

Food Waste in Canada

Canada wastes 873 pounds of food per person a year, making us one of the biggest wasters on the planet

And it costs our economy about \$30 billion a year

The agency found that from farm to table, Canada wastes 396 kilograms of food annually per capita compared with 415 kilograms in the United States and 249 kilograms in Mexico.

Food is considered lost when it is spilled or spoiled before it reaches its final destination.

Not only does that waste have an economic cost — other studies have pegged it at about \$30 billion a year — it creates 21 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, largely from landfills.

By far the largest part of the waste comes from consumers, says the report. Every Canadian, on average, tosses away 170 kilograms of food a year.

Companies can improve the way they do business."

Restaurants could reduce portions, the report suggests. Bread served at tables could be optional. Buffet serving trays could be shallower to reduce the amount of food on display.

Retailers could sell cosmetically imperfect produce at a discount, as some already do. Expiry date labels could be standardized.

Better tools and techniques to prevent food waste and to make processing and transport more efficient would be a big help

Too much food gets tossed because consumers and businesses assume a best-before date is a deadline and not a quality benchmark, she said.

"It's not clear to the consumer and sometimes not to businesses that when we say 'best before' we're not talking about a food safety issue."

Food waste is a worldwide epidemic, and it's well past time the average person started fighting back.

More than [one-third of all food](#) produced globally is wasted or spoiled. Americans throw away up to 40% of the food they buy, and organic matter in landfills provides [20% of all methane emissions](#), a potent greenhouse gas that contributes considerably to [climate change](#).

And yet in 2013, [49.1 million Americans](#) lived without sufficient access to safe and nutritious food.

The overall food supply is far too abundant — about twice the necessary amount per person, he says — and we want that food to look perfect, with the "right" shapes sizes and colors.

"Food prices have certainly been rising for the last five years, but when you look at our household spending that goes toward food, no other nation spends less on its food supply. We simply don't value things we don't spend much on," Bloom says. We're very careful about getting deals and discounts at grocery stores and at big-box retailers like Costco, but those values don't mean anything when half of that food goes in the trash.

Shop smart and realistically.

It sounds simple, but this is one of the most important things you can do. When you go food shopping, make sure you don't buy too much food. This may mean going to the grocery store more often, and buying less food each time. If you live far away from the store or you hate shopping, you should be thoughtful and careful about what you purchase.

When cooking, don't over-serve food.

The idea of massive portions is partly driven by restaurant culture, but it's started to trickle into our homes, Bloom says. Fight against that, and don't over-serve friends and family when you're cooking meals. Using small plates can help with that.

Save – and actually eat – leftovers.

In the same vein, make sure you save uneaten food when you either cook too much or you get too much food at a restaurant. Label your leftovers so you can keep track of how long they've been in your fridge or freezer, and incorporate them into your daily or weekly routine.

Store food in the right places.

"Storing food in the right place is really underrated," Bloom says. "It's often surprising what kinds of fruits and vegetables want to be at room temperature versus in the refrigerator."

Avoid clutter in your fridge, pantry and freezer.

Bloom says out of sight is out of mind when it comes to storing food, too. If we forget something's there until it's no longer good to consume, that's a huge waste. Keep things neat and visible, and use the "first in, first out" principle: After you buy new groceries, move the older products to the front so you consume them first. Also remember that things don't last forever in your freezer. Freezing can be a great asset in extending food's lifespan, but it will eventually dry that food out.

Treat expiration and sell-by dates as guidelines.

When it comes to expiration and sell-by dates, Bloom recommends not paying much attention to them, as they identify food quality, not food safety. "Trust your senses instead of the date on the package. Trust your sense of smell and sight and taste," he says.

Keep track of what you throw away: Manage a waste log to keep an eye on what you're throwing out, so you can prevent doing the same in the future. The other side is to keep track of what's already in your fridge before you go shopping; that way, you won't double-up on products and fail to use them before they go bad. As obvious as that sounds, we all forget to do it from time to time.

Donate to food banks and farms: Before you throw away excess food, look into food banks and charities where you can bring items you know you're not going to consume before they go bad, and give them to people in need.

Try canning and pickling: Canning is a great way to preserve food (especially fruit) and increase its shelf life for months.

Try composting, but don't focus on it. Rather than discarding scraps, you can compost certain foods and turn it into nutrient-rich fertilizer. But composting shouldn't be top-of-mind when first getting started on reducing food waste. Composting is really valuable -- it's part of the whole

equation -- but it shouldn't be anyone's priority. "It's a nice safety net to keep food out of the landfill, because we're never going to completely eliminate food waste. We're always going to have some excess food, so having a process for that ... is a nice solution



And we're fussy: we don't like seeing fruits or vegetables that aren't appealing. We don't tend to buy imperfect looking food even though it's totally fine for consumption. Instead this perfectly good food is wasted.

Besides being a waste of money, time and energy, unused food that ends up in landfills is one of the main sources of greenhouse gases.

- Worldwide, food is discarded in processing, transport, supermarkets and kitchens.
- Many fruits and vegetables don't even make it onto store shelves because they're not pretty enough for picky consumers.
- About 20 per cent of Canada's methane emissions (a potent greenhouse gas) come from landfills.
- When people toss food, all the resources to grow, ship and produce it get chucked, too, including massive volumes of water.

Pick the first one: This goes for things like dairy items. Don't reach to the back. Grab from the front.

Pick the last one

Nobody likes to be picked last. Same goes for the lonely head of lettuce on display.

Pick the brown, spotted or crooked ones

Imperfect-looking produce wants to be tasted, not wasted.

Choose overripe produce, sometimes

See that pineapple? It's going to be mouldy tomorrow. And it came all the way from Hawaii! It's not organic or local but it's dumpster-bound unless you buy it.

Choose single bananas

Grab a few single bananas next time instead of choosing a bunch.

How to not waste food

Meal plan

Take a few minutes to write out a week's worth of dinners. Start with what's already on hand. Think about how leftovers can play into lunches, snacks or other meals. Create a grocery list based on your plan.

If you prefer electronic help, there are loads of recipe websites — some even create the shopping list!

Buy the food you need now. Eat the food you planned. You'll be rewarded with a clean conscience, a healthier planet and a fatter wallet.

Make soup

Veggies make delicious stew, mashed potatoes thicken any stock.

Freeze

[Freezing food](#) takes only takes a moment and extends the life of what isn't getting eaten right away.

Donate

Swimming in leftovers or perishable garden produce? Bring it to your workplace, local food bank or check online to see which charities take food donations.

Create an "Eat-me-first" bin or basket for the fridge

This brilliant, simple tip comes from the Just Eat It movie:

1. Repurpose a plastic bin or basket
2. Label it: "Eat-me-first"
3. Add sad-looking produce and foods approaching their "best before" dates
4. Find recipes that incorporate bin items

You'll save money and put valuable nutrients into people instead of into the compost.

It's simple: See your food and eat your food! (That's the whole reason you bought it, right?)