!). Sustainability is our passion, and this guide lays out everything you need to know to make well-informed decisions around decarbonising your shoot and making your food provision as sustainable as possible.

Understanding the circularity of food provision goes beyond ticking the box for compostable serve ware and is more nuanced than just implementing Meat Free Mondays. So, let's break it down – the key considerations, myth-busting and important questions to ask of any potential catering provider.

We believe in transparency; in everything we do. We want to become an extension of your team; this will never be a typical contractor relationship. We are always looking at ways to be better, to do better. This isn't tokenism, we really do care about the impact we have on the environment and the people we share the planet with.

SUSTAINABILITY
IS NOW A
MATTER OF
URGENCY, AND
NO LONGER A
'NICE-TO-HAVE'.

6 PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE CATERING

A sustainable caterer adopts business practices that leave a positive impact on the environment and society. They consider sustainability at every stage of their business, from sourcing ingredients to serving the food. Any caterer endorsing their sustainability should quickly be able to provide you with information on their credentials and practices. There are 5 key areas:

1) FOOD

Able to provide carbon value of menu items food and advise on the sustainability of options. A sustainable supply chain and consideration of how/where the food produced and the food miles involved. Avoids pre packaged or processed foods.

2) ETHICAL SOURCING

Strives for ethically sourced food and can provide details around the sustainability of their supply chain and sources. Looks for locally sourced solutions over national or imported. Champions ethical farming practices in their suppliers to reduce use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, support Fair Trade and the welfare of animals.

3) SERVING AND PACKAGING

Sustainable options at the point of serving and no single use plastics. Compostable and sustainable serve ware options such as Vegware or Bagasse or reusables. Strives for sustainable packaging within their supply chain and internal operations (the preparation and storage of food).

4) WASTE AND DISPOSAL

Has sustainable practices for the management of waste – both the reduction of waste creation (plastics, oil, packaging, food waste) AND the disposal of waste, recycling of waste or redistribution of surplus.

5) PEOPLE - STAFF AND SOCIETY

Looks for wider positive societal impacts through sustainable choices. For example, fair pay for staff; community outreach initiatives, voluntarily paying carbon offset, responsible redistribution of surplus food.

6) ENERGY AND MILES

Makes recommendations for reducing the carbon impact of energy consumption. For example, looking at generators versus batteries, and sourcing staff locally to reduce fuel and energy impact of travel and accommodation, understanding the food miles associated to sourcing of produce.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

THE BUDGET TRADE-OFF

Lower budgets push caterers toward cheaper, less sustainable options. Heavily farmed, mass-produced goods from national suppliers and brokers are likely to be lower cost but have a higher environmental impact and striking a balance is key. Increasing the per person spend by even £1 or £2 can significantly increase the ability to provide more sustainable options. Any truly sustainable caterer will be able to discuss options with you and explain the trade-offs between cost, sustainability and scope within your menu.

FOOD FRESHLY PREPARED VERSUS PACKAGED

Freshly prepared food means a huge reduction in waste. Peelings and bones are used for stock, surplus ingredients are re-purposed into dishes for the next day or next service and the packaging you find in packaged catering goods is not a factor.

RAISING AWARENESS

Communications and engagement with cast and crew is really important when trying to educate around new ideas and embed new habits. Making the carbon footprints of dishes available at the point can influence positive choices for lower impact foods, as well as displaying thought-provoking posters or QR codes to interactive content educating people about the climate impacts of particular choices.

TIMINGS AND PLANNING

Having the time to plan is always a challenge in TV & film production as there is very often a short window between green light and shooting. However, any advance conversations you can have with catering suppliers are going to help you to arrive at the most sustainable solution and find the right supplier for your project.

On the shoot, think about energy sources and consumption. Explore options for condensing set serve times for meals rather than an 'always-on' approach to reduce energy use. In 'off service' times, energy sources can be switched to a lower impact energy source for example.

Supplying menu-choices to cast & crew and a digital ordering system can dramatically reduce the carbon impact of your food provision. Although not yet not a regular feature on film & TV shoots, there are huge benefits in reducing surplus food waste and also enables a feedback loop to optimise menu choices and improve the offering without incurring waste.

THE TRUE CARBON VALUE OF A DISH

While 'Meatless Mondays' and plant-based options sound 'greener' on the surface, the reality is more nuanced. For example, the footprint of air-freighted vegetables and fruit like asparagus, green beans should always be considered when planning menus. It is never as simple as 'meat reduction is the answer' although of course that is a hugely valid point in conversation. Meat sourced from a local butcher, utilising sustainable farming practice and no pesticides, not only reduces the carbon used in transportation but the impact on the land is significant. Avocados tick the 'healthy eating' box but have a high carbon impact because of their food miles and huge water consumption. Meat (regardless of where it's from) does use the highest quantity of water to produce due to the feeding of animals (a kilogram of beef emits 60 kilograms of greenhouse gases while peas emit just 1 kilogram) however, the sourcing of plant-based produce is also a factor. Think local and ethical for the lowest carbon footprint.

PEOPLE & ETHICS

Low costs often means that staff are not paid fairly and the quality of staff and experience will be lower. At The Occasional Kitchen we believe The Real Living Wage, should be the absolute minimum anyone is paid. In practice we pay our wonderful, loyal staff appropriately for the fantastic work they do. Most of our staff bring over 20 years' experience to the business, and it shows. They are highly skilled, accomplished individuals who deserve to be paid well for their vast skills. Our clients reap the benefits in the quality of service and the food they receive. Minimum wage and zero-hours contracts are against the core principles and spirit of sustainability and circularity.

REUSABLES OR SUSTAINABLE DISPOSABLES?

Look for sustainable options where serve ware is concerned. We typically favour veg ware or bagasse (made from sugar cane). Re-usable serve ware within a protected dining tent or bus may also be an option, but there is a trade off with water consumption to clean and re-use and also an energy cost in running those areas. Discuss what is practical for your location and weigh up the options with your caterer.

HOW SUSTAINABLE IS YOUR PRODUCTION CATERING: ARE YOU ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK A CATERING SUPPLIER:

1. Where are you based and is it local to the production site?
2. Can you provide the carbon value of every dish to inform menu options?
3. Is your food sourcing ethical? How do you choose your suppliers?
4. How much of your food is locally sourced? Eg. What are the food miles involved? What is local, national or imported? Beware national suppliers, delivering locally!
5. How are dishes prepared? Eg. made fresh on site or pre-made (where, by whom?). Do you offer a food pre-ordering system (to minimise waste)?
6. How do you limit the carbon impact of serve wear and what options are available? Eg. compostable and re-usable. Ask for policy on plastics.
7. What are the options for delivery of service – eg. a protected area like a food tent or meal bus allows for re-usable serve ware, versus a truck handing out disposable clam shells. Discuss what is suitable and reasonable for your unique shoot and location(s).
8. How do you deal with waste management? For example, mobile bio digester or local provider.
9. Do you carbon offset and how?
10. Power / Energy - what power sources do you require or recommend? How do you reduce energy and water consumption to minimise carbon impact?
11. Where are the staff based and what is the carbon impact of travel and accommodation?



USEFUL LINKS & RESOURCES

<https://wearealbert.org/> - BAFTA owned and industry-backed organisation and the home of environmental sustainability for film + TV.

2023 Screen New Deal Transformation Plan for Wales – read the full report here
<https://wearealbert.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SND-Report-Nov-2023.pdf>

Media Cymru - <https://media.cymru/projects/greening-the-screen/>

Ffilm Cymru Wales - <https://ffilmcymruwales.com/funding-and-training/green-cymru>

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