



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Reducing Food Waste at Home: Why and How

Let's start by taking a brief quiz:

- Are you fanatical about following date labels?
- Do you go to the grocery store, purchase an item, and then return home to find the same item in your fridge or cabinet?
- Have you had to remove liquid-y cilantro or green onions from your "crisper drawer" because they spoiled more quickly than you imagined?
- Do you fill your fridge with healthy items with the best intentions of eating them, but then end up ordering pizza or other pre-made meal?

Hey, we've all been there, but throwing food away is a waste of money, and all of the resources that went into growing, harvesting, and preparing the food. According to the USDA, a family of four wastes up to \$1500 a year on food that they buy and do not eat. Additionally, food that is thrown into a garbage bag that goes to a landfill does not decompose properly, releasing methane gas into the atmosphere. Methane gas is 30 times more powerful than carbon dioxide and a large contributor to climate change. On a practical note, throwing food away makes your garbage smell and needs to be taken out more frequently. What if there were simple habits you could adopt to use up your groceries efficiently, save money, and protect the environment? Sounds too good to be true? It really isn't!

1. Be more thoughtful about your shopping. Check your refrigerator and pantry before you go to the store to ensure you don't purchase an item you already have at home.
2. Store your food properly to make it last longer. Store fresh herbs like cilantro in a glass with water, like a bouquet of flowers. To ensure your fruits and vegetables don't ripen too quickly separate apples from other items. Apples release ethylene which ripens other vegetables and fruits.
3. Understand date labeling. The only true "expiration date" on food is for infant formula. Most other "best before" or "enjoy by" dates refer to the peak freshness of items. Avoid items that have visible mold or smell rancid, but use your senses to make an assessment for yourself before tossing unopened, past-dated items.

Authored by Amy DeLorenzo, ORISE Research Fellow, US EPA

Tips and Tricks to Reduce Home Food Waste

Plan your meals ahead - know what food you have on hand and plan meals to use your leftovers.

- Organize your refrigerator - Use the "first in, first out" rule. Store newer foods toward the back and older foods toward the front. Avoid clutter so that you can see what you have.
- Use clear containers - Store food in clear containers so you can see what you have on hand.
- Store foods the right way - Different foods need to be stored in different ways. Use the FoodKeeper App for information on how to store different foods to maintain freshness and quality.
- Make stock - freeze vegetable and protein trimmings as they accumulate in the week. Then use them to make homemade stock.

For more information about how you can reduce food waste visit: www.epa.gov/recycle/preventing-wasted-food-home

Basic Vegetable Stock

This stock recipe uses vegetable trimmings that you can collect and freeze throughout the week.

Source: Modified from <https://savethefood.com/recipes/basic-vegetable-stock>

Ingredients:

4 lbs chicken bones (necks, backs, wings, and feet)

Some recommended vegetables include: 1 carrot, celery stalk, garlic clove (unpeeled), ½ onion, ½ leek greens or 1 shallot.

Add other vegetables according to those you prepared during the week and have scraps for.

Herbs of choice: bay leaf, cilantro, parsley, etc.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Instructions:

Place the scraps in a medium-size saucepan and cover with cold water by 2 inches. Add the bay leaf and salt and pepper to taste. Slowly bring to a simmer over medium heat. Lower the heat and gently simmer for 1 hour. (Avoid the temptation to simmer for an extended period of time. Vegetables that simmer for more than 2 hours will taste bitter.)

Remove from the heat and strain through a colander into a heatproof bowl. Compost the spent vegetables. Set the stock aside to cool to room temperature and allow any grit to settle. Carefully pour off the broth, leaving any sediment behind.

Store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or freeze for 6 months. Pressure can and your stock will be shelf stable for up to 1 year.

Achieving the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

With the weather warming up, it's a great time to get outside for some fresh air to achieve the recommended 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. Take a hike! Find some excellent hikes by asking a park ranger or using a reliable site for hiking trail suggestions based on your fitness level. (VA State Park Hikes - <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/stateparks/hiking>). Our State Parks have some excellent, well maintained trails. Utilize multi-use trails, like rails-to-trails, for walking or biking. Public parks and school tracks are other locations to walk/jog. Keeping active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, but staying safe while being active is important. In our coming newsletters, we'll discuss tips for exercise safety

Resources

Environmental Protection Agency Preventing Wasted Food At Home www.epa.gov/recycle/preventingwasted-food-home

Food Keeper App

www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/Foodkeeper-app

USDA: The Impact of Food Waste

www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste

VA State Park Hikes

www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/hiking

www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/bikingmultiuse

VA National Park Hikes

www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/vatrails.ht

Editors: April Payne, MS; Carlin Rafie, PhD, RD

Peer reviewers: Jane Henderson, MEd; Susan Prillaman, MS; Aisha Salazar, MS, and Pegi Wright, MEd

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