

HOW TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE AT HOME

FOOD WASTE = UNEATEN FOOD THAT GETS THROWN AWAY



In the United States,
40% of all food
gets thrown away.



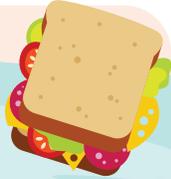
Sit as a family and talk about some of the reasons why people throw away food at home:

- People don't want to get sick from food that they think has gone bad or is past the date indicated.
- The date labels on food packaging are confusing and food that is probably still good to eat gets tossed in the garbage.
- People do not check their pantries and refrigerators before they go shopping so they end up buying more food than they truly need.
- More food is cooked than what people are going to eat.
- Some people only like fresh food and do not like to eat leftovers.
- Speaking of leftovers, often times they get pushed to the back of the refrigerator and people forget to eat them.
- Food is not always stored correctly or kept in the proper container so that causes it to go bad.
- People don't pay attention to how much food they throw away so they don't really think about what happens to it afterward and how bad it is for the environment.



Talk together about some ways people can stop throwing away so much food at home:

- The date labels on food packaging are suggestions based on quality and not whether it is safe to eat.
 - **Sell By** is the date until which the store should sell the food
 - **Best By** is the date when the food tastes the best
 - **Use By** is the date by which the food should be eaten
- Plan meals for the week and make a shopping list based on what you already have and what you need. This helps with not buying too much food.
- At meal times take small amounts or use a smaller dish. You can always ask for more if you are still hungry.
- If you don't end up eating all the food you put on your plate, save the rest for a later date.
- You can make recipes with food items you already have or that are leftover rather than making a recipe that requires all new ingredients.
- Make sure food is always stored correctly and the packaging or container is sealed properly. Whether it is stored in the refrigerator, freezer, or pantry, you want to make sure to follow the FIFO "First In, First Out" rule - older food items should go in the front or on top so they are used first.
- Understand what happens to food after it gets thrown away. Over time, all the food in the landfill rots and creates a gas called methane, which is very harmful to the environment.
- If you have any unopened boxed or canned food items, before they go bad, please consider donating them to your local food bank or pantry. If you are not sure where to go, give us a call at (732) 774-0521.



ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME WITH THE KIDS



» Where does the food go?

Proper food storage is a key component in reducing the amount of food waste generated at home.

Parents: Review the difference between perishable food and non-perishable food and what types require refrigeration and which do not. Developed by the USDA, the [FoodKeeper App](#), is a great tool for providing guidance on handling, preparing, and storing food.

- **Perishable Food** = Food that will quickly decay, spoil, or become unsafe to eat if it's not refrigerated. Examples are meat, poultry, dairy, fish, and all cooked leftovers. Most food items can be put in the freezer if you are not ready to use them and want them to last longer.
- **Non-perishable Food** = Food that is not subject to rapid decay or spoilage and does not require refrigeration. These are often referred to as "shelf stable" foods as they tend to have a long shelf life. Examples are canned and boxed food, rice, spices, pasta, and flour.

Activity: The next time you return from a food shopping trip, have the kids help unpack the groceries showing them which food items go where and explain why. For a quick & easy activity, use the "Where Does the Food Go?" worksheet.

» Kitchen Inventory

Parents: Before your next visit to the food store, have the kids use the lists provided to go through the pantry, refrigerator, and freezer to take inventory of what food you have on hand. They will record the food item, quantity of each, and the date listed on the package.

Activity: As the kids are going through the kitchen taking inventory, have them re-organize each area by putting the older items in the front or on top making it easier to see and grab the items that need to be used the soonest.

Activity: Based on this inventory, work together as a family to come up with a meal plan for the week ahead and create a shopping list.

» Reusing Food

Food waste isn't just that two-week old leftover lasagna, it's also the fruit and vegetable peels, rinds, and end pieces that we all routinely throw away. Whether in the kitchen or around the house, there are a number of ways you can re-purpose food scraps or leftovers. [Click here](#) for more tips and tricks!

Activity: Go through the ingredients you already have in the house, this also includes food scraps and leftovers, and find a recipe that you can all cook together. For some inspiration, the cookbook "*The Waste Not, Want Not Cookbook Save Food, Save Money, and Save the Planet*" by Cinda Chavich has more than 140 recipes categorized by ingredient.

Activity: Start a compost bin by using food scraps and combining them with equal amounts yard waste (tree branches and dead leaves) and water to make soil for new plants. [Click here](#) for a useful guide to composting at home.

WHERE SHOULD THE FOOD GO?

Lucy's family just came home from their weekly food shopping trip and need to put away all the groceries. Help Lucy put the food items in their correct spot ~ either the pantry or the refrigerator.

Cut along the dotted lines and then paste the pictures where they belong.



PANTRY

REFRIGERATOR

