



At-Home

Food Waste Audit

with

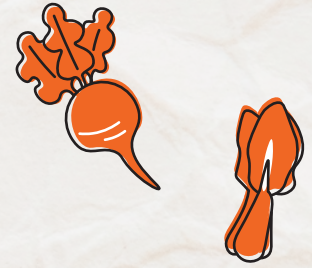


WE DON'T WASTE
SAVING FOOD • PROTECTING THE PLANET • FEEDING PEOPLE

**Instructions,
Tips, Recipes
& More!**



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At-Home



Food Waste Audit

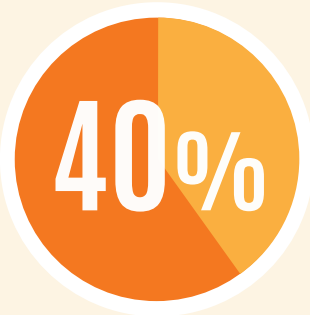


with



WE DON'T WASTE

Did you know?



40% of all food in the US is unsold and unused. This food ends up in a landfill, where it rots and produces methane (a highly potent greenhouse gas).

Out of all of that food waste, **40%** is produced by consumers in their households!

Not-So-Fun Fact: The U.S. is the third largest producer of food waste in the *world*.

What do we do about it?

We Don't Waste works to reduce hunger and food waste in the Denver area by recovering excess food from local businesses and distributing it to nonprofit partners.

You can help by finding ways to reduce waste in your own home, and by educating others in your community about the issue.



Remember: You can't be perfect 100% of the time, but there is more than we CAN do!

Why should we care?

Food waste affects our planet and your wallet.

If you enjoy hiking in the summer or skiing in the winter, your actions to prevent food waste are what help preserve these experiences in the future.

In the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2021 report, they estimate each year in the U.S. alone, food loss and waste create 170 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent—and this is a modest estimate excluding a significant amount of food waste currently rotting in landfills.

Plus, at the end of the day, food waste costs you money on food that just ends up in the trash!

The average household of four could save up to \$1,800 by preventing food waste!

Online Resources

WEDONTWASTE.ORG

Use our blog, follow our social media, and subscribe to our newsletter to continue getting new tips and tricks on reducing food waste, proper food storage, and more.

SAVETHEFOOD.COM

Save The Food provides recipes using the food in your fridge, as well as a comprehensive list of ways to prevent, spot, and mitigate food waste.

SUPERCOOK.COM

SuperCook allows you to search for hundreds of recipes using the ingredients you have in your fridge and pantry.

FOODSAFETY.GOV

Use the FoodKeeper app to find storage tips to over 650 types of food.

Schedule

Week 1: Planning & Prepping

What you'll need: Be sure to save this instruction packet somewhere you can easily access it. You should also make sure you have access to the Food Waste Tracking form. This is available on the At-Home Food Waste Audit page on our website for you to print more copies.



If you received the magnet as a part of our program, place it somewhere where you will frequently see it, either on your fridge, trash can, or compost bin. Remember, this is a visual reminder of your commitment of the project!

Week 2: Stealthy Storage

What you'll need: This week, our focus is on food storage. Go through your cupboards to look for any storage solutions you might have, such as glassware for leftovers or paper bags.



Use what you have! Try to incorporate these storage items into your routine. If you'd like to try updating your storage solutions, now is the time to look into purchasing new options!

Week 3: Creative Cooking

What you'll need: We have several example recipes for you to create! Try a recipe or two to see how you can use all of the edible parts of the foods. If you'd like to try more, you can find countless recipes online using the search term "ends and stems", (the colloquial term for recipes using all the parts of food).



Week 4: Celebration & Meetup

What you'll need: Collect all of your results and make sure you update your tracking sheet online. We will be reviewing your results and reporting back to the group on the waste we have collectively prevented in our homes!



Plus, if you're participating in our 2022 program, we will be hosting a party at our Distribution Center to celebrate the group's successes and give you an inside look at We Don't Waste's operations.

Performing a Food Waste Audit

What you'll need:

Food Waste Tracking Sheet (Included in this packet and on the We Don't Waste website)

1 Measuring Cup

1 Container or Bowl



Let's get started!

The first thing we need to do is create a standard unit of measurement for your audit experience. Find a container you're willing to use for the food waste you produce for the duration of the audit. Large leftover containers and mixing bowls work well. Now find a measuring cup. You're going to fill the container to the top with water using the measuring cup so you can record the volume of the container. The volume of the full container will be your unit of measurement for waste tracking, and will be what you record in the "Amount" section of your tracking sheet.

What are we recording as waste? Everything! Edible and inedible food counts as waste. You'll see on the next page a definition of what is edible or inedible! But just to clarify, this is an *at-home* audit, you do not need to record food waste from eating out, at friend's home, etc.

Using Your Tracking Sheet

In order to get the most accurate results, it is important to be honest and diligent about recording your results. Print out the sheet and keep it somewhere where you will be reminded to keep track, like on your fridge, or by your trash or compost bin.

Use the notes section to record any other food habits you might want to track during the experience. Did you eat out multiple times this week, or grab extra groceries? This is where you can record anomalies, or further elaborate on your "Why" section.

1. Type of Food

Record what it was that you threw out that day i.e. slice of pizza, leftover chicken.

2. Amount

Use the volume measurement of your container here to record the **total volume** of waste produced from the day.

3. Why

Why did you throw it away? Did you forget to eat it or lose it in the fridge? Be as specific as necessary here.

What is edible?



What is edible food waste?

Food waste can be divided into edible and inedible food waste. Edible food waste is anything you originally intended to eat, but threw away. For example, a banana that got too overripe to eat and was tossed in the trash is considered food waste. The pit from the avocado, however, would typically not be considered edible food waste.

What is inedible food waste?

Parts of food that you never intended to eat are considered “inedible” food waste, though this can vary from person to person. For example, most people always throw away banana peels, making them inedible food waste. However, some people eat banana peels, so if they intended to eat the peel but didn’t, that would be edible food waste. Generally, inedible food waste includes bones, rinds, peels, and cores.

What are some examples of edible food waste?

Edible food waste comes in many forms, and unfortunately a lot of it comes from healthy produce that goes bad before anyone eats it. Things like wilted lettuce or rotten apples getting thrown out are examples of edible food waste. It’s not limited to produce though – baked goods like bread that went moldy are another large source of edible food waste.

Edible: foods that were once edible but went bad such as leftovers you did not eat, or baked goods that got moldy, cauliflower leaves and stems, carrot tops, and more!

Inedible: apple core, avocado pit and peel



What is the difference between solid and liquid food waste?

If it isn’t clear if a food counts as solid or liquid, use this general rule: If you can pour it down a kitchen sink drain without the need for a garbage disposal to get it down, then it counts as liquid. For example, pudding would count as liquid, but apple cores would count as solid.

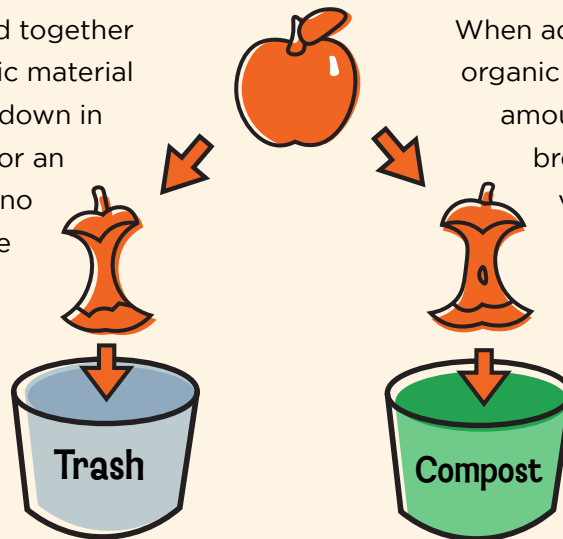
What are we tracking? All of it!

Compost What You Can't Eat

What do you do with the parts of foods that are inedible, or the food that went bad? Compost it! Most of the damage from food in the landfill comes from the greenhouse gases, (specifically, the powerful heat-trapping gas, methane) that are released when food decays in suboptimal conditions. Composting is a great alternative to sending the food to the landfill, and can be an amazing soil additive for gardens!

Trash Versus Compost

In a landfill, trash is packed together so tightly that any organic material trapped among it will break down in an anaerobic environment, or an environment with little to no oxygen. This increases the time for it to decompose and the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted.



When added to a compost pile, organic matter is able to access the amount of oxygen it needs to break down aerobically. This vastly reduces the necessary time to decompose, and allows emitted greenhouse gases to be absorbed into the soil. The soil is healthier, and the local atmosphere is spared.

LEARN HOW TO COMPOST

www.EPA.gov/recycle/composting-home

As of January 2023, The City and County of Denver, along with other Front Range communities, are working on rolling out city compost collections in phases across the metro area serviced by Denver's Solid Waste Management division.

Compost Guidelines are simple! Two categories ONLY:

Food Scraps: Produce, bread, bones, meat, cheese, eggshells, coffee grounds (no coffee filters or tea bags), moldy food, uneaten leftovers, rinds, peels, pits, etc.

REMOVE ALL: produce decals, stickers, rubber bands, twist-ties and anything that is NOT food.

Yard & Plant Trimmings: Leaves, twigs, small branches, flowers, weeds, grass and yard trimmings, etc.

Want to learn more? Check out the Denver.gov website and look up the "Expanded Waste Collection Services"

At-Home

Food Waste Audit Tracking Sheet

Day	Type of Food	Amount	Why
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

Planning

REDUCE YOUR WASTE BEFORE IT HAPPENS

* PLAN MEALS IN ADVANCE

This one simple habit can make a huge impact! Start small, and then increase the frequency. Plan out a few meals a week and pick a night dedicated to eating leftovers. If you get really good at this, meal prepping is one of the best ways to ensure that you're using what you bought, and eating it! The key is to be realistic about planning meals you will actually make and portion sizes you can finish.

* MAKE A LIST

Never go grocery shopping without a list. Try to shop for things you will be cooking with exclusively, not what you *think* you'll use.

* SHOP YOUR KITCHEN

Prepare meals with what you have in your kitchen, like leftover foods or that remaining pasta sauce that you have hanging out in the back of the fridge. Before you go shopping, take note of what you already have in your pantry or fridge so you don't end up re-buying the same items you forgot about in the back of your fridge. Use SuperCook.com to create recipes out of what you have left!

* LEFTOVERS

Rotate leftovers in your fridge so that the oldest leftovers are in the front where you'll be reminded to eat them. Write the open date on food packaging so you know what to use first. We love clear containers so you can easily see what you have to eat in the fridge.



EXPIRATION DATES ARE OUTDATED!

PER USDA GUIDELINES

SELL BY
7/26/21

"SELL-BY" has nothing to do with food safety, but with the ideal cycle of freshness for grocers.

BB: 07.26.21

"BEST-BEFORE" is a manufacturer recommendation for peak flavor quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

USE - BY
JULY 26

"USE-BY" refers to the estimated end of peak flavor, but does not refer to food safety.

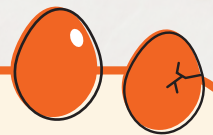
Always use your senses of sight, smell, and taste to check the food before discarding.



How do I know it's safe to eat?

Every food is going to be a little different in terms of the signs of whether or not they are safe to eat.

It's good practice to not immediately throw things away if you're unsure, but to instead test them using your senses. Look, smell, and finally, take a small taste. If that doesn't yield an obvious answer, a quick internet search can usually give you a good idea of what to look for.



Tip: Float Your Eggs For Freshness

Raw eggs in a shell usually last around a month in your fridge. Try this trick the next time you want to test freshness.

Fill a bowl or cup with lukewarm water. Place the egg in the water. If the egg sinks, it's still fresh. If it sits at the bottom but stands upright, you'll want to eat it soon! If the egg floats, it has gone bad.

The egg shell and membrane are both porous and deteriorate over time, which is why this method works so well. This is also why older eggs are easier to peel if you hardboil them!

Food Storage Tips: Produce

When storing produce it is important to consider the temperature and humidity that it prefers. Some foods need a little humidity, some tolerate it, others rot in it. Ethylene, a hormone produced by ripening fruit and veggies, is also a consideration. Produce that is sensitive to ethylene should be stored separately from produce that produces it.

Humid


Dry


Sensitive to Ethylene



Produces Ethylene



Store At Room Temp

Store On The Counter And Then
 Move to the Fridge When Ripe

Store In The Fridge

 Bananas	 Apricots	  Apples
 Basil	  Avocados	 Asparagus
 Cucumbers	  Kiwi	Blueberries
  Eggplant	  Mangoes	  Broccoli
 Garlic	Melon	  Brussel Sprouts
Grapefruit	  Nectarines	  Cabbage
  Mushrooms	 Papayas	  Carrots
  Onions	 Peaches	  Cauliflower
  Potatoes	  Pears	 Cherries
  Summer Squash	 Plums	Corn (in the husk)
  Sweet Potatoes		 Cilantro
 Taro		 Dark Leafy Greens
  Watermelon		 Grapes
 Winter Squash		  Leeks
 Yuca		 Lettuce
		  Lemons
		  Limes
		 Oranges
		 Parsley
		  Peas
		  Peppers
		 Pomegranate
		 Strawberries

Produce Continued & More

✦ Controlling Humidity

Even if the produce thrives in, or just tolerates, humidity, it's best practice to ensure it's not too soaked and there are no visible water droplets. Often times, a damp paper towel around the produce can provide all of the additional humidity you might need to add.

Conversly, if you bring home produce that prefers to be dry, and is not, dry them off before storing them, or keep a dry paper towel in an airtight container with the foods to absorb excess moisture. Paper bags are also a great way to keep produce that releases moisture, like mushrooms.

✦ Ethylene

You may not have heard of ethylene before, but it is one of the single most important factors in keeping your produce from going bad too quickly. It's a hormone that's released in varying levels in produce during the ripening process. Some foods are highly sensitive, others are not at all. It's good to look up which fruits and veggies you may be storing together that don't get along.

✦ Revive Wilted Leafy Veggies

If you wait too long to eat your veggies, and they wilt, many can be given new life with an ice bath. Throw them in cold water with some ice cubes, and give them 30 minutes to soak while preparing other foods. They'll perk up right in time to eat!

✦ Store In Water

Some produce likes being kept just like flowers, namely, herbs, carrots, broccoli, and celery. Put them in a jar with an inch or two of water at the bottom of the stems to extend their shelf life. You wouldn't store a bouquet of fresh flowers in a vase without water and expect them to last long—a lot of produce wants to be stored the same way!



Food Storage Tips: Meats & Dairy

* Meat

Meats should be stored with sensitivity to food safety, as well as their longevity. Cross-contamination can cause a huge amount of waste if isn't prevented.

Keep meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge. This prevents any juice from raw meat from dripping onto other foods and contaminating them. Keeping it in an airtight container is also a good practice. If the plastic from the grocery gets ripped, immediately put the meat in a sealable container.

For fish, it's best to remove their deli paper and wrapping and store them in your own airtight bag with as much air removed from the bag as possible. This helps prevent the bag and wrapping from sticking to the fish and excess moisture from being trapped against the fish.

* Milk

There are few worse ways to start your day than by accidentally drinking rotten milk! There isn't much you can do to extend the shelf-life of dairy, but there are a few tricks that can help you reduce waste.

Purchase boxed alternatives to milk, like oat, almond, or hemp milk that can be stored at room temperature. By limiting the quantity of milk you have open in your fridge at one time, the less product that's susceptible to fermenting. And keep it airtight! The more it is exposed to air, the quicker it ferments.

* Cheese

Keep cheese somewhere consistently cold and dry, like a shelf in your fridge. It also ages best with air, and can be wrapped in parchment paper or beeswax wrap to allow it to breath and extend it's shelf life.

Just make sure you replace the paper every time you open it to eat! Don't let it stay out in the air completely unwrapped either, as it may absorb the aromatics of the other foods in the fridge.



Creative Cooking

There are lots of ways to get creative in the kitchen in using up those ends and stems pieces you might not normally use. A surprising amount of the pieces we cut off of our food and throw away are actually edible, and packed with nutrition! If you're curious as to what parts are edible or not, a quick search online will usually yield some answers and several recipes.

If you want a place to get started with more recipes than we have listed in this packet, check out some of our favorite recipes online at:

www.WeDontWaste.org/cooking-with-we-dont-waste

BANANA PEEL CARNITAS

Yes, banana peels ARE edible. And they make some incredible carnitas. Try out this recipe and invite some friends over for a taste test. We guarantee you'll be shocked at how good these are!



Ingredients

6 banana peels	1 teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons of olive oil (or preferred cooking oil)	1/4 cup of Coca-Cola
1/2 yellow onion, diced	1 tablespoon tamari, soy sauce, or liquid aminos
3-4 garlic cloves, minced	1/4 cup orange juice from one orange
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced	
1 tablespoon dried oregano	

1. Remove the stem and bottom of the banana, then spoon out the flesh from the inner part of each banana peel.
2. Using a fork, shred the banana peels into long strips.
3. Over medium-high heat, heat a large pot, then add in oil. When the oil is hot, add onions, garlic, and jalapeno. Saute for 2-3 minutes, or until fragrant.
4. Add shredded banana peels, oregano, cumin, salt, pepper, and stir until well combined. Next, add orange juice, coca-cola, and soy sauce, then stir again.
6. Let simmer, then turn the heat to medium-low and cover for 30 minutes.
7. Enjoy as tacos, quesadillas, or anything you desire!

Creative Cooking



CARROT TOP PESTO

Did you know the tops of your carrots are edible? The next time you grab a bag of carrots don't chop the top and throw it into the trash, make this pesto to enjoy with pasta, or straight up as a dip!



Ingredients

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup toasted walnuts or pine nuts

1 small clove garlic

1 cup coarsely chopped carrot tops

Heaping handful of basil leaves

$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 whole lemon depending on preference

$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional: $\frac{1}{4}$ parmesan cheese

1. Grab the tops of the carrots and wash them thoroughly. Coarsley chop or pulse the the carrot tops, basil, and garlic in a food processor.
2. Combine the dry ingredients.
3. Stir in the olive oil, followed by the lemon juice. Add water to create your preferred consistency for pesto.
4. Salt and pepper to taste, and mix in parmesan cheese for extra flavor.



VEGETABLE STOCK

We all produce veggie scraps in the kitchen, but they have second life through a delicious vegetable stock. This can be used for your next soup, stock, chili, or even to a pasta sauce for additional flavor and nutrients.



Ingredients

Vegetable scraps!

Optional additions for flavor: garlic, parsley, bay leaves, thyme, salt, pepper

1. Remove the scraps from any vegetables you are preparing (but avoid the vegetables that will add a bitter taste such as brussel sprouts, kale, or artichokes) and store them in a gallon ziplock bag. The scraps can be frozen for about 6 months.
2. Once the bag is full, empty it into a pot and fill the pot with water up to $\frac{3}{4}$ full
3. Bring water to a boil and let it simmer for a minimum of 30 minutes (the longer, the better).
4. Strain the vegetables out of the stock and drain into a bowl.
5. Refrigerate liquid for up to 4 days, or freeze up to 3 months.

Review Your Results

✦ Check Your Stats

Congratulations! You've completed three weeks of implementing new habits to reduce your food waste at home. Consolidate your notes and the data you've tracked so you can complete a formal review of your experience.

1. Identify the culprits

Look at the foods you've thrown away for the duration of the experience. Do you notice any patterns? Are you consistently throwing away leftovers? Is old and moldy produce the most wasted food? Do you often purchase specific items because they're "healthy" and you're trying to wish yourself new habits? Try to identify any specific items or patterns you've developed with food waste.

2. What worked?

Were there any particular habits you developed that made a noticeable difference? Maybe storing your produce differently kept those bananas fresh longer. Did you stick to a meal plan and eat everything you made? Write down or highlight the habits you think made the **most** difference.

3. What did you enjoy?

What habits did you implement that you really enjoyed or found easy to change? This program will only make a longterm impact if you continue to practice these habits past these few weeks of training. Be honest and think about what you are most likely to continue doing and focus on maintaining those habits as consistently as you can moving forward.

4. Set up for success

You should have an idea now of what really makes an impact on food waste in your home, and where to start to change. By preventing this waste, you're positively impacting your home and creating a better world for everyone to live in! Be proud!



✦ A student reviews what she is throwing away for a food waste audit at school.

Notes

A large, rounded rectangular area with a light orange background and a dark orange border, containing 20 horizontal black lines for writing notes.



THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!



WE DON'T WASTE

SAVING FOOD • PROTECTING THE PLANET • FEEDING PEOPLE

LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

WWW.WEDONTWASTE.ORG

