MANAGING FOOD WASTE AT HOME

Gina Cohl, Tri-County Sustainability Food Waste Committee
WHAT IS FOOD WASTE?

It is food intended for human consumption that is wasted and lost and refers not only to food thrown away at home but also produce lost in the farming stage, harvesting process, during transportation, and storage.

Food Waste can occur anywhere throughout the entire supply chain.
FOOD WASTE STATISTICS

Is the Single largest component sent to landfills.

40% of food produced is thrown away – which leads to resources being lost

- 32% of Fresh Water
- 20% of Land Usage
- 4% of Energy

This equates to $250 billion lost globally!
TOP ITEMS BEING WASTED
MANAGING FOOD WASTE AT HOME

- Shop with intention and a list – purchase what you need. Example buy portions to match your family not excess
- Getting to Know your Refrigerator
- Keeping Food Fresh Longer with Proper storage
- Preservation and Usage
Cold air sinks so the lower level should be for more perishable foods – dairy, eggs, fresh meat.

The door is the warmest area so avoid perishable items and store condiments and soft drinks here.

The Mysterious Crisper Drawers

Low Humidity for fruit – never leave fruit in the plastic they come in as this traps humidity.

High Humidity for vegetables - such as greens and root vegetables. Wrapping greens in damp towels then in plastic also retains humidity.
PROPER STORAGE IS KEY

- Keep apples away from other fruits and vegetables as they produce the highest levels of ethylene gas which speeds up the ripening process
- Store tomatoes and bananas on the counter
- Potatoes and Onions should be stored in a cool dark place but not the refrigerator and never together
- Place herbs, scallions, and asparagus in glass with small amount of water

https://www.partselect.com/blog/proper-fridge-food-storage/

https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app
CREATE AN EAT THIS FIRST SHELF

- The top shelf is the most visible so this should be designated as the “eat this first” shelf – leftovers and fruits and vegetables on the verge of going bad
- Determine what recipes can use these items – soups, stews, pasta, and hashes can be made of anything and taste amazing
- Turn fruit and vegetables into smoothies
- Turn leftovers into something new – casserole or hash
- Small batch chutney, jams and quick pickles are also great ways to extend the life of produce
- Let’s not forget items can be thrown into the freezer for use within 3-6 months
- This concept of the “eat first shelf” can also be utilized in the pantry
In the Vein of “Eat this First shelf” doing an inventory of your staples also helps you use up what you have and to not over buy – basically shop your refrigerator and pantry first

- Every 3-6 months investigate the back of your pantry and pull-out things that should get used
  - Cans of soup, vegetables, and condiments can get pushed to the back and forgotten
- Dig deep into those freezers
  - Partial bag of vegetables – make a casserole or stir fry
  - Oh, that is where that chili went to – defrost and have for a quick lunch or dinner that week

We all lose sight of items; these tips help us use these items before buying more
Turn Bread into breadcrumbs by dehydrating

Learning how to pickle or ferment is a great way to extend the life of fruits and vegetables

Dehydrating herbs during the height of summer allows you to enjoy them all winter long (way better than any store-bought seasoning)

Trimmings or “scraps” should not be wasted either. Place them in a freezer bag and keep collecting until you have enough to make stock. This goes for bones as well.

Get more tips at https://zerowastechef.com/
Regulated and consistent everywhere, Right?

No. Neither the US FDA or USDA have defined these dates with the one exception, infant formula.

- **“production” or “pack” date** — date on which the food was manufactured or placed in final packaging.
- **“sell by” date** — used by retailers for stock control.
- **“best if used by” date** — generally indicates when the food will no longer be at its highest quality.
- **“use by” date** — typically used by manufactures to mean the same thing as “best if used by.”
Food Waste Reduction Tips

Follow these tips to reduce food waste at home, and visit us online at https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/food-waste/ to learn more!

- Inventory refrigerator before shopping
- Eat your leftovers!
- Donate excess food to a local food pantry!
- Avoid buying in bulk unless you’re sure you’ll eat it!
- Don’t go by the date label. Taste & smell food to determine if it’s edible.

#ERASEFOODWASTENJ
LAST RESORT - COMPOSTING

- Backyard Composting
- Vermicomposting – indoor with worms
- Countertop systems such as Lomi
- No interest in composting or don’t have the room – use a service
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Tri-County Sustainability Food Waste Committee – join our discord channel
  https://discord.com/channels/800838437820694528/800838437820694531
- Manage Food Waste at Home Tool Kit for Green Teams and EC's
- Social Media Blasts – #EraseFoodWasteNJ is NJDEP’s hashtag or create your own
  TCS #wastedtoplated
- Hold Seminars/Workshops on the individual topics discussed
  Food Waste Prevention and Diversion
  Proper Storage – short term and long term; including preservation
  Composting
THANK YOU

mtlgreenteam@gmail.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/gina-cohl-8a198a1/