

Ways to Reduce Food Waste

About 40 percent of the United States food supply goes uneaten. Discarded food in homes and food-service accounts for 60 percent of this total food loss and most is unavoidable. The amount of food waste is among the highest globally. Preventing food waste saves money and resources.

Feeding the world will become more difficult in the future as 9 billion people are expected on the planet by 2050, compared to the current 7 billion people now. Developing habits to save more of the food we already have will put less strain on our resources.

Here are 14 ways you can help reduce the amount of food wasted.

- ◆ Shop the refrigerator before going to the store. Use food at home before buying more. Designate one meal weekly as a “use-it-up” meal.
- ◆ Move older food products to the front of the refrigerator, cupboards and freezer and push the just purchased ones to the back. This makes it more likely foods will be consumed before they go bad.
- ◆ Keep your refrigerator at 40 degrees or below to prolong the life of foods. Foods frozen at 9degrees or lower will remain safe indefinitely but the quality will go down over time.
- ◆ Freeze or can surplus fresh produce using safe, up-to-date food preservation methods. Visit the Center for Home Food Preservation website (<http://nchfp.uga.edu>) for freezing and canning instructions.
- ◆ Take restaurant leftovers home and refrigerate within two hours of being served. Eat within three to four days or freeze. Ask for a take home container at the beginning of the meal if portions look especially large. Remove take home food from your plate at the beginning of the meal so leftovers are as appetizing as the original meal rather than the picked over remains. Or choose a smaller size and/or split a dish with a dining companion.
- ◆ Dish up reasonable amounts of food at a buffet and go back for more if still hungry.
- ◆ Compost food scraps for use in the garden.
- ◆ Check product dates on foods. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service defines them as:
 - A. A “Sell-By” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
 - B. A “Best if Used By or Before” date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
 - C. “Use-By” date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product. Do not buy or use baby formula after its “use-by” date.
- ◆ Look for recipes on websites that can be searched for by ingredients to use up food at home. USDAs “What’s Cooking: USDA Mixing Bowl website has several helpful tools and recipes.
- ◆ 10. Buy misshapen fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets and elsewhere. They taste just as good and are just as nutritious as those shaped perfect, but are more likely to be thrown away.
- ◆ Rather than buy a food for use in only one recipe, check if there might be a suitable substitute already in the home.
- ◆ Check the garbage can. If the same foods are constantly being thrown away: Eat them sooner, buy less of them, incorporate them into more recipes or freeze them.
- ◆ Donate safe, nutrition food to food banks, food pantries and food rescue programs.
- ◆ If you have several foods that might go to waste at the same time, try adding them to adaptable recipes such as soups, pasta and casseroles.

Source: University of Nebraska Extension in Lincoln County and USDA/FSIS

