

REDUCE FOOD WASTE, INCREASE SUSTAINABILITY

Contributed by Mandy Enright, MS, RDN, RYT

With Earth Day happening this month, it's a great time to assess our habits and see where there can be opportunities to reduce food waste while increasing sustainability. Sustainability is all about meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, sustainability is about our children and our grandchildren, and the world we leave to them.

In the US alone, 30-40% of the food supply is wasted, equaling more than 20 pounds of food per person per MONTH. Wasted food makes up the majority of materials found in landfills and emits methane gasses. Yet 49 million people face hunger in the United States. Reducing food waste starts with making small, simple, sustainable changes. Check out the tips below for getting started.

Shopping or Dining Out

- Create a meal plan and grocery list to only buy what you need and use what you buy.
- Don't overlook the "ugly" produce – as long as it is not rotten, it is safe for consumption (did you know there are even "ugly produce" subscription services like Misfits Market and Imperfect Foods to help reduce food waste?)
- When dining out, order smaller portions, share meals, or ask for a to-go box for leftovers. Ask for dressing on the side of salads so you can have leftovers to enjoy again, not a soggy salad.

Food Storage at Home

- Use the FoodKeeper App (www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app) to determine how to best store foods to maintain freshness.
- Utilize your freezer to prolong the life of food.
- Try these hacks for keeping foods fresh:
 - Put fresh leafy herbs in a cup of water in the fridge and cover with a plastic baggie.
 - Place the roots of cut scallions in your fridge in a cup of water – they will grow back.
 - Put paper towels in containers of fresh lettuce to reduce moisture.
 - Give your berries a bath in 1 part distilled white vinegar and 3 parts water, then rinse and dry thoroughly before storing in the fridge.
 - Wrap celery in aluminum foil.
 - Store fruits and vegetables separately – especially apples, which can cause other fruits to ripen too quickly (except in a bag of potatoes, where apples will actually prevent sprouting).

Cooking

- Use foods with a shorter shelf life first.
- If vegetables are going bad, use in soups, omelets, stir fries, and sauces.
- Turn fresh fruit going south into smoothies, jams, fruit purees, or compote.
- Make your own frozen food by blanching vegetables and cutting up fruit before freezing.
- Use a dehydrator or very low temperature oven to create your own dehydrated fruit, vegetables, or jerky snacks (check out the recipes below for some inspiration).

What about scraps?

- Save scraps like peels, tops, and skins from vegetables and bones from animal carcasses to create broths and stocks. Freeze until you have enough, then place in a large pot covered with water, bring to a boil, simmer at least one hour, then strain.
- Freeze cheese rinds, then add to soups or sauces for added flavor without having to add salt.
- Use leftover or stale bread to make breadcrumbs or croutons.
- Composting scraps from foods like fruits, vegetables, eggshells, coffee grounds, and tea help nourish soil and reduce food waste in landfills. Some townships will pick up compost from your home, while others may have community gardens or businesses that will take the compost.





Did You Know...

- Banana peels can be used for skin care, sunburns, poison ivy, and even polishing shoes and silverware?
- Eggshells can be used to remove bitterness when brewed with coffee, make a scrub to clean pots and pans, and even scare away slugs and deer from your garden?
- Potatoes help to remove rust, soothe burns, remove berry stains from your skin, clean silverware, and help reduce dark undereye circles?

How will you reduce food waste?

RECIPE CORNER: REDUCE FOOD WASTE FAVORITES

Baked Apple Chips

INGREDIENTS:

2 apples, sliced (optional cored)
Ground Cinnamon

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 275 °F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and spread apples out on sheet, making sure not to overcrowd or overlap the apples (optional to use a baking rack). Sprinkle the apples with cinnamon. Bake the apples for one hour, then flip the slices and bake for another hour. If chips are not yet crisp, bake another 15-30 minutes.

Remove from oven and allow to cool completely. Chips will continue to crisp while cooling. Store in an airtight container for up to one week.

Teriyaki Portobello Mushroom Jerky

INGREDIENTS:

¼ C Bragg's Liquid Aminos (or low sodium soy sauce)	1 tsp sesame oil
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar	¼ tsp red pepper flakes
1 tbsp mirin (or honey)	¼ tsp fresh ground pepper
1 tbsp white miso	4 large portobello mushroom caps, stems removed and sliced ¼-inch thick
1 tbsp olive oil	

PREPARATION:

Add all ingredients except portobello mushrooms together and whisk until combined. Place liquid in a covered container or ziploc bag and add mushrooms, making sure all mushrooms are covered by the liquid. Allow to marinate 8 hours to overnight in the fridge.

Arrange mushrooms on a wire rack on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Bake in a 250°F oven for one hour, then flip the mushrooms and bake for another hour.

Allow to cool completely before enjoying. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.



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