



## Green Tip: Avoiding Food Waste

How often do you go grocery shopping and go home leaving a couple of bags full of groceries in the cart? You might be thinking, “This never happens.” But in actuality, when you take into account the food waste that occurs in Canada, this equates to buying five bags of groceries and leaving two bags in the shopping cart!

It is estimated that food waste accounts for approximately 10% of all green house gas emissions. While food waste occurs all along the supply chain, about 43% of the waste is related to household use.

A third of the food we produce does not make it from farm to fork. That uneaten food squanders a whole host of resources — seeds, water, energy, land, fertilizer, hours of labor and financial capital. It also generates greenhouse gases at every stage — including methane when organic matter lands in the garbage.

In higher-income regions, food is largely wasted by choice. Retailers and consumers reject food based on bumps, bruises, and coloring, or simply order, buy, and serve too much. In places where income is lower and infrastructure is weak, food loss is typically unintended — resulting, for example, from poor storage facilities. Across the board, reducing food waste and loss can improve food security and relieve hunger.

### What About Canada?

- It is estimated that individuals and households across Canada waste more than \$10 billion worth of food annually.
- Canada’s 2.2 million tonnes of avoidable household food waste is equivalent to 9.8 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and 2.1 million cars on the road.
- When organic material is sent to landfill to decompose it releases methane into the atmosphere, which is a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide and is the single largest waste stream found in landfills. When composted food waste can turn into a valuable nutrient in compost it can then be applied to farming. When broken down in an anaerobic digester methane can be captured to produce renewable natural gas.
- When edible food is redirected to food rescue organizations for distribution it maintains its highest value and security is improved for those that need it most: children’s breakfast programs, community centres, drop-in centres, and shelters.
- Canadians are particularly bad offenders when it comes to food waste. According to a recent UN Report on Food Waste, the average Canadian wastes **79 kg. of food per year** at home (more than the American average of 59 kg, and the British average of 77 kg).

## What Can I/We Do to Reduce Food Waste?

1. **Be aware** – Becoming aware of the impact of food waste on our environment and on food security is an important first step.
2. **Watch your buying** – It is all too easy to reach for the jumbo size box, or the bargain sale item that you may or may not use. Before you buy, think about the impact of throwing food that you don't use away.
3. **Plan your menu before you shop** – create your shopping list based on your meal plan for the week. Too often food waste occurs because we forgot that we were not eating at home for a couple of days in the week ahead.
4. **Realize that “best before dates” are not expiry dates.** They are dates chosen by the manufacturer based on their estimate of how long food will be at its best quality. When stored properly, most foods are perfectly safe for a much longer time period.
5. **Get creative about the use of leftovers** – double the recipe so that you can easily heat up a meal for the next day, search the web for left over ideas. Check out “Love Food, Hate Waste Canada” for recipes by food category.
6. **Storage** - Learn the best ways to store fruits and vegetables from David Suzuki's Queen of Green tips.
7. **Compost** leftover organics – prevent food from going into landfills.

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This October is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Waste Reduction Week in Canada**. This year's overall theme is **Then - Now - Future**. Website link:

<https://wrwcanada.com/en>

The banner features the Waste Reduction Week in Canada logo on the left, which includes a recycling symbol with a red maple leaf and the text 'EST. 2001'. To the right of the logo is the text 'WASTE REDUCTION WEEK IN CANADA'. Further right is a circular badge that says 'CELEBRATING 20 YEARS'. Below these elements, the text 'SAVE THE DATES: OCT. 18 - 24, 2021' is displayed in blue. At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the words 'THEN', 'NOW', and 'FUTURE' in white, connected by blue arrows pointing from left to right. The 'FUTURE' word is enclosed in a circular arrow graphic.