Turning Surplus Into Sustainability:

How The Venetian Resort Is Redefining Food Rescue in the Meetings & Events Industry

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Think back to the last banquet you attended at a major conference. The lights dimmed, the applause faded, and servers quietly began clearing plates from hundreds of tables. The guests moved on to networking, but in the back-of-house, something else was happening — trays of untouched, high-quality food were being wheeled away.

Now imagine if that food didn't end up in a landfill, but instead, on the tables of families in need just a few miles away. That's the vision — and the daily reality — of **The Venetian Resort Las Vegas Food Rescue Alliance**, a program transforming how the hospitality industry approaches sustainability and community care.

The Scale of the Challenge

The meetings and conventions industry is massive — and so is its footprint. According to the **World Wildlife Fund**, the U.S. hospitality industry produces over **18 million tons of food waste annually**. Large convention resorts like The Venetian Resort Las Vegas, which hosts millions of guests and prepares over **four million meals per year**, sit at the epicenter of this issue.

Forecasting meals for thousands of attendees has become very close to a science for many large-scale convention resorts but even with the most precise planning, surplus food is inevitable. In the past, most of it went unseen, unmeasured, and uneaten. But as meeting planners, corporate clients, and event attendees raise their expectations around **sustainability, ESG goals, and measurable impact**, resorts are reimagining what responsibility looks like — not just in words, but in action.

The Opportunity Hidden in Every Tray

At The Venetian Resort, that realization sparked a movement. What began as a corporate social responsibility initiative to "do the right thing" has evolved into a **model of large-scale food rescue for the global hospitality industry**.

The program operates through a partnership with **The Just One Project**, a Las Vegas-based nonprofit known for tackling food insecurity through mobile markets and community food hubs. Together, they built what's now known as the **Food Rescue Alliance**, a first-of-its-kind collaboration recognized by **The White House in 2024** for its innovation in fighting hunger and reducing waste.

Why Food Rescue Matters in Las Vegas

Food rescue in Las Vegas isn't just about sustainability — it's about survival.
Southern Nevada faces one of the highest food insecurity rates in the nation, with **1 in 6 residents** unsure where their next meal will come from. This means that while luxury resorts host global events and prepare gourmet cuisine by the ton, thousands of locals live in "food deserts" without reliable access to nutritious meals.

This juxtaposition presents both a **moral imperative and an opportunity for impact**. The leadership team at The Venetian Resort saw that connection clearly — that safely rescued food from conventions and meetings could feed hundreds of families, reduce emissions, and reinforce the resort's commitment to being a responsible community leader.

"Sustainability Meets Hospitality"

As **Anna Schmid, Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility**, explains, "Our program started as a CSR initiative — a way to get healthy meals onto the tables of our neighbors in need. But over time, it became clear this was also a sustainability strategy, one that our clients deeply value. Our convention culinary team prepares millions of meals

each year. Even a small surplus can become thousands of rescued meals. We realized food rescue wasn't just the right thing to do — it was smart business."

What the Food Rescue Alliance Looks Like in Action

Walk behind the scenes at The Venetian Convention & Expo Center after a major event, and you'll see culinary staff swiftly moving prepared but unserved food to a holding area where it is safely transferred in temperature-controlled boxes to The Just One Project Food Rescue Kitchen, which The Venetian Resort funded. Within two hours, food is repackaged into family-sized portions and distributed to Las Vegans in need through the nonprofit's robust food distribution network.

Each rescued tray is logged, tracked, and translated into impact metrics. A monthly report shows not only **pounds of food diverted from landfills** and **equivalent meals served**, but also overall food value, CO_2 **emissions prevented**, **water saved**, and volunteer hours.

The numbers are staggering:

- **Over 250,000 meals rescued annually** from The Venetian Convention & Expo Center
- **More than 600,000 meals total** since the program's inception
- **Over $350,000 in estimated food value redistributed** to Las Vegas' food-insecure residents
- **Thousands of volunteer hours** from The Venetian Resort Team Members and nonprofit volunteers

In other words, The Venetian Resort has proven that food rescue can be both measurable and meaningful.

The Ripple Effect

The success of the Food Rescue Alliance is sparking wider change. Other Las Vegas resorts are now exploring similar models, inspired by the ease and efficiency of The Venetian Resort–The Just One Project partnership, and city-wide event producers are connecting with The Food Rescue Alliance for one-time food pickups annually.

Lessons for the Industry

If you're a sustainability, sales, or event leader wondering where to start, this model from The Venetian Resort offers a clear roadmap:

1. **Partner locally.** Find a nonprofit with strong infrastructure and shared values.
2. **Build a process.** From kitchen to loading dock to delivery, logistics matter.
3. **Measure everything.** Quantify meals, weight, and impact for ESG reporting.
4. **Engage your teams.** Frontline staff become champions when they see the difference.
5. **Tell the story.** Transparency and storytelling amplify impact and inspire others.

What's revolutionary about The Venetian Resort approach is its integration. Food rescue isn't a side project — it's part of the brand's culture, embedded in its *Green Meetings* strategy and woven into the guest and client experience.

From Convention Waste to Community Wellness

Food rescue may once have been seen as a charitable act. Today, it's **a business imperative, a brand differentiator, and a moral compass** for the hospitality industry. As the meetings sector continues to rebound post-pandemic and sustainability becomes central to many RFPs, The Venetian Resort model shows that doing good and doing well are no longer separate goals — they're one and the same.

For an industry built on service, perhaps it's fitting that its next evolution of excellence lies not in what we serve, but in what we choose not to waste.
