



# Is This the Most Underrated Apartment Amenity in NYC?



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(Image credit: [Elaine Musiwa](#) / [Apartment Therapy](#))

You've seen those fancy gizmos in suburban sinks—those garbage disposals that suck down each and every coffee ground or lettuce leaf you don't need, making it next to unnecessary to make countless runs to your building's refuse bin. But despite all the modern luxuries of living in New York City, garbage disposals are actually pretty rare.

Of the almost 11,000 rentals available in Manhattan listed on StreetEasy right now, only 56 include 'garbage disposal' in their description and, of the almost 7,500 apartments for sale, only 144 mentioned one, reports Maggie Fanney, an agent at [Triplemint Real Estate](#) in New York City.

"You'll see quotes in listings such as 'and even a garbage disposal' when describing an apartment's modern amenities," she says. "This rarity makes it a prized amenity—which is funny considering the fact many people moving to New York City from other places are surprised to learn that a disposal is seen as a luxury."

Turns out, the dearth of garbage disposals is caused, in part, by a [1970s ban](#) that rendered them illegal over concern that the city's older pipes couldn't handle the churned-up trash.

After decades with the ban, the city gave free garbage disposals to 200 New Yorkers in the early 90s to test how it would affect the sewers, says a 2013 "New York Times" [article](#). Since nothing major happened, they eventually overturned the ban in 1997.

But over the past 21 years of legality, the ubiquitous suburban amenity really hasn't made a comeback in NYC. And some co-ops still forbid them, since they do require some basic maintenance. "I think the main issue is that most people don't know how to do light servicing of them on their own," says Joshua D. Arcus, president of [The Siderow Organization](#), a real estate company in New York City.

Another (probably more common) reason? A mixture of fear and misinformation. The "New York Times" article states that the plumbers, building managers, and real estate lawyers in article were "hard pressed" to come up with any instances of when a disposal wreaked havoc on the plumbing system.

Still, the rumor is pretty pervasive. Even when asked about why disposals are so rare, Arcus guessed that their relative scarcity was related to potential damage to the pipe and drainage systems.

Other people might stray away from installing a unit because of environmental concerns. Though garbage disposals aren't as environmentally-friendly as composters (the best option), they're **no more or less damaging** than throwing your scraps in the trash. "It seems to be a far more efficient way to dispose of food," says Jason Bauer, a licensed real estate salesperson at **DJK Residential** in New York City, who has a unit in his Upper East Side apartment. "When leftover food is placed in trash bags, that allows for wasted plastic; then when it's placed in trash bins, that allows for foul smells to attract mice / rats; then when it's moved in dump trucks, that allows for wasted fuel; and finally, when it's compiled into trash mounds, the leftover food sits for a long time until its broken down."