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Exploring Food Waste Issues Spring 2025

Food Waste Remains Stubbornly High Despite Signs of Progress, According to New ReFED Report

In February, ReFED released *From Surplus to Solutions: 2025 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report*, featuring the latest data on the progress, trends, and remaining challenges in reducing food loss and waste in the United States. The report outlines that while there has been significant momentum in preventing and reducing food from going to waste—and the foundation for progress has been laid—waste remains stubbornly high. As such, accelerated action is needed from all food system actors, from funders to food businesses to solution providers to policymakers, to reduce food loss and waste.

After a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic, quantities of unsold or uneaten food—known as “surplus food”—rebounded in 2023 to an alarming 73.9 million tons or 31% of the food supply at a value of \$382 billion or 1.4% of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). ReFED’s analysis indicates that surplus food is responsible for 4% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, the same as driving 54 million cars, or 18% of all registered vehicles in the country. Surplus food also has an outsized impact on natural resources, including water and land. It accounts for 16% of U.S. freshwater withdrawals, enough for every American to shower seven times a day all year. If all surplus food were grown in the same place, it would require 140 million acres of land—an area the size of California and New York combined.

“Despite record high food prices, and increased awareness of the food waste challenge, our analysis shows that surplus food remains high and we’re still far off from meeting the 2030 reduction goal to halve wasted food,” says Dana Gunders, president of ReFED. “But progress is being made, and our hope is that these bright spots demonstrate that change is possible—with the right combination of motivation, stakeholder alignment, and funding.”

Key findings in the report include:

- Even with increasing food costs, consumers continue to generate the largest amount of waste. Between uneaten groceries at home and restaurant plate waste, consumers waste close to 35 million tons of food annually, costing them \$261 billion, or nearly \$800 per person.
- While food producers and businesses generate 21.5 million tons of surplus food annually equating to \$108 billion in lost revenue, momentum to address waste is building, with 20% of the top 65 food businesses across foodservice, retail, and manufacturing having specific, time-bound food waste reduction targets.
- More than \$900 million was invested in food loss and waste solutions in the United States in 2024 by public, private, and philanthropic sources. However, despite the significant environmental impact of food loss and waste, only 4% of the \$600 billion in global annual investment for climate mitigation and adaptation goes to food and agriculture generally, with an even smaller portion funding food waste initiatives.
- A \$16 billion annual investment over a ten-year period in the 45 food waste solutions that ReFED has modeled could create a net financial benefit of \$60.8 billion—a 3.8x return—while diverting 20 million tons of surplus food from the landfill and avoiding 79 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The report also highlights signs of progress in addressing surplus food, including a 25% reduction in unsold food jointly reported by retailers on the West Coast, 100 state-level bills related to food waste being introduced nationwide in 2024, and participation by a growing number of industry leaders in the U.S. Food Waste Pact.

To download the full report, visit refed.org/us-food-waste-report-2025. You can also [register](#) for an informational webinar about the report on Thursday, February 27, at 1 pm ET.



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!

Old Fashioned Bread Pudding COZY COMFORT FOOD THAT WASTES LESS AND TASTES GREAT



A serving of “Old Fashioned Bread Pudding” is a delicious way to add whole grain breads to your meals and to use up bread that is beginning to dry out. Spreading each slice of bread with margarine or butter and sprinkling it with cinnamon before cutting it into cubes makes every bite especially tasty!

USES UP	MAKES
Bread	6 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 5 slices whole wheat bread
- 2 tablespoons margarine or butter
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/3 cup sugar, white or brown
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups nonfat liquid milk
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Spread one side of bread with margarine or butter. Sprinkle with cinnamon.
3. Cut bread into 1-inch cubes.
4. In a medium-sized bowl, combine bread cubes, sugar and raisins.
5. In another bowl, blend eggs, milk, salt and vanilla. Pour liquid over bread mixture; lightly mix.
6. Transfer mixture to a casserole dish coated with oil or sprayed with a nonstick spray.
7. Bake uncovered for 50 to 60 minutes or until the center of the pudding reaches 160 degrees F when measured with a food thermometer. At this temperature, a metal knife inserted near the center comes out clean.
8. Serve warm or cold. Do not let bread pudding set at room temperature over 2 hours' TOTAL time. Eat within 3 to 4 days.

Source: Adapted from Montana Extension Nutrition Education Program, Website Recipes, Montana State University Extension Service

FOOD STORAGE TIPS FROM SAVETHEFOOD.COM

Dairy/Eggs

EGGS

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes

AT FRESHEST: Fresh, 3 to 5 weeks after sell-by date; freezer, 12 months; hard-boiled, 1 week.

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Keep in a cold part of the refrigerator in their original carton (not in the door, even if there's a space for them—it is too warm).

FREEZING: Eggs should not be frozen in their shells. Lightly beaten eggs can be frozen in an airtight container, with 1-in/2.5-cm headspace, or sealed in a zip-top bag with as much air removed as possible. Yolks can be frozen alone if mixed with 1 tsp salt per 1 pt/480 ml, and whites can be frozen without salt.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: Cracked eggs should be placed into a clean, airtight container and used within 2 days. If you're not sure when it cracked, it's best to discard the egg. As eggs age, the whites will thin and the yolks will flatten, but the nutritional value will not diminish. Older egg whites are actually better for whipping up into a voluminous meringue than fresh egg whites. Egg grades (such as A and AA) are a reflection of how well the yolk and white hold together and the appearance of the shells, not size or flavor. Frittatas make quick work of extra eggs (and anything else in your fridge).

EGG SUBSTITUTES

REFRIGERATE IT: Yes

AT FRESHEST: Fresh, unopened, 10 days; opened, 3 days; frozen, 12 months; thawed, 7 days

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Store in a cold part of the refrigerator, sealed in the original container. If the original container is not airtight once opened, transfer to an airtight container to extend life.

FREEZING: Freeze in the original unopened package. Freeze portions in zip-top bags with the air removed. Once thawed, do not refreeze.

USE IT UP/REVIVAL: Egg substitutes can be used just as you'd use traditional eggs, so if you're nearing the expiration of your egg substitute, bake up some cookies or make a seasonal frittata.

Quick Tricks! Brought To You By: Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources 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 booklet 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

Reducing the Size of Recipes

Many recipes can be cut in half or thirds. Here are some guidelines to help you adapt a larger recipe to a smaller one.

- It may be easier to make the entire recipe for baked goods and freeze half.
- When reducing recipes, you may need to use smaller saucepans, skillets and baking pans. The time for baking smaller amounts of food may be less.
- The standard size egg for recipes is the large egg. To halve an egg, break it, mix it together with a fork and use 2 tablespoons. Refrigerate the rest and use in an omelet or scrambled eggs within two days.
- A 9 x 2 x 13-inch pan holds 14 to 15 cups; when halving a recipe use a square 8 x 8 x 2-inch pan or a round 9 x 2-inch pan. When using a different pan size, try and keep the depth of food the same. Reduce the oven temperature by 25° F when substituting a glass pan for a metal one.

To help divide recipes, remember:

- 1 cup = 16 tablespoons
- 1 cup = 8 fluid ounces
- 1 fluid ounce = 2 tablespoons
- 1 pound = 16 ounces (weight)
- 1 pint = 2 cups
- 2 pints = 1 quart

To Make 1/2 of a Recipe

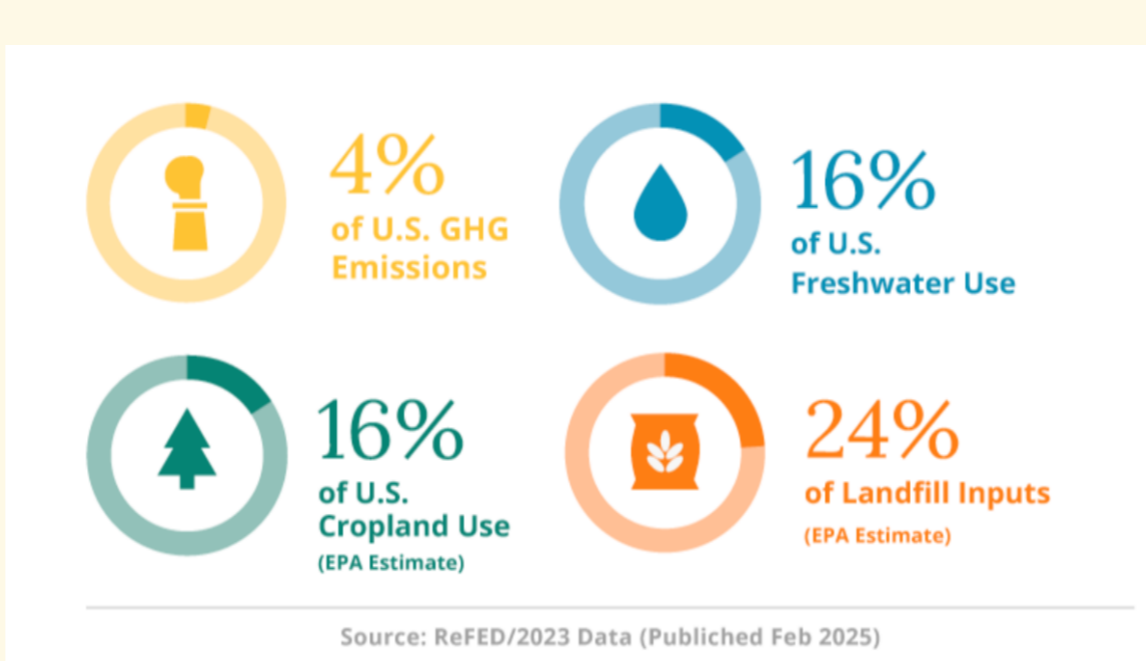
When Recipe Says:	Reduce To:
1/4 cup	2 tablespoons
1/3 cup	2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons
1/2 cup	1/4 cup
2/3 cup	1/3 cup
3/4 cup	6 tablespoons
1 cup	1/2 cup
1 tablespoon	1-1/2 teaspoon
1 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon
1/2 teaspoon	1/4 teaspoon
1/4 teaspoon	1/8 teaspoons
1/8 teaspoon	Dash

To Make 1/3 of a Recipe

When Recipe Says:	Reduce To:
1/4 cup	1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon
1/3 cup	1 tablespoon + 2-1/3 teaspoons
	(or round to 1 tablespoon + 2-1/4 teaspoons)
1/2 cup	2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons
2/3 cup	3 tablespoons + 1-1/2 teaspoons
3/4 cup	1/4 cup
1 cup	1/3 cup
1 tablespoon	1 teaspoon
1 teaspoon	Generous 1/4 teaspoon
1/2 teaspoon	Scant 1/4 teaspoon
1/4 teaspoon	Scant 1/8 teaspoon
1/8 teaspoon	Dash

For more waste reducing tips, go to:

www.food.unl.edu/cook-it-quick-documents/makeover-your-leftovers.pdf



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