

Net Positive Hospitality Podcast transcript

How do we fix hospitality's food waste problem?

29th May 2025

Becca (Podcast host) 00:15

Hello and welcome to the Net Positive Hospitality podcast brought to you by the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. In this episode, we're in the kitchen with Winnow exploring food waste. We have insight from Winnow's CEO and Hilton's Emma Banks discovering the impact of Winnow's AI powered tools which help chefs run more profitable and sustainable kitchens by cutting food waste in half. Since launching, Winnow has been deployed in nearly 100 countries, saving its customers over \$85 million in food costs. As a partner of the Alliance, winnow is sharing best practices with members to tackle food waste. It's also engaging in the Alliance's work around food waste, participating in a series of webinars we're hosting this year, bringing chefs together to drive change. Winnow is spearheading the industry's drive to reducing food waste with its innovative technology. Brands that work with Winnow, such as Marriott, are making real progress. We've seen recently that food waste is reduced by over 50% in 53 Marriott hotels in the UK, Ireland and the Nordics, since partnering with winnow at the start of 2024 the alliance was lucky enough to hold one of its summits at a Marriott hotel, the London Heathrow there, we discovered how they're a leader in driving food waste with the help of Winnow.

Ron Vos (London Heathrow Marriott) 01:29

Collecting all the waste in green buckets. We check how many green buckets we collect against the food covers. And then we also want to work on the mindset of the kitchen team. Can they be more efficient in cutting certain items, or why is it in the first place there, our food waste is taken out, used by Veolia for anaerobic digestion, so it will be made into biogas. Luckily, we don't end up in the landfill. We don't have any landfill, I think, for the entire hotel.

Becca (Podcast host) 02:00

On our visit, we spoke with one of the chefs about how food waste can be turned into not just food.

Ana-Maria Bucur (London Heathrow Marriott) 02:06

Hi, I'm Ana-Maria Bucur, and I work for Marriott. I'm a chef de partie. I'm in the kitchen staff. So basically what we do we trying to reuse the coffee grounds. So we are making soaps for the coffee grounds, or sometimes we do scrubs as well. But you can see here they're actually sea salt that we infused with the herbs, or even the lemon zest or orange peels as well. So we're drying them and mix them and we just give it away for like, you know, sometimes we do bath bombs as well that you can use, and same for this soap. So we have the coffee grounds, and we have the lemon as well, the lemon version.

NetPositiveHospitality

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Becca (Podcast host) 02:46

And it's not just Marriott which is harnessing Winnow's tools chef Wojtech Vegh, at Winnow, is working with brands such as Accor and Mandarin Oriental. Here's how the technology works.

Wojtech Vegh (Winnow) 02:57

Hi, I'm Wojtech Vegh, and I'm a zero waste culinary advisor we know having a food waste measurement system in your kitchen is the first and the most important step to start your food waste prevention journey. Because finding out what is in your bin is the most important thing, and it actually brings you to realisation of how much food you actually waste. Because without that, it's just a guesswork, and with Winnow, you have this very smart AI camera looking and capturing your waste as it's being put into the bin. So it does not get any easier for chefs to find out how much they waste than having a system like Winnow in their kitchen, because all you need to do is to look at the screen see all the important data and reports, and even see the photos of the waste, so there is no digging through the bin with your hands, with your gloves on. So as I used to do before, before, like a chef, now, you have technology helping you out, making your lives so much easier.

Becca (Podcast host) 03:58

We got chef Wojtech together with two leaders working in sustainability in hospitality, to discuss the challenges and opportunities they're facing. We started by talking about the biggest drivers for tackling food waste today.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 04:11

Hi, I'm Iris Lam, and I'm the Director of Sustainability for our global development at Mandarin Oriental. I think the biggest driver for food waste, and for us to manage food waste is the undeniable facts around it. Food waste contributes 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, full stop. You hear that, and you know, there's a responsibility, and I think that's something that resonates with all of us and in this industry.

Tony Chisholm (Accor) 04:40

Hi. Tony Chisholm, I'm the Vice President for Food and Beverage for the MEA region and also Asia. I think culture is the biggest factor that gets in the way from us as an industry, using the magic words I learned from Chef a couple of weeks ago when he talks about prevention of food waste. And, you know, I think the industry keeps looking at our culinary division heads, primarily the chefs, when that's not the place to look. It's to start looking at the entire team, top to bottom, having a vertical representation and understanding and awareness of what food waste really is it's all about the culture. It's all about the human factor and the mindset that we have about it. If we believe that it's okay, then we'll forever be okay. But if we know that this is not okay, what we are doing, then we will know that we have to change something.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 05:37

We've been aware of Winnow in the scene for some time, and we had our own journey that we were on. Right? Broadly speaking, our journey is about climate strategy with which waste management falls within it, and then, as I cited, the key opportunity identified was food waste management, and then we're talking about culture and relationships. Window stood out to me, right, because over the years, we kept in contact, and we finally got this off the ground by putting in what I called the proof of concept, and one of each one of our major operating regions. And the proof was in the pudding, right? It really was, because we started to see the results within half a year, you've got your payback, right? And then you get to see how your teams are inspired by the data and the insights that are coming in. And that inspiration says a lot, because it wasn't that we didn't have a food waste management journey we have. We had that before we worked with winnow, and we still do, because there's still a lot that can be done without technology. But what I think was really great about it is what you can do when the day to day, you're getting, you know, the fresh insights, and I call it inspiration and opportunity. You're able to create value from this, right? And I think value is one that I would underscore in a food waste management journey. It's it's that you can take something that's considered waste and be inspired to do something about it, which my colleagues across the globe have proven. We're now on a roll out to have this installed in each one of our properties by the end of 2025.

Tony Chisholm (Accor) 07:29

Working with Winnow in a number of ways, I think this year, we've really decided to give it a real additional launch and add some fuel into the integration and the partnership that we've had probably for the last 10 years, but since coming back to our core a year and a half ago, we brought in this mindset to think like an owner. And I think Iris really summed up that value proposition from an owner's perspective, from a division head, or whether you're a chef or a general manager, where's that cost going? It's going somewhere, and how can we recycle that cost back into our business and and be more agile? And I think what we've done in the last six months on this travelling food and beverage road show, we've used case studies, we've used best practices, and it's created what I would call that 'ah-ha', moment in time, where, how do you break it down and go step one, step two, step three. And so with the support of the Winnow team, we have actually been doing workshops and having in the GM conferences and the food and beverage conferences, we've had interactive workshops where people can ask simplistic questions or super complex questions, and we're able to canvas and cover it all off. And so I really feel like the needle is starting to move, not just in a couple of degrees, but it's really triggered, I would guess, more of that understanding to help the culture, which we mentioned earlier.

Vojtech Vegh (Winnow) 09:08

You know, like we are creator of habits, and it's even stronger with chefs. The way we do things is the way that we like to do things. Having that data and seeing those numbers can kind of give me, like, a wake up moment of like, 'Oh, I didn't know it's that much like, okay, it equals that much money on yearly basis, and so much food going in waste'. And then me as a chef, thinking about like, 'so what am I cooking for? Why am I cooking so much food, wasting my time? How can I be smarter with my decisions', and this is where the culture change starts. So it will start in the kitchen, because the people who design the menus and make decision on what is being cooked and how much is being cooked, it where it starts. But there absolutely needs to be a support on a

higher level as well, because chefs can't be the only one who will be driving that change. There must be a bigger support behind that.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 10:02

I might jump in there. You know, you're right. It's multi stakeholders, albeit, of course, chefs are highlighted a lot because they're the closest to the food. They're generally the ones interfacing with the system. But I find that this with our engagement with Winnow, it's really leveraged those important conversations with the various stakeholders in the team, from finance right from operations, from chefs right to F and Bs, and even when we have them installed in fun places like colleagues restaurants, it's getting everybody in this journey and realising that the power of collective action and coming together. And the visuals are undeniable. You see that, and you're like, oh, no, we've got to do something about this. The metrics hit hard. And then, you know, when you're able to take this into business meetings, and you're saying, look, I mean, our pilot of four hotels, annualised cost savings is 400k us. Come on, that's that's a very, very big thing to be able to say with precise confidence, right? And it absolutely then highlights the importance to address, you know, food waste.

Tony Chisholm (Accor) 11:14

I think one of the roadshow examples is we've had Winnow measure the food waste from our GM welcome cocktails, the coffee breaks, the lunches, the gala dinners, and so it's created this live deep dive. So I'm literally on stage debriefing from the coffee break or the lunch that everyone's just returned back from. And we've got live data from Winnow. And I love data because it's mathematical. It doesn't lie. It's not what Tony thinks, or what Chef thinks, or what Iris thinks or what Winnow thinks. It's factual. And then what we're doing is we're illustrating, I say we, but the Winnow is doing the lift on this. So I just make it look pretty on stage, but we're doing the breakdown scientifically of the items that did not get consumed at lunchtime, and we're having an open discussion about why. And one example, and it's not to throw the wrong light at anyone, but we had a beautiful outdoor barbecue concept, and we did barbecue prawns, but it was a standing cocktail, and no one really wanted to peel the shell off the prawns, so we had mise en place production waste because it wasn't utilised. We had we had plate waste because people took the item but then realised they didn't want to get their hands dirty. And there was time limited, and everyone was dressed up smartly. And so getting into the data and using the reports that are as available is paramount, because if we don't use the data, there's no point having winnow and Chef mentioned the old days. I was around in the old days, and we didn't have this technology, and so we have to use it, and we have to be scientific, and we have to drive it throughout the organisation. And I think it's critical that that vertical culture is on the same page as everyone. So if there is plate waste. It's Oh, you haven't eaten much this morning. Was there something wrong with the food? Maybe it wasn't seasonal, maybe it wasn't hot. And so we have to ask the questions, and always drive why? Why? Why? Why? Why? And every single step, we're saving 10 grammes, 15 grammes, all the way until we get to a place of satisfaction.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 13:19

I touched upon how food waste can be an opportunity, and we flipped that on the head, I think, with some of some of our amazing teams here at Mandarin. And what we've done is taken things that are traditionally considered waste right, off cuts things that are odds and ends and created in

luxury, desirable menus that people want to dine at, right? And we're talking about some of our, you know, fine Michelin operated establishments. We've got Dinner by Heston in London, we've got Amber by Richard Ekkebus in Hong Kong. And so it's really, I think, from our angle, a source of inspiration to be able to show that something that was discarded as waste is now taken and elevated to the highest echelons of dining and supported by industry heavyweights. And so that's something that we derive a lot of value, to bring guests along on the journey and challenge, you know, and bring that mindset of, wow, you know, this is premium to me. And then also take that back home with you, right? And think about, think about how you know in your daily life how you're treating food and scraps, right. And hopefully that's something that we're able to do through what we're doing here at Mandarin Oriental.

Vojtech Vegh (Winnow) 14:52

This just shows that every things that we call by products or trimmings and off cuts and scraps are in. Are just ingredients. They are just another ingredients. They are just another product that can be used in any way. So it does not matter whether it's an economy hotel or it's a luxury hotel, it still can be used in the same way. Because in cooking, we are chefs, what we are looking for is flavour and texture, and that's something that is present in all of those ingredients. And I always say, I always tell chefs that recipes are not important. It's not where we start. Chefs know how to cook. You don't need the recipes. You need to understand the bigger principle behind it. You need to shift the mindset of how you look at that ingredient and in what way can be used. Because if, I don't know if you take like carrot peels, then it's essentially, it's still just a carrot, just a peel, so you can still use it in the same way. And if we shift that way of looking, of like this is something less. This is of a lesser value too this is the same value as the other ingredients, then we will be treating it the same, because this is the biggest shift that I see with chefs when I work with them. Now, what we used to look at as something that is not valuable to now the chefs are looking at it this has an equal value to what I'm preparing and the other things I'm working with, because the flavour and the nutritional content, the texture that I can derive from that ingredient provides me with the same culinary opportunity than other ingredients. In simple words, I can cook with everything and easily.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 16:31

Love that, so nicely said.

Tony Chisholm (Accor) 16:38

These conferences have been a huge step forward. We haven't done this to the same scale or magnitude as what we've launched this year across MEA and Asia. So we're going to be hitting close to 700 hotels, and multiply that by the GMs, the chefs, the food and beverage leaders, and in a lot of the regions, we've had their entire hotel EXCOM team, so that whole sort of proliferation of understanding starts to cascade beyond just the F and B teams. So that's at the high level, from a scale point of view. But we're also talking about having restaurants considered a standalone restaurant with a standalone restaurant mindset. So what this means is the leaders of each of the outlets have different market segmentation, different customers. Some of the restaurants will be patronised by in house guests, some 80% or 90% driven by the outside guests. So you can't just have the one mindset across six outlets. If you've got a large hotel, yes, you've got the same umbrella concept of reducing food waste, but we have to be a little more scientific and individualistic and somewhat selfish about the individual outlets that we are running, whether it's a

Chinese speciality or a Japanese restaurant or French or the all day, dining, breakfast, lunch and dinner, because the trends, the habits, the ingredients are different, same concept, but the market segmentation, the trend, the purchase, all of that is different, menu designs, A to Z. So one umbrella concept, but the mindset and from the individual leaders has to represent the outlets that that they have in each one of our hotels.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 18:24

Well, I wanted to just say I'm so impressed by the scale that Tony's - he's at 700 in his region, right? It's just a different, different ballpark. We are not nearly that size, but I can relate to looking at scalability. There was something that Tony said about individualised that I very wholeheartedly agree that that's important. While scalable - you know, we're talking about a group wide rollout - you still need to resonate with each individual team. And I think that's where, when it comes to programmes, when you're speaking specifics, data and metrics specific to that operation. That's when it clicks with people, and that's super important. It's super important in the sense that at the end of the day, when it's a broad based strategy, it's very easy to not be as invested. But when you're speaking specifically to the opportunity of breakfast, right at your three meal, that's something that you know you're gonna you're gonna want to respond to, especially if you know you're vested in this, in this hotel and in this restaurant. So it's important that the people in the journey are speaking in specifics and driving this and that's where I think the passion to drive change really comes through.

Vojtech Vegh (Winnow) 19:43

100% individualization. I always encourage chefs make it your own. You get the broad idea, you get the whole mindset thing and the principles of how to do things. But make it your own. You can run with the idea and individualise it to your own needs. And for me, the key to scale is always starting with one thing at a time, starting small, seeing what works, and then scaling it up step by step, rather than trying to be everything at the same time. I see chefs and companies failing with this idea of doing everything at the same time. Always focus on one thing. Focus zoom in on the one kitchen. Zoom in on the one waste stream, zoom in on that top thing that is the most impactful, and then scale it from there.

Iris Lam (Mandarin Oriental) 20:31

I've absolutely retained a lot of optimism. I think those of us in sustainability and I believe in food and beverage have a great deal of optimism, and it starts with normalising conversation around this being an opportunity, right? Yeah, it's a fact that there's waste, right? But let's normalise this as things that we can do and rise to the challenge together. And it's a great thing, right? How we are attacking the same challenge in different ways.

Vojtech Vegh (Winnow) 21:01

Very positive about the future. Of course, I see a lot of traction in the food waste reduction as well. I think that one thing that needs to happen in the sustainability world is to stop using the word trend around what we are doing, to not have it as a trend, but to make it a new normal standard that we want to follow in the future, in the long term as well. Because being optimistic, well, as optimistic as I am, at the same time, the ideal world would be where my work is simply not needed and I'm out

of business, because this has become the norm around the world. So this is what I really hope to see in the industry at one point.

Becca (Podcast host) 21:37

Optimism there about the industry's ability to reduce food waste. Now we brought Winnow founder and CEO Mark Zornes and the Alliance's CEO Glenn Manziuk, together to ask them their thoughts on the journey the industry is on. I started by asking Mark why he founded Winnow.

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 21:54

Winnow was founded on the belief that food is too valuable to waste. It got started actually, I was doing research on the food system globally, and really became shocked about how much food was being wasted. For the listeners here, I mean, you probably know about a third of all food that is grown is thrown away. I quite frankly, said that was crazy, and there must be something done about it. Began to try to understand where and why food waste was happening, and I ended up building a very simple way, actually, to measure food waste in the staff restaurant of the company that I was working at. And found that when we had that data, and I communicated that data back to the culinary team, we helped cut food waste there by like 70% and that's when I knew that I was on something. After that ended up leaving my job and trying to build this as a business, and have since begun to do this in a number of countries around the world.

Becca (Podcast host) 21:54

Winnow is doing amazing work. And just wanted to bring you in Glenn, how important are companies like win a for the industry in driving change.

Glenn Mandziuk (the Alliance) 23:03

What Mark's talking about in terms of engagement, it's crucial, you know, winnow plays a crucial role in driving change within the hospitality industry. You know, using innovative technology and solutions to help, let's say businesses accurately measure and monitor food waste is really, you know, a central part of how we can affect change. If you can't measure it and understand it, it's very difficult to make the difference that we have to do in the staff, you know, to make that behavioural change. That's that's really critical. And I think a lot of people didn't realise the level of food waste that the industry utilises, and where it's coming from and where it can change, you know. So obviously, you know, data driven insights is really key to the success of this. I think, you know, Winnow and technology like Winnow, you know, helps obviously our members in cost savings, we know there's a significant expenditure on an annual basis in procurement, in the food space, and any way we can sharpen how we make our purchases is really imperative. Obviously, each of the companies have sustainable goals as well. And I think again, Winnow provides that opportunity for the companies to achieve their goals in ways that they probably didn't know before. That's an exciting thing that I think Winnow provides. And I think, you know, overall, we're in an industry where you don't see innovation to the extent perhaps you see in other sectors, and this particular avenue of focus really shines a light on what innovation can do and can look like in the industry, and that leads to, ultimately, behavioural change. And I think that's where I think the big corner stone is, is we, if we don't change behaviours within the kitchen, quite frankly, then it's very

difficult to move the needle on reducing food waste and I think a technology of this nature helps shine a light on that. And I think this is what's really exciting about.

Becca (Podcast host) 25:16

Thanks, Glenn. And Mark, just looking at that behavioural change when you founded Winnow and you started, you know, it's more. It's more than just putting food waste in buckets and measuring it, isn't it? How surprised were you that you know the culture, the kitchen culture and behaviour, would really play such a role in driving down food waste.

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 25:37

The technology that we use at Winnow is we use artificial intelligence to make it very easy to get accurate data on what's being thrown away at all times in a kitchen. And we designed this and focused very hard on making it a seamless process in the kitchen, right? If you don't make this easy to adopt, if you don't make this very simple to implement the challenges that, you know, hospitality businesses face, the differences in, you know, capabilities and sort of education of staff in the kitchen, the turnover sometimes that happens in these kitchens. You know, really maintaining a process in and of itself is challenging, and so we have to make that incredibly easy. So simply, you throw food away, we identify what it is, and we give them data back to the executive chef and the culinary team around what's being wasted and what they can do about it. But we're really just the data platform, right? The changes are driven by the staff themselves. And you know, when you do this, what we've proven is that you can save anywhere between 2% to 8% of food costs, which is, you know, as Glenn mentioned, something that's really powerful in the P and L of a hospitality business. What I'd say that inspires me the most from a behaviour change is some of the creativity that we're now seeing coming out of the chefs with what they're doing, whether it be, you know, new ideas on how to, you know, serve food and change their production patterns, how to invent new recipes out of things that we were purchasing in these kitchens, that we thought were things that should be thrown away, that were just byproducts of production, that actually can be delicious, you know, products that can be put in front of guests and delights them at the same time. And it's when I see that creativity unlocked with the shifts that we work with that one, I know we're really onto something, because it's something that they get excited about, and it gives me hope that we're going to see a transformation in the industry towards a more sustainable way.

Becca (Podcast host) 27:55

And Mark, can you outline some of your clients impacts? You know, what are brands achieving?

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 27:59

I mean, we're really privileged to be able to work with so many different organisations and many of the members of the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, including groups like, you know, Accor Hotels, Emaar Hospitality, Four Seasons, you know, Iberostar, who's put Winnow into all of their operations, Jumeirah, just to name a few. But I'd like to probably highlight a couple with sort of some, you know, recent news. You've got Marriott - you know, we did a deployment across Marriott's UK and Ireland business, all 53 of their managed hotels. And just a couple of weeks ago, they made the announcement that they cut food waste across their entire business by 50% and you know, there's a whole lot more Marriotts out there that we love to be able to help do the same,

and we're working on that. But I think what it demonstrates is it creates a lighthouse effect, that when a leader, and I'll call out, you know, Joanna Chugh on this, who's the VP of Operations for UK and Ireland and Nordics, sets a vision, makes a business case behind it, and partners with an organisation to help them deliver on that vision. Really, what can be achieved, right? And then, just another example, you know, I'm super inspired by the work that Hilton's doing, we have a very long, very deep relationship with the Hilton Europe and Middle East team. A shout out to Emma Banks and Sebastian Nohse and Niki Walsh and the team there, and they've just been such great partners. You know, we work with a large number of their managed properties and more franchise properties, sort of across the world, and they've taken not just a view on we're going to implement Winnow and reduce food waste, but we're going to think about how we communicate this to guests, how we create moments in the hospitality journey, such as breakfast, their Green Breakfast programme, right, where we demonstrated a 60% reduction in in food waste across hotels that implemented it. And, you know, various other sort of holiday programmes. The holy month of Ramadan, they're just wrapping up, you know, their annual Green Ramadan programme, which we're really proud to partner with them on. And it's phenomenal results. It raises awareness of the issue. It sets another Lighthouse for the industry. And again, you know, it makes economic sense at the same time. And that's what's great about it.

Glenn Mandziuk (the Alliance) 30:28

And what benefits Mark has winnow seen from engaging with the Alliance?

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 30:32

Yeah. I mean, it's been really great. The Alliance has been a really great platform for us to share some of the knowledge that we have built, you know, we believe that any measurement is good measurement, first of all, and there's a huge amount of experience we've built helping organisations deliver change at at scale. It's given us an opportunity to further engage with these organisation on food waste. We've been involved in some events that you all have hosted. We've got a zero food waste chef, Vojtech Vegh - and anyone who doesn't know who he is, you need to check him out, he's awesome - who spends his entire life trying to educate people around how you can really maximise the use of everything that comes in the door. And we've had an opportunity to help him be part of some round tables that are there. We've contributed data to white papers. And lastly, we're exploring ways to kind of incorporate some of what we've learned into the Alliance's Academy. You know, our mission is to inspire a movement where chefs all see that food is too valuable to waste, and we're on a on a path to be able to cut food waste globally in in half. And we're not going to do that alone. We're going to do that with the partner, members of the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. I mean, it's been really, really great to begin to engage and support that.

Becca (Podcast host) 31:54

Glenn, obviously, the Alliance really, you know, appreciates the impact that Winnow has in inspiring other members and partners in the Alliance. Well, how can you not be inspired from what Mark just shared?

Glenn Mandziuk (the Alliance) 32:06

I mean that that's the kind of commitment we need to make, and innovation we need to make, and and inspiration that we need to make, to make the difference. And that passion, you can see, comes through in the voice that Mark is sharing with you right now. You know, the Alliance itself, of course, is actively addressing this space, and as we know, it's a central part of how we can reduce the CO2 emissions of the industry make better procurement decisions and ultimately, behavioural changes I've referenced earlier. You know, recently, one of the central efforts we just completed was a decarbonisation hotel food systems white paper and with Systemiq, in partnership with Iberostar and the Sustainable Markets Initiative, and engaged our members and you know, it really set some ambitious goals to reduce as as Mark referenced, food related emissions in this space by at least 30% by 2030 which obviously potentially cuts up to about 70 million tonnes of CO2 annually. If we don't set targets internally as an Alliance, then it's very difficult for people to work towards something. So we wanted to make sure that was in place. And so we're really encouraging hotels to leverage their procurement power optimise their energy usage, because that was the centre part of the white paper as well, and and obviously adopt waste tracking technologies like Winnow to achieve, ultimately, up to a 50% reduction in food waste. And you know, we have this really collaborative power within the Alliance. You know, within the membership, there's over 66,000 hotels that could be engaged in this conversation and all working towards a systemic transformation and how food is sourced, prepared and consumed, I think, is where we can really affect change. And if we were looking at our core pillars of as an alliance, and where we can, you know, have an impact when we talk about sustainability and focusing, what we say is Net Positive Hospitality. This is the area, and so like I say, we're very proud and honoured to have Winnow as part of this conversation, their leadership within, within as as Mark referenced the Academy, because we've got to train. We gotta really focus on training, exposure to the opportunity. But then, of course, on the other side of this is really, is the data driven approach, and if you think about how we're looking at our global, universal sustainability standards, together with adopting a global data-driven platform that the industry owns and distributes data this is going to be one of those key data points that you'll find in the data platform, ultimately, in the end of the day. So we're excited as this programme continues to unfold, and I think we're just at the front end of something that is truly impactful.

Becca (Podcast host) 35:23

Thanks, Glenn. And Mark, where do you see the industry going in the future when it comes to food waste?

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 35:29

I see this accelerating. You know, what I've seen over the just over a decade that we've been doing this is we started by having a conversation where we had to educate people that this was actually an issue that was worth addressing, and we had some individuals and some organisations that got it and began to show that not only was this something worth getting after, but that they could do it at scale. Where we're really focused now is continuing to both drive our product and our solution forward, to make it even more powerful for chefs to use lots of exciting things coming there. The second thing is, you know, sometimes when you're talking about sustainability, it can sound to other people in the organisation that perhaps aren't as focused on that as the issue and might be more financially driven that this is something that's going to cost us to get after, and we've gotten really sharp at when we reduce food waste, how we go into the purchasing patterns of the

hotels we work with, and how we show them where they're saving that money. And that work is now convincing Chief Financial Officers, VPs of Operations, that this is a business efficiency imperative and helps the business become more profitable while also doing the right thing, and that, in turn, is getting buy in to say, this should become the standard of what we do. This should be standard operating practice. And so we're seeing, you know, organisations like Accor and Hilton that I mentioned that are beginning to really make this the standard across, you know, hotels that have a decent amount of food spend across the world. And I think we're going to see that movement spread, and if frankly it is just going to become an industry norm, and that's where we want to be.

Becca (Podcast host) 37:41

And finally, Mark what's our winners net positive ambitions for 2030?

Mark Zornes (Winnow) 37:46

You know, we think really hard, both about how, you know, we the impact that we have on carbon reduction, as well as how we minimise our own carbon footprint. You know, we've done work to analyse the carbon footprint of our technology relative to the carbon reduction impact it has. The good news is, is that, you know, we save, you know, over 20 times, I think it might even be sort of 40 times the amount of carbon per system that we put out, versus what it versus what we generate by sort of delivering our technology. We're doing a lot of work to make our technology more sustainable. There's a new version of our hardware we're working on right now that's even more more efficient, but the main role we play here is to empower organisations to deliver their own net positive goals, and supporting that in the industry, our goal is, we want to save a billion dollars of food from being thrown away per year. In the industry today, we're saving a over \$85 million a year from being thrown away. And so while that billion goal is, you know, still, still a little bit off the the impact we're having right now, I'm really proud of and I am confident we're going to get there, because we continue to scale up what we do, and frankly, the opportunities there in the industry to do that.

Becca (Podcast host) 39:18

In each episode of the Net Positive Hospitality podcast, we feature a 'Voice of the Future', and in this episode, we're hearing from Amina Ringim, Customer Services Manager at Winnow, who is working closely with Emma Banks, Vice President of Food and Beverage at Hilton in EMEA. We hear now how they've been driving food waste down and spearheading Hilton's recent Green Ramadan initiative and much more.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 39:42

Hi everyone. My name is Amina Ringim. I'm a Customer Success Manager at Winnow. Today's episode is really close to my heart. Eight years ago, I walked into Hilton Jameer Beach Resort when I first started working for Winnow, and it happened to be my very first account. And also an introduction to the hospitality industry. Little did I know that this experience is going to be shaping my career for the next few years. I got to learn everything about kitchens and chefs and how chaotic it is to make food for people on a day to day basis, and through that, now fast forward, I've been working with over 125 hotels in Hilton EMEA and helping chefs understand how to rethink

their relationship with food and also look at ways to become more efficient. So today, joining me is an incredible person who's been spearheading the revolution around hospitality when it comes to thinking about food waste, and she's a powerhouse, of course, when it comes to leading these kind of initiatives. And I'm very happy to introduce Emma Banks to this episode. So Emma, welcome.

Emma Banks (Hilton) 40:49

Thank you very much for inviting me today, Amina and the Winnow team.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 40:54

So before we start, I think it'll be great for our listeners to get to know you a little bit more. So maybe you can talk about your role and what you're doing with Hilton at this point.

Emma Banks (Hilton) 41:04

As you said, I'm Emma Banks. I'm based in Dubai, where we're recording today, so I'm the Vice President of Food and Beverage Strategy and Development for Hilton for EMEA. I've been with Hilton now just over six years, and I've been working in hospitality for longer than I care to have mentioned, but it's probably somewhere near 30 years. So I've seen a lot of changes and trends in the hospitality landscape. My role, predominantly at Hilton, is supporting our hotel and properties deliver great food and drink experiences for our guests and ensure strong returns for our shareholders. But a key part of my role is also supporting Hilton as a purpose led organisation where we are committed to driving responsible travel and tourism globally, and believe that hospitality can be a force for good, and as such, sustainability lies at the beating heart of our organisation. And naturally, all the work that my team and myself are doing around food waste with your partnership is incredibly important to us, so I'm delighted to be here today to be talking about it.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 42:20

Amazing. Thank you so much, Emma. Can you help our listeners understand why tackling food waste is very important for Hilton, and why is it a priority, and for you personally, why you so passionate about it?

Emma Banks (Hilton) 42:32

As I touched on in our introduction, I explained that, you know, as an organisation, we believe wholeheartedly in hospitality being a force for good, and how sustainability lies at the beating heart of our approach, and that is whether it be farm to table, dining, fostering a culture of inclusion in our kitchens, sourcing, responsibly, managing our waste. You can be sure we are ever mindful of what we put on the plate in front of our guests, or indeed the glass. Food waste, as we know, is an absolute, pressing challenge for the hospitality landscape. And at Hilton, we are committed to implementing a food waste reduction programme in every kitchen, and we also track our waste manually through our ESG management platform. But we also know that as you do, there is so much more we can do as an industry, and I'm delighted to say that I believe now globally, we have

197 Winnow systems across our hotels supporting in that endeavour to continue to monitor, track and reduce our food waste.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 43:42

For me, personally, coming from a background where food is scarce but sacred, is something that I value highly in terms of treating food as a valuable resource. So one of the things that I appreciate working with you during the initiatives like Green Ramadan and Green Breakfast is that I have the opportunity to impact change in terms of behaviours for a lot of people that are within the hospitality sector, and I feel like I'm privileged in that aspect.

Emma Banks (Hilton) 44:08

Yeah, so you've got a real, you've got a real personal experience of it, and you know, that's what's driving your passion. I think, I think for myself, being a mother and knowing that food waste does cause such a challenge for that, for the environment and the climate. And, you know, I want to do my bit to support future generations. And you know, through my work, if I can affect change. And the interesting thing about what we're doing at work is so many of our team members talk about how they take it home as well, and the learnings they learn in our kitchens, I mean, they take home to their family and friends. And I've myself become quite obsessed about what's in our fridge and what goes in our bin, and trying to actually send my family a little bit potty as well. So it's, it's something that, you know, I take like you, is actually part of my personal life now, as well.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 44:58

Me too. I think it's come to the point that now whenever my family members see me at home, they're scared just to kind of show up with a plate half like eaten. So it's become kind of one of those things where subconsciously, they're learning to kind of be more mindful when it comes to whatever they're taking and I appreciate that through, of course, the work that we've done together. For those who may not know, Hilton and Winnow have been working for several years now, and I'm proud to say that we've helped Hilton globally save over 4.7 million meals annually. Which brings me to our next favourite topic, which is the last initiative we've just completed, and that's the Green Ramadan initiative. Emma, would you be able to kind of tell our listeners what the Green Ramadan initiative is and what was the reason why you decided to start this?

Emma Banks (Hilton) 45:44

The Green Ramadan initiative was set up to tackle the primary barriers of food waste, namely, lack of awareness around food waste, unhelpful social norms and misaligned incentives. And we wanted to drive meaningful behavioural change across not only our Hilton team members, but also our guests visiting our hotel to enjoy the Iftar and sahur experiences during Ramadan. But also with a view of scaling a road map for change around our buffets during Iftar and Suhoor, so the initiative of Green Ramadan is primarily focused on reducing food waste across the value chain. We committed to the adoption of United Nations Environment Programme - Recipe of Change - and creating a sustainable Ramadan campaign, messaging across the customer journey. One of the key things was the development of a responsibility matrix with key stakeholders to implement corrective actions, and also getting these informed insights from Winnow AI technology to what the guest waste patterns were and what the waste pattern, the predominantly waste items on the

buffets were so the participating hotels in Green Ramadan also focus on local sourcing, ideally within a 50 mile radius restriction plastic use across our operations, taking a reduce, reuse and recycle approach to the culinary technique. So in other words, trying to use the whole plant, the whole protein, using gastronomic cooking techniques to actually look at all the ways we could reduce food waste - do anything to avoid food being sent to landfill. We focused on plant led dishes as well, to assist in our mission of being a more carbon friendly Ramadan experience for our guests, alongside traditional food items served during the holy month. Also, we were very proud to partner with local food banks, such as here in the UAE, with the UAE Food Bank to gift and donate food and avoid it going to waste. So anything, as I say, to avoid food going to landfill. We also looked at techniques such as composting, and working with a local company that actually took our waste and turned it into compost, and, in their words, turning trash into treasure. So we launched in 2023, across three hotels in three countries in the Middle East, we reported at the time a staggering 61%, I'll repeat that for the listeners, 61% reduction in food waste achieved in just 30 days. That was the astounding effort from those three hotels. Again, with your support, Amina, sometimes very stern and required support. You become famous for.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 48:46

Oh, my god, that is so bad.

Emma Banks (Hilton) 48:47

It's not, it's totally true. You had to straight and on, straight and narrow where required, because it, you know, it is a change in working practices for our team members and our chefs. And, you know, it's not easy to make changes to many years of how you've been operating. So we needed your guidance and support, and sometimes we needed just your stern support. So in 2024 based, you know, encouraged by those staggering results of 61% reduction in 2023, we launched the first Green Ramadan Toolkit, which my team put together with the support of our partners, and we launched 32 hotels, and I'm proud to say, seven countries, and we extended it to our partners, our Hilton partners, in Asia Pacific, and we actually had some hotels from Malaysia join us. And during 2023 we saw a further 21% reduction against the 2023 baseline. So what that means is, is where we exited in 2023 achieving a 61% reduction. We actually continued to reduce in 2024. So this year, I'm really proud to say. And you know, you know the results, as well as for the listeners, the project team, we launched the second Green Ramadan Toolkit and officially rolled out the initiative to all hotels in EMEA and invited our Asia Pacific hotels to join. But participation this time was contingent on fulfilling certain criteria by way of a stringent application process, because we do actually have to protect the circular infrastructure around Green Ramadan to ensure that we don't send food to landfill, and we make the Ramadan as green as possible using some of the techniques I talked about earlier, such as, you know, local sourcing, plastic reduction, etc. So we adopted the principles of green Ramadan again. But this year, I'm really glad to say that 45 hotels passed the strict criteria to participate, and that was then extended to across 14 countries, this time, even involving some of our European countries. And it extended across Asia Pacific as well. And during this time, because we went, you know, more at scale, across 45 hotels. We actually served 342,559 covers during Ifar and Suhoor across the participating hotels, and achieved a 26% drop in plate waste from week one to week four. Compared to previous years, we've come a long way. Week four plate waste in our most recent Ramadan 2025, was 64 grammes for cover, and down from 102 grammes in 2024 and 152 grammes in 2023. And you know, we could not be more proud of all the work from our hotel teams, from our guests that participated and started to become aware of the initiatives we're taking and supported us in our Green Ramadan Recipe of Change

initiative. And also, we've seen our power partnership between Winnow go from strength to strength. What were the best fits for you and Amina, in terms of you know, what did it mean to you to be part of that project?

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 52:15

I think for me, what stood out the most was the level of effort that hotels go in and beyond to make sure that their guests felt welcome. And one of the things that I always consider when I'm travelling anywhere is, do they have halal food? So can you imagine when I found out that Hilton Berlin wanted to participate for Ramadan, and I'm thinking in the back of my head, like, how could they do that? Like it'd be impossible for them to offer a Ramadan offering and in Berlin, especially with the type of regulations that they have not necessarily like fitting. But to my surprise, when I had a one on one chat with the chef, Chef Lena, who's heading the culinary part of the hotel, she was basically adamant about figuring out a way to make sure that people felt like they were at home, even though that they were far away, especially during a time of year where Muslims really take to heart and making sure that they're close to their families, she wanted to find a way to make sure that they felt included. And I thought that that was amazing, but it also opened my eyes to understanding that just because something is considered middle eastern doesn't necessarily mean it cannot be brought into the rest of the world.

Emma Banks (Hilton) 53:22

And you know that just highlights, you know, Chef Lena, there was highlighting - in Hilton, our Founder, Conrad Hilton, believed, you know, that hospitality was a force for good, but he also felt, as hoteliers, you know, we had the responsibility to shed the light and warmth of hospitality. Chef Lena in that one act and that hard work that she went through with her team, she took a purpose led approach, which is absolutely key to us as Hilton, you know, she wanted to spread the light and warmth of hospitality and make sure travelling Muslims who were away from home and during the holy month felt welcomed and included. You know, it's such a powerful story, and I'm so glad you shared it. You know, just shows what can be done. Sometimes, when you just get somebody with a little bit of vision and enlightenment.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 54:08

Emma, thank you so much for sharing your insights and stories. However, I do have a couple more questions for you. So as you reflect the work or the initiatives that we've done in the past. What are you the most proud of?

Emma Banks (Hilton) 54:24

I think what I'm most proud of is the achievements of the team, genuinely my corporate team, above property team that support the hotels, but also the achievements of some of the hotel teams. You know, I've had chefs, executive chefs say, you know, who have been in the industry a long time say that, you know, one executive chef said, once said that they had a paradigm shift about it, you know, and the passion and purpose and how the chefs really, really adopted it. So I'm really proud that, you know, I do believe that we have been industry leading in this, this arena, you know. So that's one thing I'm really proud of. The other thing I'm proud of is, you know that I'm at that stage in my career now where, you know, I want to create some legacy for the industry. And I

think you know what we have achieved so far and continue to achieve, I think will leave a lasting impact on the industry for the better. I think, you know, we've used our opportunity as a global hospitality operator who can affect meaningful change at scale, and I think we've started on that journey. However, you know, we're not resting on our laurels. We do think there is so much more we can do, so much that we can achieve within my team, within Hilton, globally, and also within the industry. So I'm proud of what the team have achieved. I'm proud that we're creating a legacy, but I'm also very conscious there's more we can do. And you know, there really is, as my team and I always say, no time to waste.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 56:02

Of course! Speaking of your career, there's one last thing that I wanted to ask you, what's something that you learned earlier on during your career that you still carry with you till this day?

Emma Banks (Hilton) 56:14

Well, as you can imagine, I've worked in hospitality a long time, and I've also worked in some very challenging times where we may have had, you know, lots of challenges for the business. And sometimes, you know, felt completely swamped or overpowered. And I have done in the past, and you know, when I, when I came to Hilton, for example, it is such a it's such a large role, covering such a big remit. And you know, there was, there was so much to do, but I I stick to one really sound piece of advice I was given. And I returned from maternity leave to a business that was in some distress, and turn around, it just been acquired by the company I was working for. And I came in and I didn't know where to start, and I was also really struggling transitioning back to work from maternity leave and being away from home, etc, etc, and I was completely swamped. And I was given a really sound piece of advice by a lady in the industry who's hugely respected, is still a personal friend, and she sat me down and we talked it through, and she says, you just need to surround yourself with good some good people and have a plan. And I'm proud to say that that has that's really great information. That's really great advice that has served me well. Surround yourself with great people and have a plan. And in my current role as Vice President of F and B development and strategy, I have to have a plan. I have to be very strategic, and I do believe we have a good plan with which food waste and supporting our travel with purpose goals is a huge part of and I'm proud to say that I have an enviable world class team as well. So sticking to that advice has really helped me, I think, get where I am and be achieving what we're achieving as a team.

Amina Ringim (Winnow) 58:00

Thank you so much, Emma. It's been a pleasure working alongside Hilton to create a real change, and I know listeners will leave the conversation feeling both inspired and hopeful. Here's to more campaigns that are reshaping the industry, and, of course, more meals saved. Thank you once again for your time. It's been a pleasure.

Becca (Podcast host) 58:20

For more information on how Winnow and the Alliance are working together to drive down food waste in the hospitality industry, head to the Alliance's website and discover Winnow at www.winnowsolutions.com.