

What can you do at home to reduce or prevent food waste?

No one buys food with the intention of throwing it away. But food waste was the top item thrown away by Americans accounting for 21 percent of the nation's waste in 2013 according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Much of this food waste occurs at home. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that on average a family of four disposes nearly \$1,500 worth of food each year. Here are some basic recommendations on how you can prevent or reduce food waste at home.

Smart Shopping: Buy only what you need.

Planning is the key to avoiding wasted food. By making a list with weekly meals in mind, you can save money, time and eat healthier.

BEFORE YOU SHOP

- **Plan your meals for the week before you go shopping.** How many meals will you eat at home? Will you or your family eat out this week? How often? Be realistic.

- **Make a shopping list based on your planning.**
- **Include quantities on your shopping list.** Consider how many meals you will make with each item. For example, salad greens – enough for two lunches.
- **Shop your refrigerator, cupboards and pantry** before going to the store to avoid buying food you already have.
- **Consider buying from local farmers.** You may get fresher food and keep your dollars local. Visit here (<https://agriculture.sc.gov/where-to-buy-local/>) to learn where you can buy local.
- **Practice First in, First out** – better known as FIFO. When unpacking groceries, move older products to the front of your refrigerator, freezer and pantry. Put new products in the back. This way, you're more likely to use the older stuff before it expires.
- **Don't automatically throw away food** because of the date provided on the product. See box below.

Continued on the back ...

Product Dating: What does it really mean?

All of those dates on food products – sell by, use by, best if used by – are not an indicator of food safety. So what do they mean?

- **"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 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.**

Visit here <http://savethefood.com/tips/deciphering-dates-on-products> to learn more about deciphering dates on products.

WHILE SHOPPING

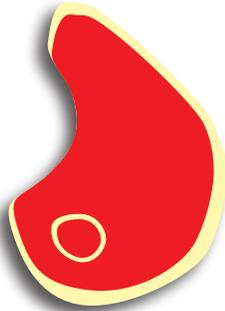
- **Choose loose fruit and vegetables over pre-packaged** to better control the quantity you need and ensure fresher ingredients.
- **Try to avoid pre-cut fruits and vegetables.** They tend to spoil more quickly. It also will save you money.
- **Don't be tempted by sales.** Buying in bulk only saves money if you can use the food before it spoils. Good items to buy in bulk include grains, beans and pasta.
- **Ask the butcher to repackage meat if there is more than you need.**
- **Use reusable shopping bags.** Make sure your items – particularly fruit and vegetables – are stored carefully in your shopping bag.

Smart Prep: Prep now, eat later.

Prepare perishable foods soon after shopping. You'll make it easier to whip up meals later in the week, saving time, effort and money.

RIGHT AWAY

- **Wash, dry, chop, dice, slice and place your fresh food items in clear storage containers** for snacks and easy cooking when you get home from the store.
- **Befriend your freezer and visit it often.** Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time.



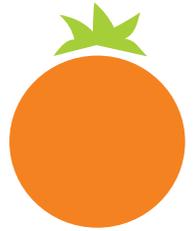
EACH WEEK

- **Save time preparing food each week by batch cooking entire meals ahead of time** that can be stored in the fridge or freezer. For example, bake and freeze chicken breasts.
- **Keep a running list of meals that your household enjoys.** That way, you can easily choose a meal to prepare.
- **Rely on your freezer** – but remember what you froze. Keep labels and a marker handy to note what

you are freezing and the date on each container. This will help you plan meals, save money and reduce waste.

Smart Storage: Keep it fresh.

Produce is the most wasted food. Typically, this is because we purchased too much or didn't use it in time. By storing fruits and vegetables for maximum freshness, they will taste better and last longer, helping you eat more of them before they spoil.



WHEN BUYING

- **Choose fresh foods that freeze well** if there's a chance you won't get to eat them in time.
- **The length of time that food will last depends on how fresh it was when you bought it.** Local in-season produce will last much longer than produce that has been shipped a long way.

HOW TO STORE

- **Learn where to store all the fruits and vegetables to keep them fresher longer.** King County (Washington) provides this useful **Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide**. Please visit <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/wasteprevention/documents/too-good-food-storage-guide.pdf> to view the guide.
- **Separate fruit that is very ripe from others that are not.** Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen that make others spoil faster.
- **Store bananas, apples and tomatoes by themselves** and store fruits and vegetables in different bins.
- **Consider using storage bags or containers designed to help extend the life of produce.**
- **To prevent mold, wash berries before storing them in the refrigerator.**



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(803) 308-0810

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Content provided by King County
(WA) Solid Waste Division

www.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste

Your Fridge & Food Safety

Keeping your refrigerator clean and organized helps to minimize food spoilage and reduces the risk of foodborne illness.

DOORS

Temperature changes frequently on both doors. Avoid storing perishable foods here.

TEMPERATURE

An appliance thermostat* lets you know your fridge is set to 40°F or below.

FRESH MEAT**

Prevent juices from leaking by storing meat on a wrapped plate or in a sealed container.

FREEZER

Set the thermostat to 0°F or below.***

COOKED LEFTOVERS

Leftovers are safe for 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator.

THE MAIN COMPARTMENT

The temperature is more stable here. Store perishable foods like fresh meat, dairy products and eggs in this area.

SEALED DRAWERS

Drawers are the best storage options for fruits and vegetables.

CLEAN SPILLS IMMEDIATELY!

Clean refrigerator surfaces with hot, soapy water and a diluted bleach solution. Keep the fridge smelling fresh by placing an open box of baking soda on the shelf.



For more information, visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle or call 1-800-768-7348.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – www.foodsafety.gov

* Most newer refrigerators have built-in thermostats, but you may have to purchase one for older models.

** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USDA) defines “fresh” as whole poultry and cuts that have never been below 26°F.

*** USDA – www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm093704.htm



Storage Times for Refrigerated Foods

NOTE: These short but safe time limits will help keep home-refrigerated food from spoiling.

SOURCE: USDA

FOOD	REFRIGERATION TIME
Ground Meat, Ground Poultry & Stew Meat	
Ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb	1-2 days
Stew meats	1-2 days
Fresh Meat (Beef, Veal, Lamb & Pork)	
Steaks, chops, roasts	3-5 days
Variety meats (e.g., tongue, kidneys, liver, heart, chitterlings)	1-2 days
Fresh Poultry	
Chicken or turkey, whole	1-2 days
Chicken or turkey, parts	1-2 days
Giblets	1-2 days
Bacon & Sausage	
Bacon	7 days
Sausage, raw from meat or poultry	1-2 days
Smoked breakfast links, patties	7 days
Summer sausage labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Unopened, 3 months Opened, 3 weeks
Hard sausage, pepperoni, jerky sticks	2-3 weeks
Ham, Corned Beef	
Ham, canned, labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Unopened, 6-9 months Opened, 3-5 days
Ham, fully cooked, whole	7 days
Ham, fully cooked, half	3-5 days
Ham, fully cooked, slices	3-4 days
Corned beef in pouch with pickling juices	5-7 days
Hot Dogs and Luncheon Meats	
Hot dogs	Unopened package, 2 weeks Opened package, 1 week
Luncheon meat	Unopened package, 2 weeks Opened package, 3-5 days
Deli and Vacuum-Packed Products	
Store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, tuna, ham and macaroni salads	3-5 days
Pre-stuffed pork and lamb chops and chicken breasts	1 day
Store-cooked dinners and entrees	3-4 days
Commercial brand vacuum-packed dinners with/ USDA seal, unopened	2 weeks
Cooked Meat, Poultry and Fish Leftovers	
Pieces and cooked casseroles	3-4 days
Gravy and broth, patties and nuggets	3-4 days
Soups and stews	3-4 days
Seafood	
Fresh fish and shellfish	1-2 days
Eggs	
Fresh, in shell	3-5 days
Raw yolks, whites	2-4 days
Hard-cooked	1 week
Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes	Unopened, 10 days Opened, 3 days
Cooked egg dishes	3-4 days
Mayonnaise	2 months

During a Power Outage

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- The refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours. If the power is off longer, you can transfer food to a cooler and fill with ice or frozen gel packs. Make sure there is enough ice to keep food in the cooler at 40°F or below.
- Add more ice to the cooler as it begins to melt.
- A full freezer will hold the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full).
- Obtain dry ice or block ice if your power is going to be out for a prolonged period. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot freezer for 2 days. (CAUTION: Do not touch dry ice with bare hands or place it in direct contact with food.)
- In freezers, food in the front, in the door, or in small, thin packages will defrost faster than large, thick items or food in the back or bottom of the unit.
- Never taste food to determine its safety after a power outage. When in doubt, throw it out!

SOURCE: USDA



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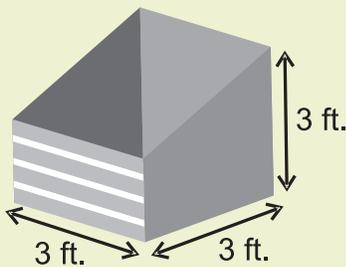


Compost at Home

Here's the dirt on composting. It's simple to do. All you need to get started is a little time, a little space, a bin and a basic understanding of the composting process.

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is the natural decomposition of organic material (from plants and animals) such as leaves, yard trimmings and food waste (e.g., fruit and vegetable scraps). Microorganisms and insects break down this material into compost – a crumbly, dark-colored, earthy-smelling, soil-like material. Compost is a nutrient-rich product that can be used in your garden and flower beds and on your lawn.

COMPOSTING: STEP BY STEP



1

Begin with the bin.

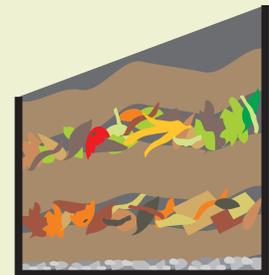
Ideally, your compost pile should be at least 3 feet wide, 3 feet deep and 3 feet tall. Compost bins can be purchased or made at home with scrap wood and wire mesh or an old trash can.



2

Pick a location.

Pick a dry, shady spot near a water source in your backyard. It needs to be at least 2 feet away from any structures including fences. There should be enough space to add materials as well as turn and harvest your compost.



3

Follow the recipe.

Making compost is a lot like cooking a meal – you need a recipe. The basic ingredients are 3 parts “browns” to 1 part “greens,” in alternating layers. See the back for more details.



4

Add water.

Water is important. Too little moisture will inhibit the composting process. Too much moisture will cause the compost pile to smell. Here's a simple tip to follow – the compost pile should be as moist as a sponge.



5

Mix it up.

Air is essential. Use a pitchfork, shovel or roll your compost barrel to turn your compost pile at least once a week to inhibit odor-causing bacteria and to speed up the composting process.



6

All done!

As materials break down the pile will get warm. Don't be alarmed if there is steam. Now just wait – you could have finished compost in as little as 12 weeks. When your pile has no remnants of food and is a dark, soil-like material, it's ready!

What goes in and what stays out?

CAN BE COMPOSTED

GREENS
Fruits and Vegetables
Eggshells
Coffee Grounds and Filters
Tea Bags
Nut Shells
Fresh Grass Clippings
House Plants
Dryer and Vacuum Lint
Hair and Fur

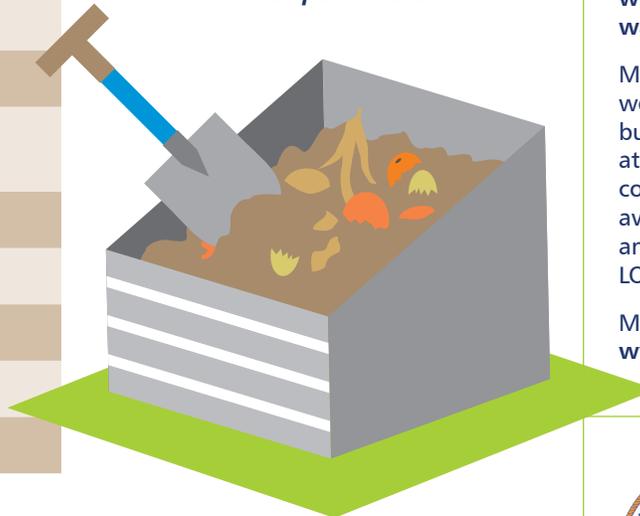
CAN BE COMPOSTED

BROWNS
Shredded Newspaper
Cardboard
Brown Paper (e.g., napkins, paper towels)
Yard Trimmings
Dead Grass Clippings, Leaves and Twigs
Hay and Straw
Sawdust and Pencil Shavings
Wood Chips and Mulch
Cotton and Wool Rags
Fireplace Ashes

SHOULD NOT BE COMPOSTED

ITEMS TO AVOID
Black Walnut Tree Leaves or Twigs
Coal or Charcoal Ash
Dairy Products
Eggs (shells are OK)
Diseased or Insect-Ridden Plants
Fats, Grease, Lard or Oils
Meats or Bones
Fish Bones or Scraps
Pet Waste
Treated Paper Products
Plastics, Metals or Glass
Chemical Products

Remember to turn or mix your compost at least once per week.



Problems and Solutions

- The pile doesn't heat up.** If the pile is new, try adding more "greens" or water to your pile. If your pile is old and you've turned it a few times, it may be finished composting.
- It smells like ammonia.** If the pile is too wet, turn it with a shovel or pitchfork to let in air and mix it up. Add "browns" to the pile. Ammonia odors often indicate too many "greens."
- The pile is attracting scavengers.** Don't add food waste with oils, meats or dairy. Keep "greens" covered with a layer of "browns."

Need help?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers basic information on composting in your backyard or indoors depending on the space at www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home.

The Natural Resources Defense Council also provides tips for composting at www.nrdc.org/stories/composting-way-easier-you-think.

Many local governments also offer workshops, often with opportunities to buy compost bins at reduced prices or at cost. Check with your local recycling coordinator. Contact information is available at www.scdhec.gov/recycle and click on WHERE TO RECYCLE LOCALLY.

More information also is available at www.scdhec.gov/dontwastefoodsc.

The Benefits of Backyard Composting

- Compost reduces the amount of waste a household generates.
- Compost reduces or eliminates chemical fertilizer and pesticide use.
- Compost improves soil by increasing aeration (the ability of air to circulate) and water-holding capacity (reducing your need to water) as well as helping plants absorb nutrients. Compost also helps suppress plant diseases and pests.
- Composting at home can save you money.



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