Waste Less Food
Save money. Feed people. Protect the environment.

You waste more than your money.

1 pound of beef = 1,848 gallons of water
1 pound of cheese = 668 gallons of water
1 pound of avocados = 262 gallons of water
1 pound of bread = 212 gallons of water
1 pound of strawberries = 46 gallons of water
1 pound of broccoli = 38 gallons of water

Source: Grist

Waste less food by making small shifts in shopping, preparing, storing, and serving food.
Impacts of wasting food

Financial:
- The average American household wastes about 25 percent of the food they buy. Yet most people don’t think they toss that much.
- The average family throws out $130 worth of food every month.
- In the United States, $165 billion annually is wasted on groceries that don’t get eaten, while another $750 million is spent landfilling the wasted food.

Social:
- One in six Americans lacks a secure supply of food.
- Reducing food loss in this country by just 15 percent could help feed more than 25 million Americans every year.
- The United Nations recently published a report stressing that reduction of food waste could be a major player in worldwide efforts to feed a growing world population.

Environmental:
- Just one pound of beef requires 1,848 gallons of water and 16 pounds of grain to produce. When we waste food, we also waste the resources it took to produce that food.
- Organic matter (including food waste) in landfills accounts for 16 percent of methane emissions in the United States.
- Eighty percent of the freshwater used in the United States goes toward getting food to our tables.

Serve Smart: Portions matter

Serve less and go back for seconds if more is needed. Try serving on smaller dishes, which reduces the amount of food that gets thrown out. It also helps you to see how much your family really eats so you know how much to make next time.

PORTION AWARENESS

USE YOUR HAND TO ESTIMATE PORTION SIZES

THUMB = 2 TSF  
(2.5 kcal per peanut butter)

CUPPED HAND = 1/2 CUP  
(415 kcal per nuts)

FINGERTIP = 1 TSP  
(35 kcal per regular butter)

OPEN PALM = 3 OZ  
(1 portion of protein)

FIST = 1 CUP  
(200 kcal of rice)
Eat Smart: Use what you buy

• Be mindful of ingredients and leftovers you need to use up.
• Move food that needs to be used soon to the front of a shelf or designated “eat first” area.
• Keep a dry-erase board on the fridge to list what needs to be used up or to plan meals for the week.
• Plan an “eat the leftovers” night each week.
• Freeze until you are ready to use them:
  • Stale breads are great for grilled sandwiches, breadcrumbs, or croutons.
  • Vegetables or meats can be used for casseroles, frittatas, or soups.
  • Fruits are perfect for smoothies, pies, or oatmeal.
• Have the kids eat lunch leftovers before they dig into a new snack.

What you need to know about product dating

It is estimated that up to 20 percent of household food waste is caused by confusion about dates on product labels. This is because many consumers believe these dates are linked to food safety. Not so!

There is no uniform or universally accepted system used for food dating in that United States to indicate “expiration.” In fact, the only product dating that is federally regulated is for infant formula.

Types of dates*

• A “Sell-By” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
• A “Best if Used By (or Before)” date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or food safety date.
• A “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.
• “Closed or coded dates” are packing numbers for use by the manufacturer.

*Information from United States Department of Agriculture

Shop Smart

• Have a shopping list and stick to it. If you buy only what you know you will need, you will be more likely to use it before it goes bad.
• Shop your fridge, freezer, and cupboards first to avoid buying food you already have.
• Include quantities on your shopping list to avoid overbuying. For fresh items, note how many meals you’ll make with each. For example: salad greens—enough for two lunches.
• Buy fresh ingredients in smaller quantities more often, so you waste less and enjoy fresher ingredients.
• Beware of the buy one get one “deals.” It might mean you save money - but only if you can really eat what you buy.
• Don’t go grocery shopping when you are hungry to prevent impulse buying!

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Tell your favorite stores that wasting less food is important to you. Ask them what they are doing to help.

Does your store:
• Donate food it can’t sell to the local food bank?
• Discount foods that are near sell-by date or just pulled?
• Sell imperfect fruit and vegetables at a discount?
Store Smart: Keep it fresh
Learn which fruits and vegetables should be kept inside or outside the fridge and how to store them. For example, the higher humidity in crisper drawers benefits many vegetables by helping them last longer.

Inside the fridge:
• Apples, berries, and cherries
• Grapes, kiwi, lemons, and oranges
• Melons, nectarines, apricots, peaches, and plums (after ripening at room temperature)
• Avocados, pears, tomatoes (after ripening at room temperature)

Outside the fridge:
• Bananas, mangos, papayas, and pineapples (store in a cool place)
• Potatoes and onions (store in a cool, dark place)
• Winter squash (store at room temperature—once cut, store in fridge)
• Basil (store on counter in a glass of water like a cut flower with the stem in water)

Make food last:
• The length of time that food will last depends on how fresh it was when you bought it. Local, in-season produce will usually last much longer than produce that has been shipped a long way.
• Store bananas, apples, and tomatoes away from other fruit, and store fruits and vegetables in different bins in the fridge. Separate very ripe fruit from fruit that isn’t as ripe.
• Wash berries just before eating to prevent mold.
• Untie all bunches (herbs, greens, etc) to allow the produce to breathe.

Prep Smart: Prep now, eat later
By doing a little work ahead of time, you’ll prevent foods from going to waste and make it easier to grab snacks or whip up meals.

Prep your food ahead of time so it’s ready when you are.
• When you get home from the store, take the time to wash, dry, chop, dice, slice, and place your fresh food items in clear storage containers for snacks and easy cooking.
• You can also take some time to brown the ground beef, marinate the chicken, and boil the eggs you bought.

The freezer is your friend
• Recipes such as lasagna, spaghetti sauce, and casseroles can be prepared in advance and divided into containers. Eat some now and freeze the rest for future meals.
• When you are cooking up a batch of beans or rice for a recipe, double it and put half in the freezer to use for a future meal.
• Cook up packages of chicken breasts or ground beef and divide them into smaller containers so you can thaw and use later.
• Leftover greens or veggie tops can be blended and frozen for winter soups or kept whole and turned into broth (which you can also freeze).