

BEST PRACTICE ROCA RECICLA BY EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA

Submitted by: Dom Spain

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline with rocky cliffs and turquoise water. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the right side of the image. In the center, a white circle contains the text 'CIRCULAR ALBANIA TOURISM'.

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ALBANIA
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INTRODUCTION



SECTION 1: BASIC INFORMATION

- Title of the Best Practice: Roca Recicla by El Cellar de Can Roca
- Website of the Practice: <https://rocarecicla.com/>; <https://shop.cellercanroca.com/es/22-roca-recicla>
- Social Media links: <https://www.instagram.com/cellercanroca>
- Location: Can Sunyer, 48 17007 (Girona, Spain).

SECTION 2: PRACTICE OVERVIEW

• Short Description of the Practice:

Roca Recicla is an upcycling initiative by El Cellar de Can Roca, a world-renowned restaurant in Girona, Spain, famous for its creative, innovative cuisine. The initiative was launched by the Roca brothers (owners) in 2015, and its main objectives are to promote waste reduction through creative reuse and minimise the waste generated by the restaurant's activities. It aims to upcycle materials, transforming empty bottles into beautifully designed objects, striving to achieve a zero-waste restaurant.

The upcycling process for empty glass bottles takes place in a dedicated workshop in La Masia (I+R), the Roca brothers' innovation and creativity centre. This is done with the collaboration of craftswoman Elena Portillo, who directs the glass transformation. Products like glasses, trays, and dishes made from recycled glass are then sold through their online shop. More recently, the Roca brothers participated in the filming of the documentary 'Sembrando el futuro', crafting unique menus from extinct or marginalised foods to raise awareness and actively protect biodiversity.

• Implementation Period: 2015 - ongoing

• Status:

☐ Planned ☐ Pilot phase ☐ Fully implemented ☒ Ongoing and evolving

• Thematic Areas Addressed:

☒ Farm to Fork / Sustainable Food Systems

☒ Waste Management

☐ Resource Efficiency

☐ Other: _____

• Describe how the practice aligns with the selected Thematic Areas:

Roca Recicla deeply aligns with the Thematic Area Waste Management by creating a closed-loop system for residues. This initiative minimises waste while promoting the brand through the sale of eco-conscious products in their online shop.

Regarding Sustainable Food Systems, Roca Recicla contributes by significantly reducing the packaging waste generated by the restaurant's operations, which is a key component of food distribution. Project RR201, designed by Andreu Carulla, upcycles expanded polystyrene food transportation boxes into durable stools. El Cellar de Can Roca's broader commitment to sustainability extends beyond upcycling. Most recently, the Roca brothers championed biodiversity, collaborating with local sustainable producers and consciously using diverse, local crops, as highlighted in projects like 'Sembrando el futuro'.





- **Explain how this activity fits within the tourism sector:**

Roca Recicla's upcycling projects, like RR201, directly integrate sustainability into the tourism experience by creating an eco-conscious environment within El Celler de Can Roca. Guests interact with recycled items, becoming part of the restaurant's zero-waste ethos.

Similarly, 'Sembrando el futuro' highlights biodiversity loss through unique menus featuring endangered local crops, fostering an appreciation for local, sustainable produce. Both initiatives attract discerning tourists seeking authentic, ethical culinary journeys that support ecological preservation and responsible consumption. As a world-renowned restaurant, El Celler de Can Roca sets a leading example, inspiring other establishments and enriching the overall sustainable tourism sector.

- **What learning value for VET training, curriculum development or capacity-building of professionals does the practice offer?:**

For VET training, students can learn vital sustainability skills. In culinary arts, they can design creative menu plans that incorporate endangered local crops (e.g. Albanian mountain tea), as exemplified by El Celler de Can Roca's 'Sembrando el futuro' project. This fosters an appreciation for local, sustainable produce and biodiversity. In hospitality, students can learn upcycling practices by partnering with recycling companies like Green Recycling (Tirane) or Recycling Albania (Kruje), aligning with circular economy principles of reducing and reusing waste. These activities teach practical, eco-conscious operational skills.

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES AND ALIGNMENT WITH CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

- **What challenges or barriers were addressed?**

- ☒ Waste management and disposal
- ☐ Energy/resource use
- ☐ Infrastructure limitations
- ☒ Seasonality
- ☐ Skills and capacity gaps
- ☒ Low awareness of CE
- ☐ Behavioural resistance
- ☐ Financial or funding constraints
- ☐ Other: _____

- **How were these challenges overcome?**

El Celler de Can Roca addresses waste management and disposal through Roca Recicla, directly tackling the significant waste generated by the hospitality sector. The 'Sembrando el futuro' project combats challenges related to seasonality and crop diversity loss by reintroducing endangered local crops (e.g., black turnip, Mora potato) into their menus, ensuring the use of diverse, sustainable produce. These initiatives from a world-renowned restaurant actively combat low awareness of the circular economy by setting a tangible example of creative reuse and sustainable practices, promoting broader adoption.

- **Which circular economy strategies does this practice address?**

- ☒ Waste reduction / reuse / recycling
- ☐ Renewable energy / energy efficiency
- ☐ Water conservation
- ☒ Circular product / service design
- ☒ Sustainable food systems / short food chains
- ☐ Eco-certifications or green standards
- ☐ Repair, refurbishment, or reuse of infrastructure / furnishings
- ☐ Digital tools for circularity or sustainability





- **Describe why this practice can be considered as a 'best practice' and how it contributes to one or more circular economy principles:**

El Celler de Can Roca's initiatives, Roca Recicla and 'Sembrando el futuro', represent best practices due to their holistic commitment to sustainability and global influence as a two-time world's best restaurant. Roca Recicla directly contributes to "eliminate waste and pollution" and "circulate products and materials at their highest value". It upcycles the restaurant's significant glass packaging waste – a concern with 18.8% of EU packaging waste being glass – into new tableware like glasses and trays. Project RR201 further tackles hard-to-recycle expanded polystyrene by transforming it into durable stools. Concurrently, 'Sembrando el futuro' embodies "regenerate nature". This project explores alarming crop diversity loss and champions endangered local produce (e.g., black turnip, Mora potato), integrating them into unique menus to promote biodiversity and sustainable food systems. Together, these practices serve as a powerful model for the tourism sector to adopt circular economy principles and reduce environmental impact.

- **Describe why this practice can be considered as innovative. What new, creative or underused approach brings added value to circular tourism development?**

El Celler de Can Roca's initiatives are innovative through their design-driven approaches to sustainability. Roca Recicla, through zero-waste upcycling, effectively moves beyond simple recycling by creating a visible closed-loop system. 'Sembrando el futuro' addresses biodiversity loss by featuring endangered local crops in unique menus and a documentary, turning gastronomy into a powerful tool for environmental awareness. These practices offer added value to circular tourism by providing tangible, inspiring examples of sustainable operations, educating guests, and promoting conscious consumption within the sector.

SECTION 4: COLLABORATION

- **Describe any collaboration that were involved in the development of this practice? this practice involve local authorities or other groups?**

Roca Recicla collaborates with craftswoman Elena Portillo and involves people at risk of labour exclusion in the upcycling process. 'Sembrando el futuro' is a joint project with BBVA, also involving international experts and organisations like FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), Crop Trust, Slow Food, and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). Additionally, it collaborates with various seed banks (e.g., BGHZ-CITA, Svalbard Global Seed Vault) and seed guardian networks.

SECTION 5: RESULTS AND REPLICABILITY

- **What measurable results or outcomes were achieved?**

For Roca Recicla, El Celler de Can Roca opens 22,500 wine bottles annually, which are then intended for upcycling into new tableware. Each RR201 stool is created from six expanded polystyrene food transportation boxes, directly diverting this difficult-to-recycle material. Regarding 'Sembrando el futuro', the documentary has achieved 113,000 views on YouTube to this day. These efforts demonstrate measurable outcomes in waste reduction and public awareness.

- **Why is this practice relevant to the Albanian tourism context?**

El Celler de Can Roca's initiatives offer significant relevance for Albanian tourism. Roca Recicla provides a tangible model for reducing waste and pollution by upcycling materials like glass bottles, which helps tackle the common issue of packaging waste in hospitality. This promotes a cleaner, more sustainable image for tourist destinations. Concurrently, 'Sembrando el futuro' encourages the preservation and integration of endangered local crops into culinary offerings, fostering biodiversity and enriching Albania's unique food tourism experiences. Both practices set a high standard for sustainable development within the sector.





- **What is the practice's potential for further expansion? How can it be applied or adapted to other Albanian tourism destinations or businesses?**

El Celler de Can Roca's initiatives offer significant expansion potential in Albania. Roca Recicla can be applied by Albanian hospitality businesses (restaurants, hotels) through partnerships with local recycling companies, such as Green Recycling (Tirane) or Recycling Albania (Kruje). This allows them to upcycle waste materials like glass bottles into new tableware or decorative items, reducing landfill waste and creating unique products. 'Sembrando el futuro' can be adapted by culinary arts VET programs and restaurants to design menus incorporating endangered local crops (e.g., Albanian mountain tea), thereby preserving biodiversity and offering unique, sustainable gastronomic experiences to tourists. Both practices foster vital sustainability skills and circular tourism development. The practice can serve as inspiration also to find other creative ways of upcycling materials that can be used in the tourism context.

- **What advice would you give others looking to implement a similar initiative?**

To implement a similar initiative, prioritise creative reuse and upcycling for waste reduction, transforming "useless" items like glass bottles into new products. Integrate sustainability directly into your operations, perhaps through a dedicated innovation space. For culinary experiences, embrace biodiversity by researching and incorporating endangered local crops into menus. Collaborate with artisans, social groups, and experts to develop solutions and leverage your platform to raise awareness, inspiring others in the sector.

SECTION 6: PICTURES

- **Pictures of the practice:**





Project Partners



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