

Food Tossed is Money Lost

Barbara L. Ames

Wildcat District Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

What is going into your trash? Per the United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, **about 40 percent of the United States food supply (1,500 calories/person/day) goes uneaten.**

Discarded food in homes and foodservice accounts for 60 percent of this total food loss and is mostly avoidable. The remaining portion is lost or wasted during food production. *(Photo by Nick Saltmarsh/Food Waste)*



Preventing food waste saves money and resources. Resources used to produce uneaten food include: 30 percent of fertilizer, 31 percent of cropland, 25 percent of total fresh water consumption and 2 percent of total energy consumption.

As our population grows and feeding the world becomes more difficult, developing habits to save more of the food we already have will put less strain on the resources associated with producing and buying food. **Reducing food waste will result in money saved for families to use for other needs.**

Alice Henneman, Extension Educator at University of Nebraska Lincoln, offers these suggestions to help consumers reduce the amount of food wasted.

- 1. Shop the refrigerator before going to the store.** Use food at home before buying more. Designate one meal weekly as a "use-it-up" meal.
- 2. Move older food products to the front of the fridge/cupboard/freezer and just-purchased ones to the back.** This makes it more likely foods will be consumed before they go bad.
- 3. Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below to prolong the life of foods.** Foods frozen at 0°F or lower will remain safe indefinitely but the quality will go down over time.
- 4. Freeze or can surplus fresh produce** using safe, up-to-date food preservation methods. Visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation website (<http://nchfp.uga.edu>) for freezing and canning instructions.

5. Take restaurant leftovers home and refrigerate within two hours of being served. Eat within three to four days or freeze. Ask for a take home container at the beginning of the meal if portions look especially large. Remove take home food from your plate at the beginning of the meal so leftovers are as appetizing as the original meal í rather than the picked-over remains. Or, choose a smaller size and/or split a dish with a dining companion.

6. Dish up reasonable amounts of food at a buffet and go back for more if still hungry.

7. Compost food scraps for use in the garden. Visit Nebraska Extension for direction on creating compost for your garden (www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g2222.pdf).

8. Check product dates on foods. The United States Department of Agriculture/Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS) defines them as:

ÉA òSell-Byö date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.

ÉA òBest if Used By (or Before)ö date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

ÉA òUse-Byö 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. Do not buy or use baby formula after its òuse-byö date.

9. Buy misshapen fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets and elsewhere. They taste just as good and are just as nutritious as those with a òperfectö shape, but are more likely to get thrown away.

10. If you have several foods that might go to waste at the same time, try adding them to such adaptable recipes as salads, soups, pasta and casseroles.

11. Rather than buy a food for use in only one recipe, check if there might be a suitable substitute already in the home. The Cookø Thesaurus website (<http://foodsubs.com>) gives thousands of ingredient substitutions.

Find more about reducing food waste at: <http://food.unl.edu/14-ways-consumers-can-reduce-food-waste>, or <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/lets-talk-trash#>.

For more information about this topic or other topics, contact the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Clean Out the Fridge Potato Salad

Have you ever looked in your refrigerator and found a little bit of this and a little bit of that? And it should all be used **SOON!** When that happens, make potato salad! (Note: Potatoes should be stored in a cool dry place in your house for best quality **not** in the refrigerator.)



Follow these quick "1, 2, 3" steps!

1. Begin with cooked, diced potatoes (1-inch cube). Let them stand until cool enough to handle.

Tip: You can leave the skins on young, tender potatoes and other varieties of potatoes with a thin, delicate skin.

2. While the potatoes are cooking/cooling, clean and prepare potential still-edible foods that might soon go in the garbage. Also, look for jars and packages of other still-edible foods that have been lingering in your refrigerator. Use your own preference as to amounts of ingredients. Ingredient suggestions include: red peppers, peas, onions, carrots, radishes, fresh dill and pickle relish.
3. The last step is combining the potatoes and vegetables with mayonnaise. Or, use your favorite homemade or purchased potato salad dressing. Then, chill your potato salad for about an hour before serving, to let the flavors meld.

Some other foods you can add to potato salads include: hardboiled eggs, celery, cheese, parsley green pepper, grape or cherry tomatoes (halved), capers, olives and chives.

Recipe and photo from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension: <http://food.unl.edu/14-ways-consumers-can-reduce-food-waste>