

View this email in your browser

ReFresh Nebraska Exploring Food Waste Issues Spring 2024 EPA Wasted Food Scale

The Wasted Food Scale prioritizes actions that prevent and divert wasted food from disposal. Tiers of the scale highlight different pathways for preventing or managing wasted food...

The most preferred pathways - prevent wasted food, donate and upcycle food - offer the most benefits to the environment and to a circular economy. These "top" pathways prioritize using food for its intended purpose...



EPA developed the Wasted Food Scale based on the findings of its 2023 report From Field to Bin: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste Management Pathways. This report assesses 11 common pathways for managing wasted food in the U.S...

- Notes on the Wasted Food Scale:
- The rankings in this scale apply only to the management of wasted food by these pathways...
- This scale does not consider economic and social factors.

Wasted Food Pathways Prevent Wasted Food

Preventing food from going to waste in the first place is the most environmentally beneficial option on the Wasted Food Scale. When food is wasted, all the resources that went into producing, processing, distributing, and preparing that food are wasted too.

Donate

Wholesome food that goes unsold or uneaten can be rescued, donated, or redistributed to feed people. This pathway includes food from across the food supply chain, from produce gleaned from farm fields to shelf-stable goods at a grocery store...

Upcycle

Upcycling food into new food products usually takes place at the production or manufacturing stage of the food supply chain. Edible parts of food as well as less desirable scraps can be upcycled into new food products.

Feed Animals

Using wasted food as animal feed can displace the production of traditional animal feed (e.g., growing soy, corn or barley) and avoid the environmental impacts associated with the production of that feed.

Leave Unharvested

Food crops are ideally harvested and used to nourish people. Sometimes market forces or environmental factors cause crops to remain unharvested in the field.

Anaerobic Digestion with Beneficial use of Digestate/Biosolids

Anaerobic digestion is the process of breaking down organic materials, such as wasted food, in an oxygen-free environment. The anaerobic digester may be a stand-alone digester that primarily processes wasted food...

Anaerobic Digestion with Disposal of Digestate/Biosolids

Digestate and biosolids are sometimes disposed of in a landfill. When the digestate or biosolids is disposed of, valuable nutrients are lost. Even if renewable energy (biogas) is generated, the environmental benefits are fewer than if digestate or biosolids had been beneficially used.

Compost

Composting is the controlled, aerobic (oxygen-required) biological decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms. Composting wasted food with other organic materials like yard trim produces a valuable, stable soil amendment...

Apply to Land

Raw wasted food from the food manufacturing and processing sector is sometimes applied to fields as a soil amendment. Land application of raw wasted food may involve spreading, spraying, or injecting the wasted food on or below the surface of the soil.

Landfill

EPA estimates that in the U.S., 24 percent of material in municipal solid waste landfills is food. Landfilling is one of the least preferred pathways because wasted food in landfills generates methane...

Incinerate

Wasted food (when it is mixed with other municipal solid waste) may be incinerated (also referred to as combustion with energy recovery, or controlled combustion). Incineration is one of the least preferred pathways because valuable nutrients in wasted food are not recovered.

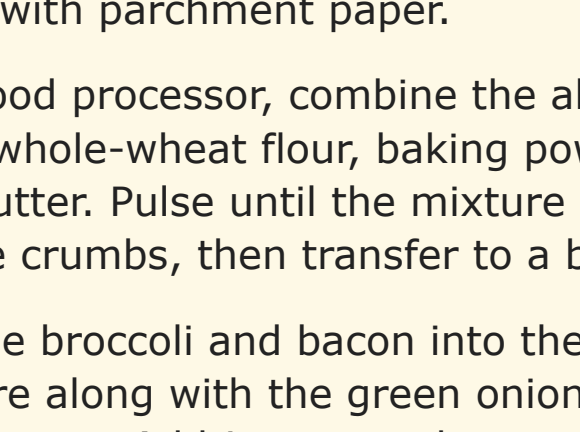
Send Down the Drain

When wasted food is sent down the drain, it combines with other wastes in the sewer system and ends up at a water resource recovery facility, or wastewater treatment plant.

ReFresh Recipes 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!

Savory Broccoli, Cheddar and Bacon Scones

BAKE SOME GOODS THAT DO SOME GOOD, TOO



These savory buttermilk scones are a "mother" recipe. In other words: this is choose-your-own-adventure territory. Mix and match leftover veggies (like spinach, roasted butternut squash or caramelized onions) and meats with herbs, green onions, and cheese to make a readily portable breakfast or lunch.

- INGREDIENTS: 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1 cup whole-wheat flour, 2 Tbsp baking powder, 1 1/2 tsp salt, 1/2 cup unsalted butter, chilled and cut into cubes, 1/2 cup chopped cooked broccoli, 1/4 cup crumbled cooked bacon, 1 green onion, minced, 1 Tbsp chopped fresh herbs (dill, basil, oregano, etc.), 1 cup grated aged cheddar (or Gruyère, Gouda, crumbled blue cheese, feta, etc.), 1/3 to 1/2 cup half-and-half or buttermilk, plus more for brushing, Poppy seeds or sesame seeds, for sprinkling

- USERS UP: Veggie, Meat & Cheese. MAKES: 8 Servings

DIRECTIONS: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a food processor, combine the all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, baking powder, salt, and butter. Pulse until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs, then transfer to a bowl. Stir the broccoli and bacon into the flour mixture along with the green onion, herbs, and cheese. Add just enough cream to make a soft dough... Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until golden, then transfer to a rack to cool slightly. Serve warm with butter.

FOOD STORAGE TIPS FROM SAVETHEFOOD.COM

BUTTER & CHEESE BUTTER

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes AT FRESHEST: Opened, about 3 weeks; unopened, 2 months; freezer, up to 9 months

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Keep reserves in the freezer. Butter can be kept at room temperature if it will be used up within several days, but only if kept out of the light. If used only occasionally, store in the refrigerator in its original packaging and in the cooler parts of the refrigerator...

Clarified butter or "ghee" keeps three times longer than other butters because the milk solids (which cause butter rancidity) have been removed. Clarified butter is good for cooking but not for use as a spread. It will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.

FREEZING: For the best results, freeze fresh butter in its original carton within a zip-top freezer bag.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: The translucent dark yellow patches on the surface of butter are simply spots that have been exposed to air and dried out. Eat them or scrape off. Save butter wrappers to grease pans or separate homemade burger patties.

CHEESE, HARD

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes AT FRESHEST: 1 to 10 months, depending on the cheese

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Buy small amounts of cheese. Cheese is best stored loosely wrapped in wax paper or parchment paper to allow it to breathe, which likely means rewrapping it once you get it home to get it out of plastic wrapping.

FREEZING: Grate or cube before freezing, then seal into a zip-top freezer bag. Thaw in the refrigerator and use soon there-after; the texture may be compromised, so plan to use for cooking and baking rather than straight eating.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: If hard cheese develops a blue-green mold on the exterior, remove 1/2 in/12 mm below the mold; the remainder will be fine. Use rinds of hard cheeses to flavor soups and stews.

CHEESE, SOFT

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes AT FRESHEST: 1 to 4 weeks, depending on the cheese

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Buy small amounts of cheese. Cheese is best stored loosely wrapped in wax paper or parchment paper to allow it to breathe, which likely means rewrapping it once you get it home to get it out of plastic wrapping.

FREEZING: Cheese can be frozen but may become crumbly and lose flavor, and is therefore best used in cooking when thawed. Cube before freezing for ease of use. Very soft cheeses such as Brie will not freeze all that well.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: Soft cheeses with blue or green molds (that are not intentional as in blue cheese) should be discarded. Take care with unpasteurized cheeses, which carry food safety risks and are not recommended for populations at higher risk for food-borne illness. Rinds of soft cheeses can often be eaten. Whip small amounts of leftover soft cheeses together with some olive oil to create a delicious whipped cheese dip.

COTTAGE CHEESE

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes AT FRESHEST: Unopened, up to 10 days; opened, 7 days

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Closed container in the refrigerator.

FREEZING: Not recommended, although dishes that include cottage cheese as an ingredient may be frozen.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: Substitute for ricotta cheese in lasagna. Cottage cheese can be used in place of cream cheese or ricotta cheese in dips, casseroles, pancakes, and desserts. Process in a blender if you prefer a smoother texture. Add cottage cheese to custards, pasta sauces, egg dishes, cheesecakes, and all sorts of recipes where cheese or milk would normally be used.

Quick Tricks! Brought To You By: Nebraska Extension

QUICK TRICKS

Food tossed is money lost. One way to add new life to still edible foods is to re-purpose leftovers and reuse them in new ways and new recipes. This newsletter will get you started with simple tips and recipes. You'll find "recycled" can taste just as good, maybe even better than the original recipe.

Alice Henneman, MS, RDN Extension Educator

REFRIGERATOR & FREEZER STORAGE CHART Table with columns for Refrigerator and Freezer, listing products and storage durations.

Source: US Food & Drug Administration For more information, go to www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely

For more waste reducing tips, go to: www.food.usf.edu/sovc-2-public-documents/makeover-your-leftovers.pdf

Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste: What resources go into a year of food loss and waste in the U.S.? Greenhouse gas emissions more than 42 coal-fired power plants. Enough water and energy to supply more than 50 million homes. The amount of fertilizer used in the U.S. to grow all plant-based foods for U.S. human consumption. An area of agricultural land equal to California and New York.

ReFresh Nebraska is published by: Keep Nebraska Beautiful, 6101 O Street, Suite 114, Lincoln, NE 68510, Telephone: (402) 486-4562, Email: info@keepnebraska.org, Web Site: www.knb.org