



REDUCING FOOD WASTE: TIPS TO SAVE YOU MONEY

Food waste makes up over 20 percent* of our trash. This wasted food is just part of the story. All of the resources – land, water, energy, labor, manufacturing, packaging, transportation – that went into growing the food and getting it to the table are also wasted – along with your money.

- A family of four in the U.S. throws out about \$1,300 to \$2,200 worth of uneaten food each year on average*
- Worldwide, the amount of land used to grow food that is never eaten is larger than Canada and India combined*
- 25 percent of all fresh water use in the U.S. goes to growing food that is never eaten*

The Solution?

It's simple – buy less! You'll save money and help the planet.

Most people don't realize how much food they throw away – from leftovers to uneaten fruits and vegetables – it all adds up.



Think Before You Buy

Once a week, open your refrigerator, look in your cabinets, and note what food you have:

- If it's been in there for a while, make a plan to use it up
- If you realize that you're unlikely to use unopened goods, donate them to your local food pantry before the labeled date

Take a few minutes to think about what meals you want to eat that week:

- What food do you already have that you can use? What do you need to buy?
- Consider what plans you have. For example, if you know you'll be going to a restaurant one night and will have leftovers, you won't need as much food at home.

Make a list before going to the store so you:

- Don't buy more than you need – this will save you money
- Don't forget to get any ingredients that you'll need to make something with what you already have

Helpful Storage Hints

When you come home from shopping, put new products on the shelf or in the drawer behind/under the same sort of items that are already there so the older ones move to the front/top and get eaten first.

Put leftovers and other items in your refrigerator in clear containers so you can see what they hold. Use a marker to label and date bags and other containers in your freezer so you know what's inside.



Store Food So It Lasts

A good way to extend the life of food is to freeze it. For best results, put your item in an airtight container or inside two layers of freezer bags. Almost anything can be frozen: meat, milk, cheese, bread and other baked goods, unused pasta sauce, soups, and much more. Bananas too mushy? Freeze them and then use them to make banana bread later.



Date Labels – Confused?

Food manufacturers and stores use a variety of dates on their products. **The dates are not related to food safety**, but many people think they are and throw out edible food.

“Best before”, “use by”, “best by”, “best if used by”, “enjoy by”, and similar dates have no standard definition and are suggestions related to quality. The food is still safe to eat after the date and probably still at its best quality. For the most part, you can trust your senses to know when food has gone bad. For example, milk, yogurt, juice, sauces, and many other items are well suited to the “look” and “smell” tests.

“Sell by” dates are meant for the store staff so that they can manage inventory. If the food is sold by that date, it will still have top-quality shelf life for some time afterward. For example, eggs are still good for three weeks or more after the date on the carton.

To reduce the consumer confusion surrounding date labels that leads to wasted food, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued updated information on food product labeling to encourage manufacturers and retailers to label using only a “Best if Used By” date.

*Source References:

U.S. EPA, www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics

Natural Resources Defense Council Issue Paper, www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/sustainability_pathways/docs/Factsheet_FOOD-WASTAGE.pdf

Hall KD, Guo J, Dore M, Chow CC, PLoS ONE 4(11): e7940. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0007940>

More Information:

- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Save the Food: www.savethefood.com
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Reducing Wasted Food at Home: www.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-home

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