

Reducing *Food Waste*

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Reducing Food Waste

Each year, around 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted throughout the world. One-third of all food that is produced is spoiled during transportation or storage, or is thrown out after it has been bought. More than half of all food that is wasted comes from households. Families can help reduce food waste by making changes to the way they plan their weekly menu, shop for ingredients and cook meals.



A lot of food that is still edible is thrown away each year.

Planning meals before heading to the shops is a good way to avoid buying more food than a family needs. A practical starting point for meal planning is to check what food items are already in the fridge and pantry. Much of the food wastage that occurs in households is due to food items not being used quickly enough, and then having to be thrown out. It is important to understand the length of time various foods can safely be stored before use.

Checking the fridge before shopping can help people avoid buying more of a food that they already have at home.



Many packaged foods have a “use-by” date. This date indicates the food is safe to eat until that date. A use-by date is most commonly seen on **perishable** foods, such as meat and dairy products. These products should only be bought if they can be eaten before their use-by date.



A use-by date on a packet of fresh pasta shows when it must be eaten by.



Dairy products like milk and yogurt are common foods that need to be eaten by their use-by date.

Some products are labelled with a “best-before” date. This means these foods will remain fresh until that date, but can also be safely eaten afterwards. However, after the best-before date, the flavours could be slightly affected, or there could be changes to the colour or texture of the product. Frozen, dried or tinned foods usually have a best-before date stamped on them.



A best-before date on a loaf of bread shows how long it will remain fresh.

When planning family meals, the items that have the nearest use-by and best-before dates should be used first to avoid wastage. Regularly checking the contents of the fridge and pantry means foods nearing their **expiry dates** can be used up first. If there is an oversupply of some food items, they could be shared with another family to reduce food waste.

Jars of sauce and tinned foods can stay fresh for much longer than other food products.



After checking which ingredients are in the pantry, a meal plan can be made for the week ahead. It is helpful to write a shopping list to take to the market or supermarket. This list should contain only the foods that are required to make the meals on the meal plan. Listing the quantities of each item also helps to reduce food waste, because then shoppers only buy what they need.

While shopping, it is a good idea to look for bags of fruit and vegetables that have slightly odd shapes and sizes. These foods are pre-packed and usually sell at a reduced price. Sometimes, they are thrown away because they look a little different from what shoppers expect, but they are still healthy and delicious. Once these foods are chopped, grated or sliced, the odd shapes or sizes are not a problem.



Oddly shaped apples still taste delicious.

People can use a shopping list on a notepad or their phone to remember the food they need to buy.



Having a well-organised shopping list can stop shoppers from buying more of items that are on special simply because these deals appear to save them money. While special deals may be tempting, if all the food isn't used and some is thrown out, a percentage of the money spent on it is wasted, as well as the food.

Energy, fertilisers and suitable land are required to produce food, and make up a large part of its total cost. However, this money is also wasted if families do not responsibly use the food they buy.



Buying lots of products that keep for a long time can be tempting, but the food sometimes isn't eaten.