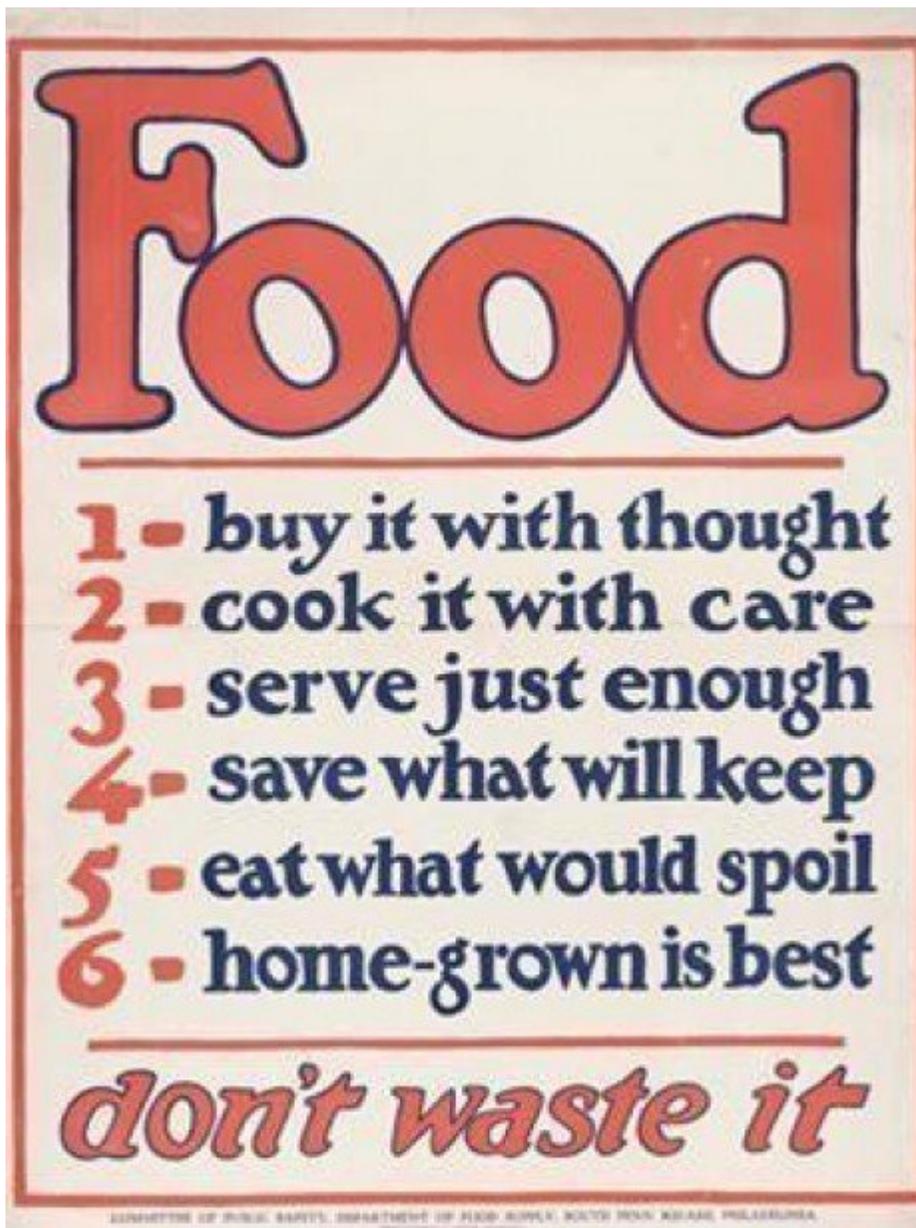




Reduce Your Food Waste

If you find yourself throwing out food that you think isn't safe to eat, you may be throwing money away.

 ARTICLES | UPDATED: FEBRUARY 29, 2016



Many of us check the date on the package and then if it has passed, we toss it! But actually the date doesn't always mean that it's not safe to eat or drink, it may be just a quality issue. The "use by" date on infant formula is an exception. The date on infant formula is a safety, not a quality, issue. Do not buy or use baby formula after its "use by" date. All other food products are a quality, not a safety issue.

A "use by" date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The manufacturer determines the date for best quality. According to USDA, if the "best buy" date or "sell

by" date, expires during home storage, the product should be safe and of good

quality if handled properly. That's where following good food safety handling techniques is important.

Here are some food safety tips:

- If a food item is perishable, take the food home immediately after purchase and refrigerate promptly.
- Wash hands when handling foods. We are carriers of bacteria and can make others sick if we don't wash our hands, especially if the food item isn't cooked.
- Defrost foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Food can become contaminated and bacteria can grow.
- Use clean cutting boards, countertops and cooking utensils to ensure that ready to eat foods don't become contaminated with raw meats or eggs.
- Refrigerate leftover foods promptly. As soon as you finish a meal, put leftovers in the refrigerator. Make sure that the temperature in your refrigerator is 41°F or colder. Put a piece of tape on the container and write the date on the tape. It is best to use refrigerated leftovers within 4 days. If you won't be eating your leftovers in that time, place them in the freezer.
- For best quality, store your foods for recommended times. Learn storage times for uncooked foods. Refrigerate poultry, ground meats and sausage for 1 to 2 days. Freeze if you haven't used them. Refrigerate beef, pork, veal and lamb, for 3 to 5 days. Again, freeze if not cooked. Store cured ham (cooked before heating) for 5 to 7 days and eggs 3 to 5 weeks.

For a complete storage chart, visit the [USDA website](#). Source: USDA.gov