



At-Home

# Food Waste Audit

with




## WE DON'T WASTE

SAVING FOOD • PROTECTING THE PLANET • FEEDING PEOPLE

### Your Guide to Saving Food and Protecting the Planet



The page is framed by a decorative border of green line-art icons representing various food items like mushrooms, tomatoes, carrots, and pizzas, as well as kitchen tools like forks and spoons. An orange starburst icon is located at the top left of the main content area.

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# Food Waste Audit

with



WE DON'T WASTE

## Did you know?



**40%**  
**of Food Produced  
is Never Eaten**

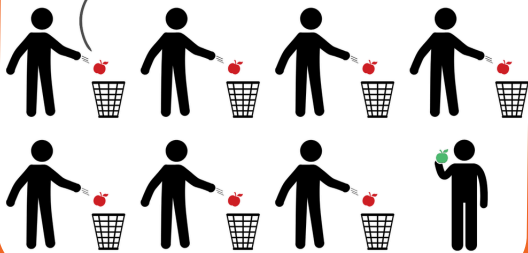


This food ends up in a landfill, where it rots and produces methane and carbon dioxide (greenhouse gases).

## The majority of FOOD WASTE comes from HOUSEHOLDS!

**7/8**

households report wasting  
edible food in the last week



Food waste and food loss happens at every stage of the food cycle, from planting and harvesting, to transportation and retail, to our cupboards at home.

In the U.S., households are the worst offender for sending edible food to our landfills.



# Food Waste Audit

## WHEN WE WASTE FOOD WE ARE WASTING OTHER RESOURCES



### WATER

When food is lost or wasted, we are also wasting the water that was used to produce and process that food. In 2023, it was estimated that **16.2 trillion gallons** of water were used to produce food that was never eaten. That's more than all the freshwater water used in California and Idaho combined. This amount of water **would fill 24 million Olympic-sized swimming pools** or allow **every American to shower seven times a day all year long**.



### LAND

When we waste food, we also waste the land used to grow, raise, and produce it—including cropland, grazing land, and the land needed for infrastructure like storage and transport. Land use for agriculture also impacts biodiversity due to habitat loss and food web disruptions.

**Nearly 30% of the world's agricultural land is used to produce food that ultimately goes to waste.**

In the U.S., the amount of land required to grow all surplus food would cover an area the size of California and New York combined.



# Food Waste Audit

## WHEN WE WASTE FOOD, WE ARE WASTING OTHER RESOURCES



### LABOR

In the U.S., **millions of hours of farm labor** are spent growing crops and raising animals for food that's never eaten. This includes the work of farmers, field workers, factory employees, truck drivers, grocery staff, and restaurant workers.

It is hard to calculate the exact hours of labor wasted but just to give you a tangible number, there are 1.9 million farms in the U.S. and about 2.9 million agricultural workers including both full-time and seasonal workers.

(According to The National Center for Farmworker Health)



### MONEY

When we waste food, we are also throwing away the money that we used to purchase that food. Between groceries and restaurant plate waste, consumers spent **\$261 billion** on food they didn't ultimately eat.

On a household level, the average American family of four throws away food worth about **\$3,000 per year**. On an individual level, food waste is estimated to cost Americans around \$792 per year, which is equivalent to 214 meals.

**Are there any other resources you can think of that get wasted when food is thrown away?**

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# MEASURE YOUR FOOD WASTE



What you'll need: measuring cup, container with a lid, & included tracking sheet



- ☐ Find any size container **with a lid** to measure your food waste in. We recommend a container that holds 1-2 cups for smaller households and 3-4 cups for larger households.
- ☐ Fill the container to the top with water using a measuring cup so you can record the volume of the container in ounces.
- ☐ Write down the volume of the container on the tracking sheet (on page 8). Ounces will be our unit of measurement to report at the end of the audit.

The goal of this assignment is to **use what you already have** at home. If you only have a larger container, that works too!

**If your container holds 2 cups of water, the volume of your container will be 16 ounces (1 cup = 8 oz).**

**2 X 8 oz = 16 oz. If it is 3 cups it will be 3 x 8 = 24 oz, and so on.**

## USING YOUR TRACKING SHEET

To get the most accurate results at the end of the program, it is important to be honest and diligent about recording your daily 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.



Start the habit of writing down what you put in your container **every day—both morning and night.**



## WHAT ARE WE RECORDING AS WASTE?

Any food that you didn't or couldn't eat that you would normally throw away. Ex: unused ends and stems from making dinner, apple cores, banana peels, egg shells, pizza crust, etc.

Food waste can include food that went bad before you had the chance to eat it, bread that doesn't taste good, moldy cheese, moldy lettuce. Ultimately, any food that ends up in a landfill is rotting and producing greenhouse gases. The more we prevent, the better the result for our planet!

Do your best to estimate your food waste when you eat out of the house.



### 1. Volume

At the top of your first page of tracking sheet, write down volume of your container in ounces.

### 2. Day of week

If you start measuring on Monday you will write that there.

### 3. Type of food

Record what it was that you threw out that day. Ex: pizza crust, leftover chicken.

### 4. Number of full containers

Write down the number of containers you **fill up**. If your container is not full, wait to write down the number, or write 0.

### 5. Notes/reasons why

Why did you throw it away? Did you forget to eat it or lose it in the fridge? Did it taste bad? Was it egg shells, coffee grounds, or something inedible? You can also write "I ate out of the house on this day". Be as specific as you can.

# Food Waste Audit Tracking Sheet

## Week 1

Volume:			
DAY	Type of food	# of FULL containers	Notes/ Reasons Why
<b>1</b> Day of Week:			
<b>2</b> Day of Week:			
<b>3</b> Day of Week:			
<b>4</b> Day of Week:			
<b>5</b> Day of Week:			
<b>6</b> Day of Week:			
<b>7</b> Day of Week:			
		<b>Total:</b>	
<b>Math/ other notes</b>		<b>Patterns:</b>	

# Food Waste Audit Tracking Sheet

## Week 2

Volume:		What Changes are you making:	
DAY	Type of food	# of FULL containers	Notes/ Reasons Why
<b>8</b> Day of Week:			
<b>9</b> Day of Week:			
<b>10</b> Day of Week:			
<b>11</b> Day of Week:			
<b>12</b> Day of Week:			
<b>13</b> Day of Week:			
<b>14</b> Day of Week:			
		<b>Total:</b>	
<b>Math/ other notes</b>		<b>Patterns:</b>	



## GUIDED NOTES



What patterns are you seeing with your food waste?

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What changes can you make to reduce your food waste?

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Which of the changes you mentioned above are reasonable to make in your day to day life?

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# FOOD DATE LABELS



Lots of food gets thrown away because of confusion about what date labels mean. They mostly have to do with flavor & quality of the food.

**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.

SIGHT



SMELL



& TASTE



Before today, did you know what the date labels meant?

YES



NO



Now that you know about the labels, would you eat food that is past the date?

YES



NO



UNSURE



SIGHT



**Does the food look good?**

SMELL



**Does the food smell good?**

& TASTE



**Does the food taste good?**

If all of the answers above are yes, your food should still be safe to eat! (Regardless of what the label says!)



# IF I CAN'T EAT IT, THEN WHAT?



**Upcycle:** You can repurpose older foods into new food options, such as brown bananas into banana bread. Check out our recipes at: [www.WeDontWaste.org/cooking-with-we-dont-waste](http://www.WeDontWaste.org/cooking-with-we-dont-waste)



**Donate:** Your family can donate unopened foods to a food bank, food recovery organization, a neighbor, or to We Don't Waste!



**Feed Animals:** If you have food that went bad but is still safe for animals to eat, you can feed that food to chickens or pigs, if you have access to those animals.



**Compost:** Composting is a great way to "recycle" food! Food scraps that are no longer safe to eat can be transformed into compost allowing all the nutrients in that food to go back into the soil to help grow more foods.



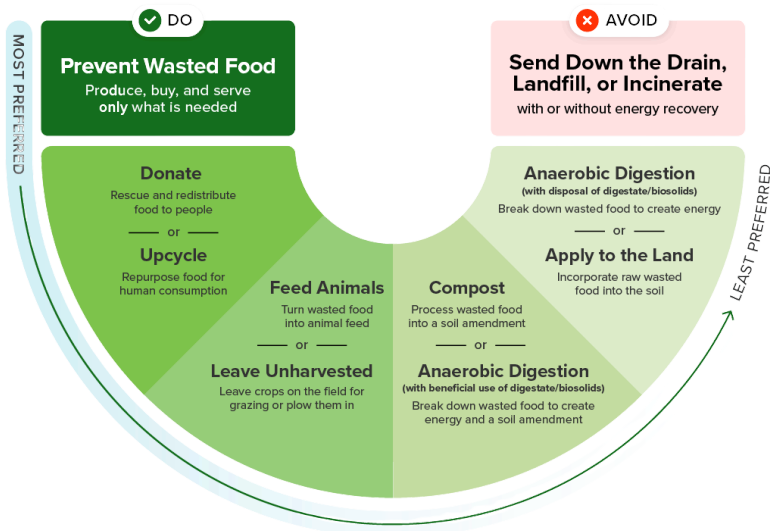
## WASTED FOOD SCALE

The best way to keep food out of the landfill is **preventing the food waste** in the first place! This could mean serving smaller portions of food. Any other ways of preventing waste you can think of:

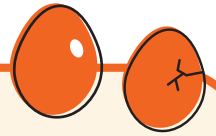
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## IF I CAN'T EAT IT, THEN WHAT?



If you live in Denver you can request your **rollout cart**, learn more following this [link](#).

You can start your own **compost bin at home**. Denver Urban gardens offers compost workshops with the pay what you can model. Learn more and sign up in their [website](#).

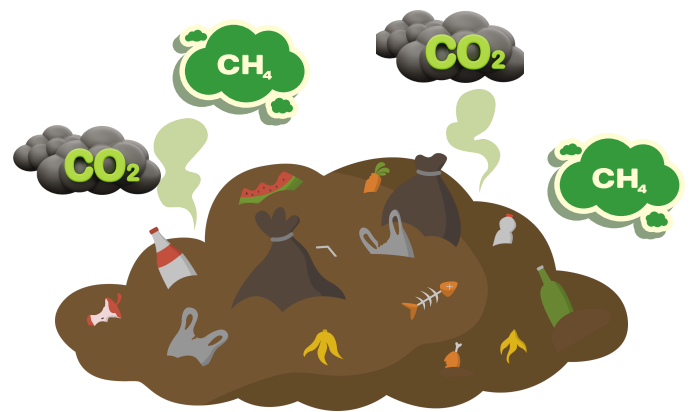
Depending on where you live, you can subscribe to the following services who will pick up food scraps and give you back finished compost: [Compost Colorado](#), [Scraps](#), [Wompost](#), [Denver compost Collective](#).

Do you know of any other organizations collecting or receiving food scraps? Please write it here:

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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 the food to decompose** and the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted to the atmosphere, **causing the planet to warm up and accelerate climate change!**



**Reducing food waste is one of the most effective ways we can all combat climate change.**

# REVIEW YOUR RESULTS



## \* Check Your Stats

Congratulations! You've completed two weeks of measuring and reducing your food waste at home. Let's go over the data you collected.

### 1. Identify the problems and challenges.

Look at the foods you've thrown away the most. Do you notice any patterns? Are you always throwing away leftovers? Try to identify any specific food items or patterns you see with your food waste.

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### 2. What changes were made and what worked?

Where there any changes you made that reduced your waste? Write down any changes you made, for example eating your leftovers.

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### 3. Share with a friend!

Compare numbers and changes that you made with one of your coworkers. What did they do to reduce their waste?

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# FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PLEDGE

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
pledge that:

- ☐ I will eat or share my leftovers.
- ☐ I will help my family with meal planning.
- ☐ I will help make sure food does not end up in the landfill.
- ☐ I will not judge food based on looks.
- ☐ I will use my senses to decide if food is still safe to eat instead of trusting expiration dates.

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My Signature

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Date





# WE DON'T WASTE

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## GET INVOLVED

Continue your impact past this program and make a difference in your community with We Don't Waste or your local food recovery organization.

### VOLUNTEER

Volunteering is fun, and an immediately rewarding experience! Individuals and groups support We Don't Waste's food distribution and programs each week. Download the We Rescue App if you're located in Denver to get started recovering food on your own time from your smartphone!

### LEARN MORE

Become an expert in food waste reduction, the food cycle, and nutrition with digital materials and programming on our website, or learn in-person at We Don't Waste's Food Recovery Hub. Learning opportunities exist for groups of all ages.

### DONATE

Make a gift or become a monthly donor to support food access and food recovery in Colorado through We Don't Waste or your local food recovery organization. Corporate partnership opportunities are available and unlock perks such as cause-related marketing, exclusive access to events, and more!

### FOLLOW ALONG

Organizations are only as strong as their communities. Follow along on social media and help spread the word about the important programs in your community to inspire others to action! Many nonprofits rely entirely on social media to reach new people.



@WeDontWasteDenver



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@WeDontWaste.org

[www.WeDontWaste.org](http://www.WeDontWaste.org)

