

Two Dubai mums want to change the way we think about what is rubbish with recycling system that turns food waste into fertiliser

With lavish buffets held at different venues nightly and all-you-can eat brunch tables laden with tempting treats every weekend, much food goes to waste.

During the Holy month of Ramadan, the issue is magnified as we sit down with friends, family and colleagues to sumptuous, social iftars with an abundance of delicious, traditional dishes on the menu.

1. Jo Marengo (L) and Janine Sheard are optimistic about environmental views in the UAE

While you may not always be able to regulate the amount put on your plate when dining out, it may now be easier to reduce waste at home and in the workplace.

One environmentally-minded Dubai business is hoping to change the way we think about food - and waste - in

the build-up to Ramadan. Jo Marengo and Janine Sheard of Bokashi Dubai, both busy mums, are determined to make a difference this year and are urging businesses and individuals to make an eco promise to recycle 60kg of food waste before the end of August.

Jo explains: "Every year, numerous articles lament the

increase in food waste during Ramadan. We are very

aware of this problem and decided that this year we

would make a real effort to do something to change this.

"By just having bins to segregate waste, already 30 per cent more of daily waste is recyclable." Bokashi is the Japanese word for 'fermented organic matter' and the process, which uses bins, bran and

beneficial bacteria, is an environmentally-friendly way of turning unwanted food from the kitchen into rich organic compost and liquid plant food.

Anyone who takes up Jo and Janine's challenge this year will be rewarded for their green efforts with a free bag of the bran used in the system. Whether you have the kit or not, you can still do your bit.

Jo says: "Even if people don't have the system in their homes they could perhaps start serving themselves with portions of food that they will actually be able to consume, instead of overloading their plates. "That would make a difference - anyone can join the pledge."

The Bokashi babes are not alone - their environmental

efforts have already taken root and several big names

have made the switch to a successful composting system

using the bins.

While the finger is often pointed at restaurants over food waste, its heartening to hear that the Al Qasr Hotel already recycles more than 5.5 tonnes per

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month and boasts a bank of 30 bins and a special area to bury the waste.

Dubai English Speaking College uses three bins, with the treated waste helping to grow salad in a veggie garden with the produce then being used in the canteen. Several other schools are in on the act and Jo believes things are changing for the better in the UAE.

She says: "Slowly but surely the wheel is turning - we

have both lived here for 17 years and have noticed a significant increase in awareness in the past five years.

"Many people are wanting to do the right thing and follow a more sustainable approach to living.

"There are more recycling bins and centres, people are

reusing shopping bags, purchasing locally grown produce and there are now a good number of organic farms - the list goes on."

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BIN IT TO WIN IT

>> Bokashi is a natural process in which the soil is

regenerated.

>> **If sandy soil is fed properly, less water is required for the plants - noticeable when using the Bokashi bran.**

>> The system is very simple, anyone can do it, just place your leftovers in a bin and add the bran.

>> **It is a natural drain cleaner - by introducing good microbes into drains, natural balance is restored and odours disappear.**

>> Initial costs are low and recouped on not having to

buy fertilisers or compost.

Visit www.bokashidubai.com