

Tips for Being Wise with Food

Make the Most of Your Groceries & Pantry Items by Reducing Wasted Food

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity rates have been rising alongside unemployment, and a greater percentage of food is going to waste with the loss of key markets such as restaurants, schools, caterers, and others.¹ To help curtail these issues, the Syracuse University Center for Sustainable Community Solutions (SU-CSCS) encourages New York residents to consider implementing the following strategies.

1.) Buy Local: Support local farmers who may have lost key buyers due to the temporary closures of restaurants, schools, caterers, and others by signing up for a CSA or locally sourced grocery box.² Picking up produce curbside or having it delivered can limit the amount of time you need to spend in stores.

Find local food providers here: www.localharvest.org

2.) Create A Plan: Create a weekly meal plan with the members of your home, use recipes to determine how much of each ingredient to buy, and don't forget to check your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer first. This will prevent you from buying too much, and it will minimize your number of trips to the grocery store, thus limiting your exposure to others.

View meal-planning tips here: www.savethefood.com/articles/10-easy-tips-for-meal-planning

3.) Store & Preserve: Maximize the shelf life of your favorite perishable produce to ensure it doesn't wilt or become overripe before you can eat it. For example, tightly wrap celery in aluminum foil to keep it crisp for weeks! Learn how to properly freeze, can, pickle, cure, and dry to extend the shelf life of perishable foods for even longer periods of time.

Learn food storage and preservation here: www.nchfp.uga.edu

4.) Cook Root To Leaf: Did you know that beet greens, broccoli stems, and citrus rinds are not only edible but delicious? So are bruised apples and crooked carrots, even if they are not as pretty as their aesthetically flawless counterparts. Avoid wasting these often neglected – yet nutritious – pieces of produce by learning their many culinary uses.

Discover recipes here: www.gibbs-lab.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Cookbook050516.pdf

5.) Eat Leftovers: If you aren't a fan of leftovers, be sure not to have any by properly planning portions before shopping. If you are a fan, commit to finishing all leftovers or re-purposing them into a new meal. For example, use tonight's leftover baked potatoes for tomorrow morning's home fries.

Explore recipes for invigorating leftovers here: www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/recipes

6.) Relearn Date Labels: "Sell By", "Best By", "Use By", and "Freeze By" have different meanings. With the exception of baby formula, date labels are not regulated. They are meant to indicate freshness not food safety. Use your senses to help determine freshness and to avoid discarding valuable food prematurely.

Relearn date labels here: www.savethefood.com/articles/deciphering-dates-on-products

7.) Volunteer: Food banks and local emergency feeding programs are experiencing significant increases in costs and demand, while many of their volunteers – who tend to be of retirement age – are sheltering in place.³ If appropriate for your situation, contact your local food bank or food pantry and inquire about their volunteer needs.

Find volunteer opportunities here: www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/volunteer

8.) Compost: Transform inedible fruit and vegetable scraps such as banana peels and onion skins into a nutrient-rich soil amendment by composting them with leaves and other landscape debris. Finished compost can be added to the soil which will benefit your gardens, trees, and landscaping by increasing nutrients, microbes, and water retention.

Learn to compost here: www.npr.org/2020/04/07/828918397/how-to-compost-at-home

Find more wasted food reduction resources here: www.nysar3.org/page/wasted-food-reduction-121.html

Funding provided by the NYS Pollution Prevention Institute through a grant from the State of New York. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Rochester Institute of Technology and its NYS Pollution Prevention Institute or New York State.

¹ National Geographic "Food waste and food insecurity rising amid coronavirus panic"

² Syracuse.com "Fine dining to farm delivery: How this downtown Syracuse restaurant is weathering the coronavirus storm"

³ New York Times "Never Seen Anything Like It": Cars Line Up for Miles at Food Banks"

