

Top Tips

Saving Food from Waste



6.7 million tonnes of food is thrown away by households in the UK every year, or to put it in real terms, 1/3 of all food we buy ends up being thrown away when most of it could be eaten! If we stopped wasting food which could have been eaten, it would have the same impact on carbon emissions as taking one in five cars off the UK roads.

What is included?

Research has suggested that 40% of the food we throw away could have been eaten. The top 5 foods are:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables including potatoes
- Meat and fish
- Bread and other baked products
- Rice and pasta
- Dairy produce

Avoiding throwing out food that could be eaten will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions – it will also save you money!!

However, there are some foods that we can not help but waste such as egg shells, banana skins and tea bags. Home composting is a great way to stop this type of waste ending up in a land fill, and this will help our gardens too.

What to do?

There are a few simple things that you could do as an individual to reduce waste, save money and still make sure food is safe. One of the easiest is to make sure we don't buy or cook more than we can eat. Some of our waste is made of such things like peelings, cores and bones but a large majority of it is perfectly good food. The food we discard ranges from mouldy cheese to stale bread and meats that are past their sell by dates.

The majority of food gets thrown away because it is “out of date”. It is important to remember that you shouldn't use any food or drink past the “use by” date even if it looks and smells fine, because it could put your health at risk. It is possible to freeze certain foods on purchase and then eat them after the “use by” date but remember it's always better not to buy too much in the first place!

“Best before” dates are more about quality than safety and many people get the two confused. When the date runs out it doesn't mean that the food will be harmful, but it may begin to lose its flavour and texture. The one exception to this rule is eggs which should not be eaten after their “best before” date. In the effort to reduce food waste there are a number of tips which can help:

- Use foods again such as left over meat and vegetables from the Sunday roast to create stir fries, pie's or soups.
- Buy meat in bulk and freeze so they last longer and they can be used after their “used by” date.
- Make food in large batches and freeze in portions sizes so any excess isn't wasted
- Buy tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables to stop fresh produce going to waste

The Environment

Throwing food away is throwing away valuable resources. It is important to think about the energy, water and packaging used in food production, transportation and storage which all goes to waste when we throw away perfectly good food. Cheese is a good example. Cows have to be fed and milked. The milk then has to go into



cooling and is transported to be processed into cheese, packaged, and transported to the shops - all the time being kept at the right temperature. If it gets thrown away it will most likely end up in a landfill site, where, rather than harmlessly decomposing as many people like to think, it rots and actually releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Recycle NOW!

So it's not only the food we should think about but the packaging too. When you recycle materials, these are converted into new products, which reduce the need to consume natural resources and therefore using considerably less energy than producing new products from raw materials. Recycling also reduces the amount of rubbish sent to landfill sites. On average there are 1,500 landfill sites in the UK, and in 2001, these sites produce a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the UK's emissions powerful greenhouse gases.