

Maine Home Food Waste Reduction Tips

I. Plan More/Shop Less = Waste Less

- Create an “Eat this First” section in your fridge – you won’t “lose” good, valuable food anymore!
- “Shop” your fridge or pantry first – it’s “free” and will save time/gas/carbon going to the store.
- Shop with a List – don’t let great “deals” or tasty displays get you to buy more than needed.
- Collect your food waste separately from your other trash for a day, two days, or ideally a week – see what items you (your family) most commonly waste and take specific action to reduce that waste (e.g., lots of moldy bread – ask why the bread keeps going bad and what you can do...freeze the slices until you need them? buy a ½ loaf?)

II. Store Better = Waste Less

- Learn how to store every type of food to save food and money.
- Understand how your fridge works to keep food items from spoiling and remember “the freezer is your friend” to help reduce wasted food.
- Don’t use “Best Buy ____” and “Use By ____” date labels to manage your food storage (except baby formula and fresh meat/seafood). Misleading food date labels contribute to nearly 20% of food waste.

III. Cook Creatively = Waste Less

- Visit SuperCook website to find great recipes that use up just the leftover ingredients.
- Google for great free cooking ideas and videos like Waste Not videos (Video 1: scraps/trims, Video 2: stale bread, Video 3: overripe fruit). Get a FREE download of IKEA’s The Scraps Book Cookbook.

If these food waste reduction tips don’t work and you still have some surplus food – be sure to donate or share with friends/family. Or, if the food is not edible, find a compost bin or pile.

Food NEVER belongs in the trash!!



Food Rescue MAINE

My Pledge

Food waste is a big issue in my community and throughout the state of Maine. Data shows that about 40% of food produced is never eaten. This wastes money in three different ways: the cost of the food, the cost to process the food (labor, energy, resources), and the cost to dispose of the food.

Despite these facts, the largest part of Maine's waste stream, over 30%, is FOOD.

At the same time, Maine has the highest rate of food insecurity in New England. 1 in 5 Maine kids, and 1 in 8 Maine adults go hungry each day.

So what can you do to end food waste and be a Food Rescue Hero?

I pledge to end my food waste by doing one or more of the following:

- *Take all food out of my home trash*
- *Donate food that is in good condition*
- *Use my new community food recycling drop-off site*
- *Compost food scraps at home*
- *Store food correctly so that it does not spoil*
- *Eat or use all my leftovers to make a new meal*
- *Learn about food date labels like "Best By" or "Sell By" - do not just throw out*
- *Use fruit and vegetable scraps in new recipes*
- *Check my refrigerator and freezer before I shop*
- *Shop with a list and buy only what I need at the grocery store*
- *Talk with others in my community about food waste and food recycling*

Signature

Date



Tips to Reduce Food Waste

By The New York Times

March 3, 2015

Being a better cook is more than mastering recipes. It's also getting the most from your food, wasting little and repurposing leftovers in creative, even ingenious ways. Below, Food reporters and editors share their ideas for improving kitchen storage and using up odds and ends. Have a suggestion? Post it in the comments section.

Produce

Give vegetables some space. A crowded vegetable crisper is soon a rotten one. Allow air to circulate. Most vegetables are best left in plastic bags that are open and punched with holes. (Onions and potatoes are outliers. Leave them in a cabinet or pantry, alone in the dark, away from the other vegetables and each other.)

Wrap lettuce and cucumbers well in paper towels and refrigerated in plastic bags. For best results, wrap cucumbers individually.

Rinse herbs lightly, roll them in paper towels and refrigerate in a plastic bag with the top left open. Or, if you have shelf space in your refrigerator, trim the ends off a bunch, put it in a glass of water like a bouquet, and cover with a plastic bag.

Sauté lettuce that has begun to wilt in olive oil and season with garlic or shallot.

Blanch and then purée carrot tops into chimichurri or pesto. For chimichurri, blend with red wine vinegar, olive oil, herbs and garlic or shallots. For pesto, blend with olive oil, pine nuts and a hard cheese like Parmesan. Use it to top fish, season soup or sauce pasta. (Taste the tops first; if they're very bitter, blanch more than once.)

Radish tops and roasted asparagus bottoms are good for pesto, too.

Eat carrot tops in a seaweed-like salad: blanch once or twice, then toss in sesame oil and soy sauce.

Garnish foods with fennel fronds, celery leaves and carrot tops (used sparingly).

Chop and sauté radish tops or turnip tops. Add a poached or fried egg. Call it breakfast.

Stop peeling so many of your vegetables. Carrots, parsnips, cucumbers and many others are just fine to eat with a good scrub.

Make chocolate mousse with overripe avocados: purée with melted chocolate chips, almond or cow's milk, cocoa powder, a little sweetener and vanilla. Or mash them with a little lime juice and freeze for an instant guacamole base. Or blend with spinach or basil, olive oil and herbs to make a sauce for pasta. Or add to salad dressing and purée for a thicker emulsion.

Boil carrots and blend with a neutral oil, a little garlic and a hard-boiled egg for a fluffy alternative to mayonnaise.

Save vegetables (or use up kale stems and cucumber butts) with a quick pickle. Pour a boiling mixture of white vinegar, sugar, salt and water and some herbs or peppers or garlic. Refrigerate. Make a steak salad and add some sliced pickled vegetables.

Keep the stems from cilantro or parsley, along with celery leaves, onion peels, mushroom stems and the like in a bag or bowl in the refrigerator or freezer. When you have enough, simmer into a stock for risotto or soup.

Toss those last few berries, half an apple, peeled brown bananas (cut into chunks for easy puréeing) or other fruit in a bag in the freezer. Soon you'll have enough for a smoothie, which is also a good way to use up the last bit of sour cream, yogurt or ice cream at the bottom of the carton.

Save orange rinds, especially those from juiced oranges. Dry them and use as fire kindling, where they release a delightful aroma against the wood smoke.

Keep lemons in the fridge. Wrap zested lemons in plastic, and keep extra lemon halves cut side down in a bowl or on a plate to be used for salad dressings. They can also be preserved or cooked down to a quick marmalade, or used for cleaning: rub the cut side on aluminum pots to shine them, or on cutting boards to clean them. Or put them down the garbage disposal to make the house smell good.

Throw woody stems (like rosemary and thyme) into a roasting pan with meat or root vegetables.

Chop tender, thinner parsley and cilantro stems and use them as you would the leaves. Thicker stems can be chopped and sautéed with the onion in any recipe that calls for the herbs as a garnish. Any stem can be used in stock.

Steep mint for tea. Stir in honey after steeping.

Purée herbs and olive oil and freeze in plastic bags or ice cube trays. Use as the base for pesto or other herb sauces.

Resprout scallions by using the green parts, then taking the white bulbs and putting them in a jar of water. Replenish the water regularly.

Hang sturdy herbs upside down to dry. Use as you would any store-bought dried herb.

Meat and Seafood

Make stock. In the refrigerator or freezer, save poultry, beef and ham bones and scraps; shrimp, lobster and crab shells; and fish heads and bones (from white-fleshed fish) until you have enough for a big pot of whatever kind of stock you want to make. Or make a small batch of stock immediately. The carcass and pan drippings from a roast chicken can go right into a pot with whatever bits of vegetables you have. Add a carrot, half an onion and a bay leaf or other herbs. Cover with water, bring to a boil and then turn heat down to a slow simmer for a couple of hours. Don't forget to check for seasoning and skim for fat or impurities. Use for soup the next day or to cook a pot of rice.

Reduce stock and freeze for a fast broth. When you've made stock, strain it and then simmer it again, reducing by perhaps 10 times. Freeze it in ice cube trays or small containers. Reconstitute with water.

Reserve any excess skin or fat from the chicken you are about to cook. Freeze it until you have enough to render into schmaltz.

Save even small amounts of bacon grease and rendered pork fat from roasts. Use to roast potatoes and root vegetables, or with greens. Bacon grease can be especially good in baked goods.

Freeze the chicken liver if you get one with a whole chicken. Accumulate enough and sauté with butter, a little shallot and a shot of wine to blend into paté. Or just sauté it as a cook's treat.

Save pickle brine for brining chicken.

Give meat — and not just fruit — a second life in a pie. A few balls of savory dough wrapped in plastic or foil and then put in a plastic bag will last up to three months in the freezer. Or use leftover meat for soup, quesadillas, enchiladas, tacos or salads.

Dairy

Use sour milk to make pancakes or other baked goods that call for buttermilk.

Save Parmesan and pecorino rinds in the freezer to make stock, or slip them directly into a pot of soup to enhance the flavor.

Mash blue cheese with olive oil and keep it in the refrigerator for salad dressing or to use on potatoes.

Combine small mixed scraps of cheese to make fromage fort, fondue or mixed-cheese macaroni and cheese. Or grate or crumble them on salad or on top of sliced fruit.

Bread and Nuts

Whirl stale bread into bread crumbs and freeze. Toast as a topping for pasta or gratins, as a coating for pan-fried cutlets or as a thickener for blended soups or gazpacho. Mix into ground meat for meatballs or meatloaf.

Use stale bread for French toast, bread pudding or strata. Or turn it into croutons, use it in panzanella or ribollita, or as bed for roast chicken. A loaf of aging bread is a good excuse to make a fondue or a pot of French onion soup. And you don't need to make bread crumbs to use old bread in meatballs; if the bread has personality, you can increase the ratio of bread to meat.

Freeze bread by wrapping it well, then reviving it by bringing it back to room temperature, unwrapping it, spritzing it with water a few times and popping it into a 350-degree oven for 8 to 12 minutes. (Stale loaves that aren't frozen can be brought back to life this way, too. Spritz them with a little water first.) You could slice the bread first, which affects the quality but makes it easier to take a piece directly from the freezer to the toaster.

Slice up a leftover baguette, let the pieces dry out, then bag them to repurpose as croutons or crackers.

Cut leftover bread slices or crusts into sticks, butter and bake for "soldiers" to serve with eggs or soup.

Crush leftover party nuts and sprinkle them on top of a salad or cooked brussels sprouts.

General Storage

The dates on your packages have nothing to do with food safety, nor are they federally regulated. They are the manufacturer's suggestion for when the products are at their peak quality. Properly stored food that looks good and smells good is probably good.

Freezer bags are wonderful, but food is better if it's wrapped tightly before it goes into the freezer bag. Pour cool stock in a freezer bag, carefully get the air out and put it in the freezer flat. Label and date everything. Painter's tape and a Sharpie work well.

Readers' Tips

When I buy corn on the cob, I cut the kernels off and serve that day (or freeze them for instant corn niblets) and save the cobs for later. I make corn broth out of the cobs the next time I make a vegetable soup. I cut 4 to 6 cobs in half and boil them for about 45 minutes in 9 cups of lightly salted water. Strain after boiling; this results in about 6 cups of corn broth. If you skip the salt, you can chill it and it makes a nice, light drink. I can't believe I used to just throw the cobs out before! *Courtney Shannon*

Once a day I review the fridge contents and put all items that need to be consumed in the next 72 hours in a certain spot. That way, when we go to cook, we always look there first to determine what we should be using. *Mike McCarthy*

Candied orange peels. *Varsha Maharaj*

Making soup on Saturday morning (before heading to the grocery store) lets me inventory what veggies are limp and need to be thrown into the pot, as well as which ones are still good for the following week's recipes. *Jurate Kutkus Burns*

Quinoa or brown rice, Braggs (a healthy alternative for soy sauce) and most any leftover can be mixed together for a hot, tasty meal. *Gary Schutze*

Peel citrus with potato peeler, freeze it and use as needed for zest. *Vickie Lynn Fisher*

We've started a new "leftover" tradition of taking what's left, maybe adding little extras like cheese, then wrapping in pizza dough for individual potpies. *Larissa Larivee*

Every now and then I'll have a couple of tablespoonsfull of a dish leftover. I'll pulse it and add it to a sauce or soup for some extra depth and flavor. *Catherine Wynne*

We turn leftover dry bread into a very simple delicious recipe. With olive oil heated, add small square chopped onion and 4 gloves of garlic. Then add 2 cups of water for each loaf, and let it boil. Add 1 teaspoon of paprika or dried red chile pepper, and a similar amount of rich dried peppermint (you can use fresh green peppermint) and 2 spoons of tomato paste. Stir well, then add the chunks of bread and leave it for 5 minutes on calm heat. *Ehsan Al Rifai*

Stop building a pantry for every cuisine on earth. Focus on what is in season or accessible locally. Build out a pantry based on the tastes you love most. Simplify always. *Sarah Edell*