



MAKING SUSTAINABILITY CONVENIENT: Customized Food Ordering To Incentivize Food Waste Reduction At Bistro



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PROBLEM

How might we enhance large-scale sustainability practices at McMaster University?

- McMaster produces 120 tonnes of organic waste every year. Over 40 tonnes go to a landfill. The rest is composted, but most of it could have been eaten.²
- Much of this is food. The school plans to reduce organic waste by encouraging students to take uneaten food home, and eat it later.³
- However, it is often more convenient for students to throw out uneaten food and simply buy more food when they are hungry. On a large scale, people are likely to choose quick and easy approaches regardless of sustainability.
- At popular locations on campus, meal sizes and composition are very fixed. If a person does not want to eat everything they purchase, waste is likely.

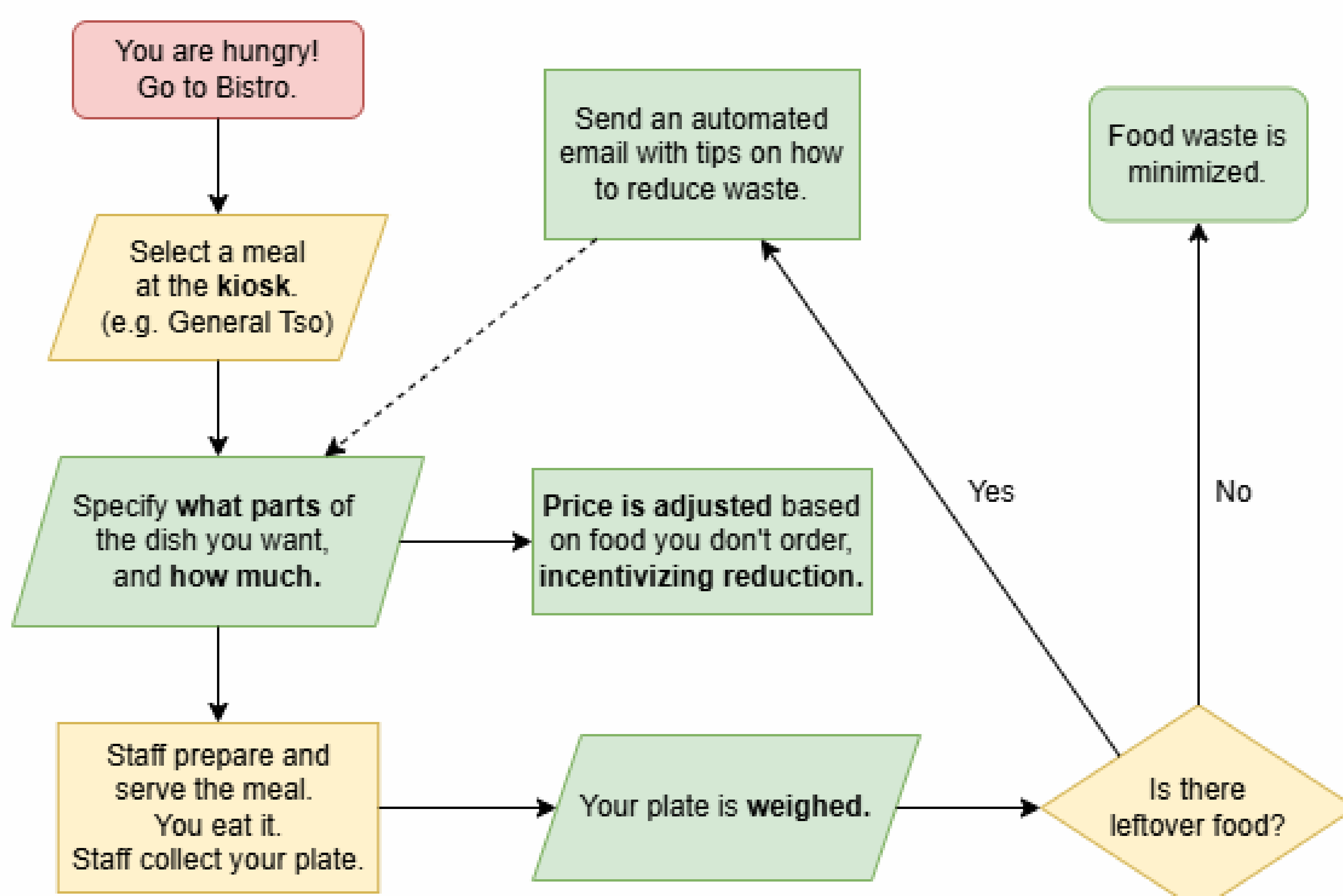
SOLUTION

After discussions with sustainability experts in the community, it became clear that **reducing** food waste is much more impactful than diverting it.

Additionally, students have expressed a desire for **simple** sustainability solutions that fit well into their busy schedules.

Our proposal is to modify the food ordering system at Bistro in order to give students **more control over what they order**. This solution would:

- Leverage the existing **kiosks** at Bistro to provide a larger variety of portion sizes for existing meals, at a low implementation cost.
- Cancel charges for food excluded from meals (e.g. mushrooms), incentivizing students to **think** about what they order.
- In cases of food waste, use a scale to measure weight of leftovers, and optionally email the student **feedback** on what to cut from their order.
 - The feedback would be auto-generated based on the weight of the leftovers and the contents of the order associated with the plate.



McMaster put
40 metric tonnes
of organic waste in landfills last year.¹

77 metric tonnes
were composted.⁴

63% of Canadian food waste
could have been eaten.²

NEXT STEPS

- Discuss the plan with Bistro staff to ensure a smooth transition and determine viable portion sizes.
- Implement the plan and monitor changes in food waste relative to food consumption.
- Conduct surveys to ensure that the amount of available choices is not burdensome for students or staff.
- Expand to other eateries at McMaster, and eventually other universities, adapting to their infrastructure to decrease implementation costs and learning curves.

REFERENCES

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