

Food Waste Prevention

A guide for community educators to support food resource management education

Why does food waste prevention matter?



On average, households could save about \$370 per person annually. Imagine what a family of four could do with an extra \$1,500 each year.

Up to 40% of food (133 billion pounds worth \$161 billion) in the U.S. is wasted, while 8.7 million households struggle to get enough food to feed their children. Reducing food waste could positively impact food security, the environment, and climate change. When food is wasted, so too is the land, water, labor, energy, and other inputs. In the U.S. food is the single largest category of material placed in municipal landfills that leads to greenhouse gas emissions.

When food is saved, so is our budget and the environment for future generations, also setting an example for our children.

Watch this [video](#) for a visual presentation of these food waste facts.

How to reduce food waste?

Step 1. Shop Wisely

- **Shop with a list.** Check your fridge and cupboards first to avoid buying food you already have.
- **Buy less fresh food at a time.** Include quantities on your shopping list to avoid overbuying. For fresh items, note how many meals you'll make with each. For example: 1 pound of chicken and salad greens - enough for two dinners.

- **Be mindful about deals.** Be cautious about sales requiring bulk purchases. Split large packages with friends and neighbors to reduce food cost and waste.
- **Choose loose fruit and vegetables over pre-packaged produce** to better control the quantity you need and to ensure fresher ingredients.
- When possible, **look for [produce that is in season in your area](#)**. Local, seasonal produce often tastes better and lasts longer because it is fresher.

Step 2: Store Wisely

- Use the [Fridge Organization Guide](#) to help **maximize the freshness of your food and beverages**.
- **Control ripening of produce.** Keep apples, bananas, citrus, and tomatoes away from other produce – they will ripen other produce faster.
- Check out the cold [food storage chart](#) to **learn how long to store food and leftovers** in the refrigerator and freezer.
- **Befriend your freezer.** Lots of fruits, vegetables, and meats [freeze well](#) and freezing can extend their lives from days to months.
- Consider **buying canned and dried fruits and vegetables**, which have a long storage life.
- **Understand the date label on the package.** Except for infant formula, most unopened products are still safe to eat if [the date on the package](#) has already passed. Still unsure? Use the [FoodKeeper App](#) to help you decide.

Step 3. Consume Wisely

- **Cook just enough.** Check the portion/serving size of the recipe and make just enough for your family or freeze leftovers.
- **Cook the older food first.** You can label your food with the purchase and date opened as a reminder.
- **Use the leftovers.** Use your leftovers to make new meals. Casseroles, stir-fries, frittatas, soups, and smoothies are great ways to use leftovers.

Clickable Resource List

1. FDA: Food Loss and Waste (animated video)
<https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/food-waste-animations>
2. USDA: Food Loss and Waste
<https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/consumers>
3. Buy In-Season Fruits & Vegetables to Save Money
<https://ucsdcommunityhealth.org/work/eat-ca/>
4. Fridge Organization Guide
https://www.addisoncountyrecycles.org/fileadmin/files/Food_Scraps_Composting/Documents/Fridge-Organization-Guide.pdf
5. Cold Food Storage Chart
<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts>
6. USDA: Freezing and Food Safety
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/freezing-and-food-safety>
7. University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Freezing
<https://food.unl.edu/freezing>
8. FDA: Food Product Date Labels
<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/confused-date-labels-packaged-foods>
9. USDA: Food Keeper App
<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

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March, 2021