

PROFILES



A Countertop Food Recycler Is Making Composting Easier

by Sheri Radford / Nov 19, 2021

With their Tero machine, Valérie Laliberté and Elizabeth Coulombe aim to make composting simpler—and less stinky

Anyone who’s ever left a compost bucket on the counter on a hot day knows how it gets smelly and attracts insects, not to mention the family dog. And anyone who’s ever had a paper bag full of food waste burst open unexpectedly has wondered if there’s a better way to compost.

Valérie Laliberté (pictured left) and Elizabeth Coulombe (pictured right) met while studying product design at Université Laval in Quebec City. The assignment for their graduation project was to create a product that solves a problem. Motivated by the lack of municipal composting in their city, they teamed up to tackle the problem of consumer food waste. The end result is [Tero](#).



Manufactured in Quebec, this food recycler removes the odour and mess from countertop composting. Within three to eight hours, the machine quietly turns four litres of everyday kitchen waste—including scrap veggies, eggs, legumes, cheese, chicken bones, tea leaves and coffee grounds—into nutrient-rich fertilizer. It does this by heating and grinding the scraps, reducing the overall volume by 90 percent.

This little laundry strip helps keep 700,000 plastic jugs out of the landfill

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With its sleek design and small footprint, Tero fits easily into any kitchen. Plus, the inner bucket and blades are all dishwasher-friendly.

“Our vision is to give every environmentally conscious citizen the power to make an impact on the planet by simplifying their daily kitchen routine and transforming their food leftovers into natural fertilizer,” says Coulombe.

The duo didn’t realize just how many people would share their desire to make composting less of a hassle. When they launched a crowdfunding campaign in 2019, their goal was to raise \$70,000. Instead, they hit \$1.75 million in just 30 days.

According to a survey conducted for Tero, 45 percent of Canadian households do not compost. Respondents cited challenges such as the fear of attracting bugs and animals, a lack of kitchen space, a dislike of the smell, a lack of knowledge about what’s required and a belief that composting requires too much time. But 87 percent of respondents also admitted feeling guilty whenever they toss food waste into the garbage can.

“When food gets thrown away, it ends up in landfills and creates methane, a greenhouse gas much more potent than carbon dioxide,” says Coulombe.



Tero addresses all of the common complaints about composting. The unit’s airtight lid keeps out bugs and curious household pets, while the anti-odour filtration system uses activated charcoal to stop smells from escaping. The small, elongated shape means Tero requires minimal counter space. And it’s as simple to use as pressing a button, since the unit determines the length of the processing cycle based on the amount and type of food. Very few foods can’t go in the unit, such as chewing gum, cooking oil, beef and pork bones, and hard pits.

For now, Tero is a small Canadian company. But the “soil sisters” plan to expand to many more homes, offices and businesses in the future. Coulombe says, “When people make Tero part of their kitchens, they’re taking ownership of their role in accelerating the shift to an eco-friendly future.”

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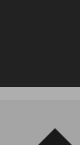
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