

7 tips to reduce food waste



If you regularly buy groceries for your family, you know how hard it can be to buy just the right amount. Either you're running to the grocery store last-minute for a forgotten ingredient, or perhaps more often, you're bemoaning wasted food. Unfortunately, food waste at home is only one component of the food lost regularly in the U.S.

Between 30% and 40% of food in the U.S. is thrown out or wasted each year, according to the Department of Agriculture. That equals about 133 billion pounds and \$161 billion.

Food loss occurs at every step in the food supply chain from production to consumption. Some examples are spoilage during storage and transport, or exposure to insects and rodents, bacteria or mold. Sorting out blemished or imperfect produce results in loss, as does consumers buying more than they need or can consume. Not only is edible food wasted, but all the energy, fertilizer and land use that went into producing that food is wasted as well. Fortunately, you can do your part to help.

Here are 7 ways you can reduce food waste in your own kitchen:

1. Take inventory

Take stock of your pantry, refrigerator and freezer before going to the store to prevent overbuying. If something will expire soon, buy the rest of the ingredients to incorporate it into a recipe.

2. Create a meal plan

Planning at least a few meals for each week is a great way to ensure you have healthy meals. Coordinate your meals so you aren't using completely different ingredients for every recipe. For example, plan to eat broccoli as a side one night and in a stir-fry the next.

3. Save and eat leftovers safely



If you don't think you will be able to eat your leftovers within three days, store them in the freezer and label them. Keep your freezer organized so food doesn't get lost and then thrown out due to freezer burn.

4. Use leftovers creatively

Find ways to use rather than toss food that isn't fresh. Vegetable scraps and peels can be made into soup stock. Apples or blueberries that are soft work perfectly cooked in oatmeal. You can even use stale bread to make croutons or an egg strata. Slightly wilted vegetables are great for stir-fries.

5. Store food appropriately

Store greens with a paper towel in a plastic container in the crisper drawer, tomatoes and bananas on the counter, potatoes and onions in a cool, dark place and fresh herbs in a glass of water. Have some frozen fruits and vegetables on hand in case you eat all your fresh produce before your next grocery day.

6. Buy “ugly” foods

Nothing’s perfect, including in the plant world. Purchasing misshaped or oddly shaped fruits or vegetables has never been easier. Some companies will deliver “ugly” foods to you with a monthly subscription. You also can start a relationship with a local farmer through a community-supported agriculture or farmers market to get your hands on some imperfect produce.

7. Compost

Even vegetable peels don’t have to go to waste. Backyard composting is a great way to keep food waste out of the landfill and provide nutrition for your garden. You also can find small composting containers that you can keep in your home.