



# ReFresh Nebraska

Stop the Rot

Spring 2018

## Keep Good Food From Going To Waste - Take The Food Waste Challenge

From farm to fork, preventable waste occurs all along the food chain. In fact, research shows that people tend to waste far more food than they think they do, so it's important to understand how and where that occurs if habits are to change. As part of their call for a 50% reduction of food waste in America by 2030, EPA introduced the Food Waste Challenge - a six week food waste assessment designed for families, but which can easily be scaled for use in restaurants, and cafeterias of all sizes.

Only a few basic tools are needed - a pen or pencil, paper or printed work sheets (see p.2), garbage bags (small if measuring by volume) and a scale, if measuring by weight. Measure preventable waste ONLY, including food that spoils in the fridge over that time. NON-EDIBLE food such as banana peels, eggshells, apple cores and chicken bones, should be discarded in the usual manner. Preferably that would mean composting, but if not yet part of your routine, we'll get there in time, so it's ok to wait until you're ready. Also, while you don't need to collect liquid waste like soup or food-soiled paper products, any meat or veggies that can be filtered out will provide a more accurate food waste assessment.

Begin by explaining the challenge to members of your household, or kitchen and ask for their participation. Prep a new garbage bag at the start of each week - preferably by lining a paper bag with a green compostable bag, but any plastic bag will do. Over the course of the week, place all your PREVENTABLE food waste inside - including food that spoils in the fridge over that time. Add new bags as necessary. It's important that usual routines are kept as much

as possible, so unless the freezer is cleaned out on a regular basis, don't do it until the challenge is over.

For the first two weeks, simply measure how much food your family wastes in a week and record the volume and/or weight, establishing a baseline (see pg2). Then in weeks 3 through 5, try out one or more of the smart strategies listed below while continuing to measure how much goes to waste each week. Keep notes on what works to reduce food waste and what doesn't. Finally in week 6, hone your strategies, measure and record your final weekly food waste amount, and compare to previous weeks to see how much food (and money) you saved.

Food Waste Reduction Strategies:  
SMART SHOPPING: Shop with Meals in Mind

- Shop your kitchen first and note items you already have.
- Buy What You Need - Make a shopping list based on remaining needs for meals you'll eat at home before your next shopping trip.
- Next to fresh items on the list, note the quantity you need or number of meals you're buying for.

SMART STORAGE: Keep Fruits and Vegetables Fresh

- Store produce for maximum freshness - know which belong inside and outside the fridge. They will taste better and last longer.

Inside the fridge:

- Apples, berries, and cherries
- Grapes, kiwi, lemons, and oranges
- Melons, nectarines, apricots, peaches, and plums (after ripening)
- Avocados, pears, tomatoes (after ripening)

Outside the fridge:

- Bananas, mangos, papayas, and pineapples: (in a cool place)

- Potatoes, onions: (in a cool, dark place)
  - Basil and winter squashes: (once cut, store squashes in fridge)
- Other storage tips:
- If you like your fruit at room temperature, take only a day's worth out at a time.
  - Many fruits give off natural gases that hasten the spoilage of other produce. Store bananas, apples, and tomatoes by themselves and store fruits and vegetables in different bins.
  - Consider storage bags and containers designed to help extend the life of your produce.
  - To prevent mold, wash berries just before eating.

SMART PREP: Prep now, eat later

- 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.
- Befriend your freezer and visit it often. Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time.
- 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.

SMART SAVING: Eat what you buy  
Be mindful of leftovers and old ingredients that need using up.

Designate an area in the fridge for food that should be eaten soon to prevent spoiling and post an EAT FIRST prompt as a visual reminder.

For more information on sustainable management of food or to take the Food Waste Challenge, please visit:

[www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food](http://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food)

# FOOD WASTE RECORDING WORKSHEET

WEEK 1  
WASTE AND WHY

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO \_\_\_\_\_)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 2

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

Totals – Weeks 1 and 2

Averages – Weeks 1 and 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Total Volume ÷ 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Weight ÷ 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 3

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 4

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 5

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

Totals – Weeks 3-5

Averages – Weeks 3-5

\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Total Volume ÷ 3 = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Weight ÷ 3 = \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 6

NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected \_\_\_\_\_

Totals – Week 6

Averages – Week 6

\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Total Volume = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Weight = \_\_\_\_\_



## HDR Composting Success

by Kim Sosalla

For the last decade, HDR's Green Teams have been working behind the scenes in our offices. More than 65 offices have Green Teams whose efforts support HDR sustainable business initiatives related to sustainable resource use as well as sustainable transportation, and office environments. HDR

has guidance in place to help offices address recycling and food waste both in their offices and at large meetings that we host.

Each office reviews their Waste Prevention and Recycling Plan each year and identifies goals for the year as well as current challenges. When conducting a visual waste survey, the Omaha office found that a large portion of waste that was being landfilled could actually be composted – coffee grounds, lunch/food scraps, napkins, and paper towels. In the fall of 2014, the Omaha office conducted a food waste study with the help of Adam Sagert and WeCompost. We notified staff that we'd be trying out composting and tracking the amounts during the two week study. Some questioned if it would smell and if it was conducive to an office setting. We explained that the current landfill bins in the office were open bins that held food waste and paper waste, by implementing composting we were just putting that waste in its own bin. Consistent with the current practice, all waste was collected daily and placed in covered compost bins or the landfill dumpster on the loading dock. Compost bins were then placed throughout the office and the study began.

The amount of compostables collected increased each day and one of our two landfill dumpsters was empty each night. It was encouraging to see that people were learning and wanted to participate. The positive experience with the food waste study and cost savings that could be realized led us to continue composting. At our Omaha headquarters we were able to reduce our number of landfill dumpsters from two to one and add composting bins for a lower cost than the two landfill dumpsters. Other Green Teams around the country were interested in what we had done and looked at what they could do in their offices. Programs were implemented in office locations where composting vendors were available and other locations use a small indoor composter, work with community gardens, or their building management to use composted coffee grounds on site. The Green Teams share information on what has worked in their offices – wheeled compost bin that can roll to lunch meetings – and offer suggestions to solve challenges. The process guidance as well as standard templates for waste, recycle, and compost signage that are based on Recycle Across America's color standards has helped offices address the food waste issue. In addition to composting in our offices, we suggested composting to our local convention center when we were having a large meeting with 600 staff in attendance. Adam and WeCompost again helped with the logistics and we composted 995 pounds of food waste over the 3 day conference. We have continued composting at our large meeting events and also donate usable food to organizations in town. Last year's efforts, company-wide allowed us to divert more than 43,000 pounds of compostable waste from the landfill.

Keep Nebraska Beautiful would love to learn what your family, school, or business are doing to reduce, reuse & recycle food waste. Drop us an email at [pstadig@knb.org](mailto:pstadig@knb.org) and we'll do our best to publish it in this space!



Shopping your fridge first is an important strategy for reducing food waste. Here's a recipe idea that will help you use what you have before buying more!

## Cilantro Stem Green Sauce

Cilantro stems are tender, flavorful, and most importantly, edible.

### Servings:

1 cup

### Uses up:

CILANTRO, CILANTRO STEMS

Chop them up right along with the leaves to add to recipes or whip them, like in this one here. This green cilantro sauce is best when served up at cookouts, right along with whatever you're throwing on the flame.

### INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup red wine vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 cup fresh cilantro stems (from 1 bunch of cilantro)  
1/2 cup olive oil or neutral oil, such as organic canola or grapeseed  
1/2 tsp ground cumin

### DIRECTIONS:

In a blender or the mixing cup of a small food processor or immersion blender, combine the vinegar and a pinch of salt and pepper. Swirl a few times to dissolve the salt. Add the stems, olive oil, and cumin puree. Adjust theseasoning to taste. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

CREDIT: From "Eat it Up!" by Sherri Brooks Vinton, Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2016

For those of you dedicated to the old school card file recipe box, here's the recipe in a 3"x5" format to print

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SAVETHEFOOD.COM

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# FOOD STORAGE TIPS FROM SAVETHEFOOD.COM

## FRUITS

### APPLES

**REFRIGERATE IT:** Yes **AT FRESHEST:** Up to 6 weeks in the refrigerator, longer in a root cellar environment  
**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Do not wash until ready to use. Store in a breathable bag in the low-humidity drawer of the refrigerator. Handle carefully to prevent bruising, and separate any with bruises from other apples (or they will cause others to brown). Apples ripen 6 to 10 times faster at room temperature. For large quantities, store in a cardboard box covered with a damp towel in a root cellar or other cool place. Ideally, you would wrap each apple individually in newspaper to reduce their influence on each other. Many heirloom varieties are not suited for long-term storage, so try to eat them right away.

**FREEZING:** Can be frozen raw or cooked, with or without sugar. Raw—Wash, peel (if desired), core, and slice. To prevent browning, either blanch for 1½ to 2 minutes or sprinkle with lemon juice. Then choose between (1) packing dry with ½ cup/100 g sugar per 1 qt/1 kg of apples; (2) packing in 40 percent syrup; or (3) placing directly on a baking sheet and freezing, then transferring to an airtight container. Cooked—Cook, cool, and pack in an airtight container.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** To prevent apple slices from browning, toss them with one part citrus juice and three parts water. Mealy or wrinkled—Cook! Even shriveled apples can be cooked into applesauce, apple pies, apple crisps, etc. A few bruises are fine and can be cut out; if the whole fruit is soft or mushy, however, discard. Use apple peels to make a tea, flavor fresh water, make a jelly or syrup, or in smoothies.

### AVOCADOS

**REFRIGERATE IT:** After ripe **AT FRESHEST:** Whole, after ripe, 2 to 5 days in refrigerator

**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Store on the counter until ripe, then refrigerate loose. Place in a closed paper bag to accelerate ripening (adding an apple or banana will make them ripen even faster). Do not refrigerate before ripe, or they will never ripen. Store avocado-based products such as guacamole with plastic wrap pressed directly onto the surface of the food to avoid browning.

**FREEZING:** Peel, purée, mix in 1 Tbsp lemon juice per avocado, and pack into an airtight container, leaving ½ in/ 12 mm at the top for expansion.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** If you find that an avocado is not ripe enough after you've cut it open, sprinkle the surface with lemon or lime juice, close it back up around the pit, wrap tightly, and place in the refrigerator. Check periodically to see if it has ripened enough to eat. To prevent browning once cut, close the avocado back up around the pit or sprinkle with lemon or lime juice and place in an airtight container in the refrigerator. If your avocado or guacamole has turned brown, skim off the brown parts. Parts that are green are still edible (so are the brown parts, but they may not taste as good)

To download the entire Food Storage Guide, go to [www.savethefood.com/food-storage](http://www.savethefood.com/food-storage)

## Quick Tricks

Food tossed is money lost. Refresh still edible foods, re-purpose leftovers and reuse or “recycle” them in new ways.

### Fruits

1. Freeze lemon or lime juice in ice cube trays. Transfer to freezer bags. Pop into water for flavored water. NOTE: It's easier to remove frozen food from silicone ice cube trays and muffin pans than plastic trays or metal pans as silicon is more flexible.
2. Roll citrus fruits with your hand on a hard surface before juicing to get more juice from them.
3. Refrigerate ripe bananas to make them last a few days longer. They may be brown on outside, but still a good color on the inside.
4. Freeze lemon slices in water in cupcake pans for large, flavored ice cubes.
5. Freeze washed, peeled, bite-size pieces of fruit for smoothies. Place on baking sheet with sides and cover with plastic wrap. Transfer frozen pieces to freezer bags. Toss into smoothies.

For more ideas on how to makeover your leftovers, go to: [food.unl.edu/cook-it-quick-documents/makeover-your-leftovers.pdf](http://food.unl.edu/cook-it-quick-documents/makeover-your-leftovers.pdf)

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