

# Ask an Expert: Three Ways to Prevent Wasted Food

**Kathleen Riggs**

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The U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is concerned about the amount of wasted food making its way from home garbage bins into landfills. The EPA website states: "About 95 percent of the food we throw away ends up in landfills or combustion facilities. In 2013, we disposed more than 35 million tons of food waste." In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that Americans waste over one-third of the vegetables and fruit purchased for home.

Granted, composting food scraps is not appealing to everyone nor is it practical for most apartment dwellers or residents in larger cities. However, learning to reduce waste can help make funds in the family budget available to meet other needs. To that end, EPA provides a few tips for helping families reduce wasted food through planning, storing and preparing food.

## 1.Planning

\* Keep a running list of ingredients for meals you know your family enjoys. That way, you can easily choose, shop for and prepare meals you know your family will eat.

\* Make your shopping list based on how many meals you'll eat at home. Will you eat out this week? How often?

\* Plan your meals for the week before you go shopping and buy only the things needed for those meals.

\* Include quantities on your shopping list noting how many meals you'll make with each item to avoid over-buying. For example: salad greens, enough for two lunches.

\* Look in your refrigerator and cupboards first to avoid buying food you already have, then make a list each week of what needs to be used and plan upcoming meals around it.

\* Keep in mind that buying in bulk only saves money if you are able to use the food before it spoils.

## 2.Storing

\* Freeze, preserve or can surplus fruits and vegetables, especially abundant seasonal produce. Visit your local USU Extension office or the National Center for Home Food Preservation ([www.nchfp.uga.edu](http://www.nchfp.uga.edu)) for guidance.

\* Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen, making other nearby produce spoil faster. Store bananas, apples and tomatoes by themselves, and store fruits and vegetables in different bins.

\* Wait to wash berries until you are ready to eat them to prevent mold.

\* If you like to eat fruit at room temperature, but it should be stored in the refrigerator for maximum freshness, take what you'll eat for the day out of the refrigerator in the morning.

## 3.Preparing

\* When you get home from the store, take the time to wash, dry, chop, dice, slice and place your fresh food items in clear storage containers for snacks and easy cooking.

\* Take advantage of your freezer:

- Freeze foods such as bread, sliced fruit or meat that you know you won't be able to eat before it spoils.

- Cut your time in the kitchen by preparing and freezing meals ahead of time.

- Prepare and cook perishable items, then freeze them for use throughout the month.

- For example, bake and freeze chicken breasts or fry and freeze taco meat.

Food in the United States is very affordable and takes only a small chunk out of most family budgets.

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However, mindless wasting of food should not become an acceptable norm. Pitching in by applying just a few of the above tips could go a long way in keeping food prices low, garbage pick-up prices affordable, landfills slower to be maximized and even make more food available to struggling families.

By: Kathleen Riggs, Utah State University  
Extension family and consumer sciences  
professor, [kathleen.riggs@usu.edu](mailto:kathleen.riggs@usu.edu) What Next?  
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