



Top 5 Food Waste Solutions

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One of my top pet peeves is wasting food. My mom has always been the same way, so I know where I got it from. I remember our weekly “leftover night” as a child. My mom would pull out all the random leftovers from the week and that’s what was for dinner. Thanks to my mom I’m very good about using my leftovers now. I just hate to throw food away. It’s money in the garbage!

Food waste is [a big problem though](#), not just an annoyance. Did you know that 30-40% of the food in the U.S. goes uneaten? Americans waste an estimated \$162 billion in food each year (\$400 billion globally)!!! On average, we all waste about 25% of the food we buy. For many of us trying to choose quality food on a budget, not wasting food is the #1 priority! But it’s not just about money. Millions of Americans face hunger on a daily basis while the amount of [safe, edible food wasted](#) in the U.S. continues to increase.

On an individual or family scale, many of us end up wasting food due to poor meal planning, improper storage, or even just not understanding what [the labels on food](#) means (FYI, they have very little to do with when the food goes bad).

Here are 5 ways to help reduce your food waste:

1. **Make a meal plan or menu each week.** Take a look around your pantry and fridge to see what needs to get eaten! Use what you already have at home before buying more food. This is THE most important step! Also, when you’re at the grocery store, make sure you only buy what you will eat before it goes bad. Be careful with sales, it’s not a bargain if you end up throwing some in the garbage.
2. **Plan in leftovers!** When making your meal plan or menu for the week, make sure to leave room for those leftovers. You can easily take them for lunch the next day, or if there is a lot leftover it can be another meal the next day (either the same or “repurposed” – for example, leftover baked chicken can become chicken burritos– see recipe below).
3. **Make sure your refrigerator is working properly** and is optimally between 35°F and 38° F and your freezer is at 0°F. Don’t just assume it’s working properly. Purchase a thermometer to keep in there so you can always check. Some of the newer digital refrigerators have this built in. This will help prolong the life of foods. Regular [maintenance](#) of your refrigerator will also help it working better (when was the last time you cleaned the coils on your fridge?).
4. **Prep your vegetables when you get home** from the farmer’s market or grocery store. That way they are ready to go and are more likely to get eaten before they go bad. This can be a game changer!
5. **Use everything!** Do you have fruit that’s a little too ripe? Freeze it and use it later for smoothies or [homemade ice cream](#), [sherbet](#) or sorbet. How about random leftover vegetables? Make a soup. Just add leftover meat or beans for a full meal. You can even make amazing homemade stock from leftover bones and veggie scraps. Keep a “stock” bag in the freezer and toss in bones and vegetable scraps until you get enough to make stock or bone broth.

What are some of the ways you reduce food waste? Anyone [compost](#) with the inedible food scraps?