

Rethink  
Food

**2023**

**SPRING  
IMPACT  
REPORT**



# FOOD, EQUITY, SUSTAINABILITY.



**W**e welcomed 2023 with renewed emphasis on resilience and building capacity to sustain small businesses (80% minority- and women-owned or led), local communities, and neighborhoods as the fabric of our cities. Spring is a time for renewal and growth, and in Q1 2023, we started new pilots, continued initiatives from 2022, and provided over 540,000 nourishing meals through 56 restaurant partners and our in-house sustainable commissary kitchen. Spring is also a time when our commissary team sees its first donations of the season's produce: cabbages, carrots, purple cauliflower, blackberries, and more.

## **FRESHLY PREPARED, AVAILABLE TO ALL**

Whether it's a college student, a longtime elderly resident, or a family seeking asylum after traveling hundreds of miles to flee hardships, Rethink is committed to alleviating food insecurity with freshly-prepared ingredients and culinary expertise. In providing nourishing meals at no cost to those who need them, the Rethink Food network is in constant motion to deliver aid + comfort in these difficult times.

In continuation of our work providing fresh meals to asylum seekers arriving in New York, we provided more than 90,000 meals from August 2022 to March 2023. In Miami, we celebrated 100k meals provided throughout Miami-Dade County, a proven model that funds meals entirely from restaurant donations from The Genuine Hospitality Group.



We look ahead this year with idealism and some concern. In building capacity, we continue to strengthen community bonds and place restaurants squarely at the forefront of food insecurity. An inflationary economy and supply chain issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continue to place strain on our partners and communities, and we anticipate that food hardship will continue to increase.

In March 2023, 30 million people lost their SNAP benefits across the country when pandemic era benefits ended. In NYC, 1.5 million people have an average of \$160 to spend each month, leaving them to choose between basic necessities – like rent, utilities, prescriptions – and food. These individuals then turn to their local food pantries and soup kitchens, who are dealing with reduced donations. According to Feeding America, nearly 40% of its pantries are operating in a budget deficit in order to meet communities' needs.

We can't do this important work without the dedication and support of our donors, advocates, partners, and supporters. As we continue this important work in 2023, please join us—our capacity to serve communities is directly related to the support we receive. Thank you.







# WHAT IS A RETHINK MEAL?

**WHOLESOME  
DIGNIFIED  
COMFORTING**

**Nutritionally dense** – There is an emphasis on vegetables for vitamins, carbohydrates for energy, protein for health and nourishment.

**Culturally celebrated** – CBO populations include the elderly, different ethnic groups, and the unhoused. We address differing needs by using seasonings + flavors that are familiar to our diners, lowering the salt content for seniors, and paying attention to the texture and fiber content of a meal.

*\*Food photography shown uses excess donated ingredients, photographed at Rethink Food's sustainable commissary kitchen.*

**Prepared professionally and safely** – All Rethink partner restaurants and the in-house commissary kitchen team are certified in food + kitchen safety standards relating to hygiene, food preparation, cooling, + storage.



# VOICES from the Rethink Food Commissary Culinary Team



- **“It must be something that I personally would want to eat — tasty, interesting, and balanced.”**
- **“It requires care, attention, and effort, not just the fastest thing that we can make.”**
- **“It should look delicious. If someone gives it to their child to take to school, it shouldn’t just be a serving of plain brown beans, but a flavorful chili instead. It should have herbs, spices, and flavor.”**
- **“If the recipient can enjoy the meal, that’s dignity. We should strive to provide variety.”**
- **“We don’t consider or base our work on the economic or social status of who is getting the meal.”**





# CELEBRATING 10 MILLION MEALS

ON MARCH 27, 2023

We invited supporters and partners across our network to celebrate everyone's efforts in reaching 10 million meals provided since 2017.

We were honored to receive proclamations from NYC Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams. Thank you to Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy Kate MacKenzie

for presenting the mayoral proclamation, declaring **March 27 RETHINK FOOD DAY.**

Thank you to our event sponsors, Fandi Mata, and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce for co-hosting the event.

Hear from our partners in the [10 MILLION MEALS VIDEO.](#)





# RESTAURANTS MOBILIZE FOR COMMUNITIES

We've continued building connections that get nutritious, culturally celebrated meals directly to people who need them, by connecting restaurants who make meals to nearby organizations that serve their communities locally. Rethink restaurants take the care they put into their food and move it outside their four walls—making an impact that directly improves lives of those around them. Our fundraising restaurants add a % donation to every check, with all funds going directly to providing meals for their local communities.

**627,000+ MEALS in Q1**

between Rethink restaurants, partners + our commissary kitchen

## THANK YOU: ELEVEN MADISON PARK CREATING A PATH FORWARD



During the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, Eleven Madison Park made a phenomenal commitment to alleviating food insecurity in NYC. Their work preparing and delivering fresh meals laid a foundation, creating a model for other restaurants to go forward to support their local communities. From fundraising to providing fresh, nutritious meals created by the EMP team, EMP's efforts made a huge difference in NYC and the Queensbridge community. Rethink Food's programs would not be where they are today without this vital work and partnership. EMP continues to donate hundreds of pounds of excess produce to be converted into nutritious meals. Our deepest gratitude and thanks to chef + co-founder Daniel Humm and the entire Eleven Madison Park team.





## MIAMI EVENTS: 100K MEALS, SOUTH FL FOOD RESCUE

Rethink welcomed partners across its Miami network to a brunch event, celebrating 100,000 meals provided in Miami-Dade with THE GENUINE HOSPITALITY GROUP—in just over a year. Elsewhere in Miami, Rethink collaborated with SOUTH FLORIDA FOOD RESCUE to provide meals at its monthly Farmers' Markets. Rethink also attended the South Beach Wine & Food Festival, connecting with chefs and partners including TGHG chef MICHAEL SCHWARTZ and Rethink board member chef J.J. JOHNSON.

## TACOMBI MEALS GROW

Thank you to the TACOMBI FOUNDATION for expanding its ongoing meal support in 2023. By cost-sharing meal donations, TACOMBI COMMUNITY KITCHEN and TACOMBI restaurant locations have provided 96,604 meals (from Feb. – Apr. '23) to communities in New York City, D.C. metro, and Miami—a 24% rise from the previous three-month period. Two new locations are set to open in Chicago. Since fall 2022, Rethink welcomed Tacombi's Master Taqueros to volunteer visits at community organizations they serve in NYC and Miami. Tacombi's Master Taqueros also created three new recipes for the TCK menu. For more info on cost-sharing partnerships, get in touch [HERE](#).

## ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT

Rethink continued its work for asylum seekers that, from 2022 included meals at: Port Authority w/Artists Athletes Activists, the Queens All In Food Distribution w/Monkworx, and support for Bronx organizations w/the Bronx Community Foundation. In February, Rethink joined the City of NY and NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS to continue to provide care & dignity in the City's response to the continued arrival of asylum seekers—an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that the City has mobilized to respond to with partners across NYC. By working with its proven network of restaurants already providing meals to community organizations in their neighborhoods, Rethink is able to meet the need for fresh, culturally responsive meals while directing tax dollars back to local NYC businesses.



# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



## COLLECTIVE FARE + COLLECTIVE FOOD WORKS

Co-founders LaToya Meaders + chef Femi Rodney Frazer continue to be stellar partners & community leaders since partnering with Rethink in April 2020, providing 9,000+ meals in Q1 '23. Collective Fare incorporates African Diaspora + Southern flavors into its cuisine with 30+ years of experience in large-scale food production. With nonprofit Collective Food Works, Meaders is empowering communities through food access, wellness initiatives, workforce opportunities + more: "We're telling our story through food — both through the southern lens, and a broader, diasporic lens. But now it's also about creating something that's sustainable and able to reshape a community. Because we believe that restaurants have that power. And we want to be an example to other restaurants, so they too understand that they have the power to create change." Find out more [HERE](#).

## SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH / GREATER HARLEM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Salem United Methodist Church (SUMC), the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce (GHCC), and Rethink Food partner to address food insecurity by providing nutritious, culturally celebrated meals to the Harlem community. Restaurants (recommended by GHCC), have strong community ties and provide a range of cuisine types from West African to Italian to Soul Food. Through Q1 '23, the partnership has provided 728,821+ meals to the Harlem community while investing \$3.6M+ to support meal production through local restaurants, helping businesses remain open and sustain jobs. This synergistic relationship among SUMC, GHCC, & Rethink is a model for coalition building across sectors: economic development, faith-based communities, & food access.

## SPECIAL MEAL REQUESTS TO HONOR COMMUNITIES + CELEBRATE CULTURAL HOLIDAYS

Rethink continued its work providing supplementary meal distributions throughout each year for occasions that include Lunar New Year, Passover, Thanksgiving, Independence Day, and more. In 2023, Rethink provided APNA Brooklyn Community Center and Brooklyn Emerge with additional meal support to include Ramadan service, and to Congregation Sons of Israel Passover for Passover.

Rethink attended Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson's Annual Iftar Dinner at Bronx Borough Hall, which brought community leaders together throughout the borough in celebration of Ramadan. Rethink provided meals for the dinner in partnership with Rethink restaurant Brain Food.



# ADVOCACY



## NYC MAYOR VISIT

In February, Rethink Food visited Mayor Adams, City Council Member Julie Menin + Exec. Dir. of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy Kate Mackenzie. They were joined by Ali (Brainfood), Akram + Abdul (Yemen Cafe), and Chris Keely (NYC Health + Hospitals) to discuss potential opportunities to expand partnerships.

## JOINING ADVOCACY + POLICY EVENTS ACROSS NYC

including City Harvest's Women in Food Policy Panel, the NY City Council Women's Caucus "Herstory" Month Celebration, Brooklyn Community Foundation's Spark 2023 Breakfast, Nonprofit Thought Leaders Reception at Manhattan West (Brookfield Properties)

## ENACTED: FOOD DONATION IMPROVEMENT ACT (FDIA)

In 2022, Rethink Food advocated for the FDIA alongside WW's Healthy Coalition, NRDC, and Harvard Food Policy Clinic.

[READ MORE](#)

## CITY COUNCIL BUDGET REQUESTS

for 32 districts, with Rethink participating in site visits + hearing calls.



# Q1 SUSTAINABILITY

**240,141 lbs. of food rescued**

**600,352.5 lbs. of CO2 diverted**

**5,523,243 gal. of fresh water saved**

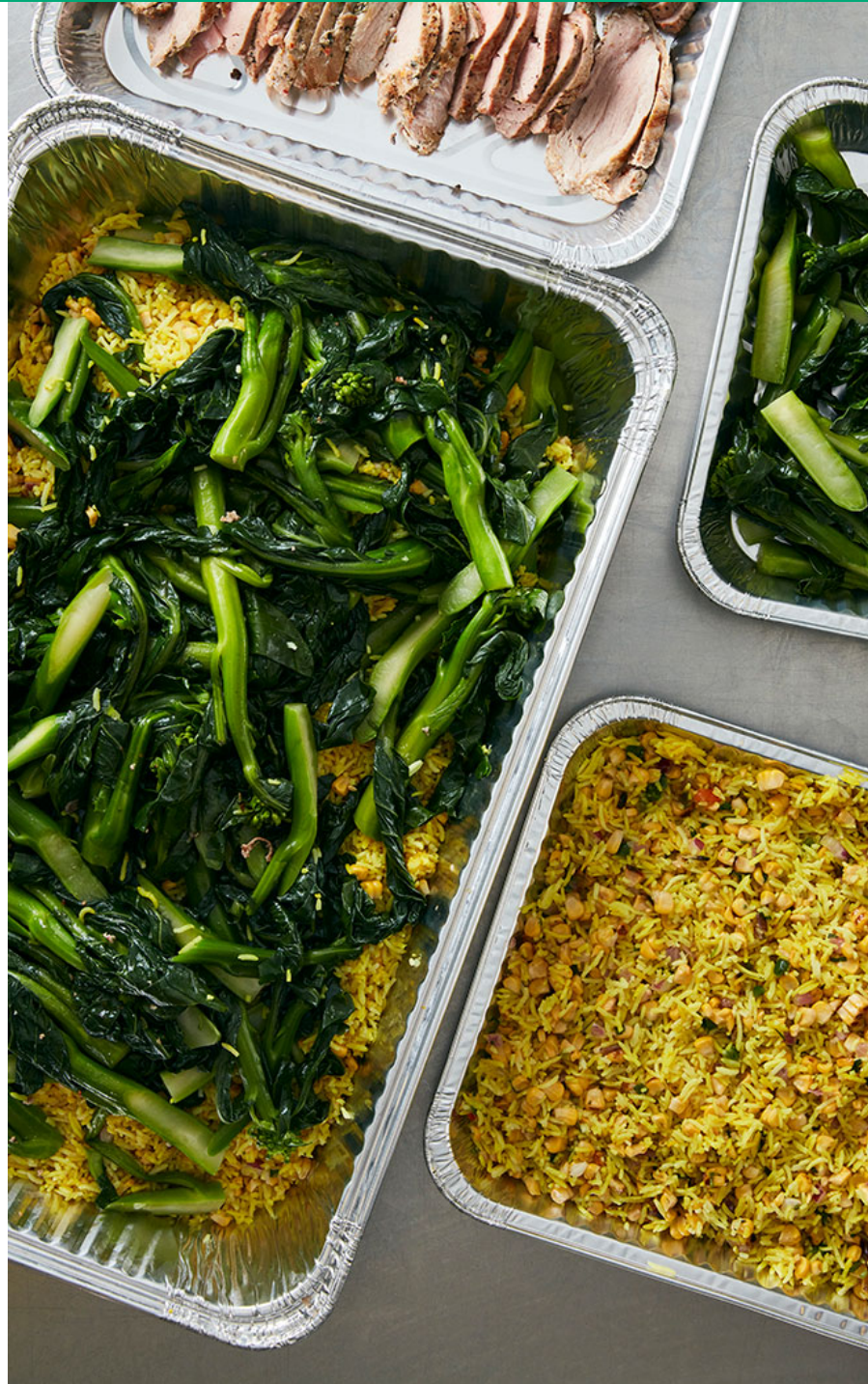
## **NEW SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERS + EXCESS FOOD DONORS**

**New paid partnerships: Rhubarb Catering, Chelsea Market (Jamestown Properties), and Citizens Food Hall at Manhattan West (Brookfield Properties) all began pick-ups of excess food.**

**WHOLE FOODS increased its donation commitment to 55,000+ lbs. Rethink welcomed a new refrigerated van donated by WF and partnered with a new store.**

**50/50, an innovative half-plant, half-meat based protein company continued to provide donations to Rethink's commissary kitchen.**

**FRAICHE, increased donations from Q4 2022, providing direct support to One Love Community Fridges.**



*\*Prepared meals from Rethink Food's sustainable commissary kitchen, created from donated and excess food.*



# THE RETHINK FOOD SUSTAINABLE COMMISSARY KITCHEN

94,945 Q1 meals

12 CBOS  
in Brooklyn,  
Manhattan, Queens

Every week, Rethink Food takes in thousands of pounds of donated excess food and transforms it into fresh meals with creative preparation + cooking accomplished by a full team of highly skilled culinary professionals. The commissary has large-scale food service capability and menu that evolves daily. The team works with diligence and a guest-service approach to providing for its CBOs with an

enormous required daily production target, finding creative and practical solutions with a stream of “mystery” inventory that comes in twice a day. From donation pick-up to bagging and tagging, each team member and station in the kitchen works in lockstep.





# COMMISSARY TOURS + VOLUNTEERS

After reopening the space to volunteers and tours + tastings in 2022, the commissary team continues to guide visitors through a day of transforming excess food into meals, centered on the needs of the people who bring our communities to life.



## LENDING A HAND AT THE COMMISSARY

The commissary kitchen team welcomed volunteer groups from BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES, COOKUNITY, PRECISE, and TACOMBI Nolita at the start of 2023. Want to volunteer?

[Reach out HERE.](#)

*Above: BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES volunteer day, February 2023.*

## CULINARY SKILL + SUSTAINABILITY

Thank you to the TACOMBI Spring tour + tastings at the commissary welcomed groups from CONEDISON, EARTH BRANDS, ORION INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL, NIMBUS, + PHOOD SOLUTIONS. Rethink also completed a commissary tour with Council Member JULIE MENIN as well as family + individual tours.

[Book a TOUR + TASTING.](#)

*Above: Tasting for a family tour, March 2023*

## SHARING WITH OUR PARTNERS

Our friends at COOKUNITY volunteered and completed a tour + tasting the same day. Rethink shared its approach in creating wholesome, satisfying dishes specially crafted for delivery to community organizations—on the order of ~8000 meals per week.

*Above: Tour + tasting, volunteer day with COOKUNITY (March 2023)*



# A MORE SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE FUTURE

With an inflationary economy, food price increases, and a looming hunger cliff, funding support is crucial to ensure nutritious, dignified access to food for all. In cities like New York, challenges are magnified by inflation, rising food prices, and the ending of pandemic-era assistance, leaving social service organizations with fewer resources to help. Too many will have to face choosing between paying for food and other necessities.

Beginning in Q1, Rethink has provided 55,000+ nutritious, culturally celebrated meals per week. Yet we'd like to go further, continuing to scale our model and double the number of meals we provide in 2024, with the goal of serving 3M meals by 2025, and 10M meals in the next five years.



**The number of meals we provide is directly related to the support we receive.  
Please join us in this urgent cause.**

**[MAKE A  
CORPORATE GIFT](#)**

**[FUND MEALS  
BY DONATING](#)**