

Tips for Reducing Food Waste



In March of each year, The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics celebrates National Nutrition Month® to promote leading a healthy lifestyle. This year's theme is "Eat Right, Live Right, Feel

Right." One of the key messages is to help reduce food waste by considering the foods you have on hand before buying more at the store. Most people don't realize how much food they throw away every day - from uneaten leftovers to spoiled produce. Each year in the United States, 130 billion pounds of food is wasted, at a cost of \$165 billion. That's the equivalent of up to \$2200 per household per year! The USDA aims to cut food waste 50 percent by 2030. Fortunately, there are many things we can do at home and we can all play a key part in reaching this goal. In this issue, we will explore tips to reduce food waste, save money, and protect the environment.

Tip # 1: Shop with a Plan



Simply making a list of your meals and snacks each week can help you stick to your healthy eating goals, save money and time, and use up all of the food in your refrigerator. As you think about what you would like to eat for the week, check your fridge and pantry to see what items you already have. Consider making a list each week of what needs to be used up and plan upcoming meals accordingly. When at the store, buy only what you will be able to use and stick to your shopping list. Buying in bulk only saves money if you can use the food before it spoils.

Tip #2: Prep Food



By preparing perishable foods soon after shopping, it is easier to make quick meals and snacks later in the week.

- When you get home from the store, take time to wash, dry and chop foods. Place them in clear storage containers for easy cooking.
- Explore "root to stem" cooking. Save broccoli stalks for soups, stews, or side dishes. Try carrot tops or nutritious stems from leafy greens in pesto. Keep a container in your freezer with vegetable scraps for broth.
- Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time.

Tip # 3: Store Food Properly

- Don't let good produce go bad. Store fruits and vegetables properly so they stay fresh for longer, inside or outside your refrigerator. See links section for details.
- Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen, making other nearby produce spoil faster. Store bananas, apples and tomatoes by themselves, and store fruits and vegetables in different bins.
- Wait to wash berries and grapes until you want to eat them to prevent mold.
- Consider freezing or preserving surplus, especially abundant seasonal produce. To retain nutrition and color, blanch vegetables

by immersing them in boiling water for several minutes then plunging them in ice-cold water before freezing.

- If produce is past its prime, it may still be fine for cooking. Think soups, casseroles, stir fries, sauces, baked goods or smoothies.
- Store nuts and seeds in the fridge or freezer so they don't go rancid.
- Keep grains and beans/legumes in clean, sealed containers.
- Place meat in the bottom drawer of the fridge, where it won't potentially leak onto other foods.
- Keep eggs in the main part of the refrigerator, rather than the door.
- Create a designated space in your fridge for foods that need to be used in the next few days before going bad. Check your fridge often to keep track of what you have and what needs to be used.
- If you have more food on hand than you need, consider donating any extra supply of packaged foods to a local food pantry.

Tip #4: Love your Leftovers

Eat them as is or give them a fresh twist by tossing them in a salad, into a taco, or scrambling them with eggs. Some foods, like soups and casseroles, are even better the next day.

Zero Waste Recipe: Leftover Fried Rice

Adapted from www.stopfoodwaste.org

Repurpose your leftover rice and clear out your veggie drawer by making a tasty fried rice.



Ingredients:

- 1-2 tablespoons of oil
- ½ onion, diced

- 2 cloves of garlic, diced
- Chopped veggies, about ½ inch (take this opportunity to clear out any wilted greens like kale or cabbage, or the last carrots, snap peas, etc. leftover from another recipe)
- Leftover meat (optional)
- Leftover rice (~ 1.5 cups per person)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- Salt and pepper

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large pan or wok on medium-high heat on the stove
2. Sauté the onion until softened, add garlic and sauté until golden brown
3. Add leftover meat and heat until browned (optional)
4. Add chopped veggies and sauté until everything has slightly softened
5. Add rice to the mix - if it is dry, pour in a few tablespoons of water to steam and soften.
6. Make a small well in the center of the pan/wok and pour the beaten eggs in the center, scramble the eggs and incorporate into the rest of the mixture.
7. Add soy sauce. Salt and pepper to taste.

Helpful Links:

Produce Storage Guide:

<https://www.eatright.org/homefoodsafety/multimedia/infographics/how-to-keep-produce-fresh-longer-infographic>

Refrigerator/Freezer Storage Chart:

<https://www.fda.gov/downloads/food/foodborneillnesscontaminants/ucm109315.pdf>

412 Food Rescue:

<https://412foodrescue.org/>

A local organization committed to rescuing food about to go to waste and directly distributing to organizations that serve communities in need.

Need a Dietitian?

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).