



# 412 Food Rescue's Ultimate At-Home Food Waste Prevention Guide

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# Let's be honest. Everyone wastes food.

Is half a zucchini lurking in your veggie drawer? Have you forgotten about those leftovers hidden behind the margarine on the middle shelf? Are they all headed for the trash can again?

You're not alone. More often than not, we end up throwing away food like this with a twinge of regret, yet do the same thing the next time. And the next.

And we're not just wasting food. We're also wasting the money we spent on it. And we're contributing to landfills and greenhouse-gas emissions in the environment.

Fortunately, we can take small steps at home that will lead to big changes for everyone.

## The problem is big. And growing bigger.

Americans produce more than 62 million tons of food waste each year at a cost of \$218 billion. Growing, processing, transporting and dumping unused food also emits methane and about 3 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the environment,<sup>1</sup> and of all the garbage in our landfills, a fifth of consists of discarded food - making food waste the largest single contributor.

But here's the real kicker: About 43% of all that food waste - some 27 million tons - originates in residences like yours.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, much of the power to combat food waste and its environmental impact lies in your hands.

Could the key to saving the earth be hidden inside your own kitchen? Yes!

## You can save \$2,000 a year.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that a family of four throws away more than \$2,000 every year by tossing unused food into the garbage. Do you know what you could buy with that much money?



54 tanks of gas



6 months of utilities



Zoo family membership  
for 15 years



100 movie tickets



Having your grass cut  
all summer

<sup>1</sup> *Food Wastage Footprint: Impacts on Natural Resources*, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), [climatecentral.org/news](https://climatecentral.org/news), accessed 19 April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *Moving Food Waste Forward Policy: Recommendations for Next Steps in Pennsylvania*, prepared by Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic for Philabundance, [philabundance.org](https://philabundance.org) (PDF), accessed 19 April 2018.

# Step 1: Meal Planning

## | Make meals ahead

Advance meal planning makes creating and sticking to a grocery list easier – you’re less likely to buy items you won’t end up using. Plus, you’ll get extra family bonding time from soliciting their suggestions!

## | Plan with portions in mind

When was the last time you made homemade dinner for yourself – and how many times did you end up with leftovers? While we do love a good “everything must go!” (from the fridge) evening here and there, it’s typically better to make the right amount every time to prevent potential waste. Of course, if you do end up with leftovers, freeze them!



# Step 2: Have the right tools on hand.<sup>3</sup>

Here’s some essential kitchen equipment to help keep cooking fun!

## | Baking sheets, ice cube trays, muffin tins

Use these to easily freeze soups, breakfast sandwiches and more in appropriate, uniform portions. Once frozen, be sure to put items into re-sealable, freezer-safe storage bags.

## | Baking spatula

Flexible, rubber spatulas are about to become your new best friend. Having a few spatulas of various sizes on hand lets you scrape the sides of just about anything – no more wasting any of the good stuff!

## | Big soup pot or crockpot

Soups and stews are a good way to use questionable produce and vegetable pieces, so a big soup pot is a necessity. Anything you can dump in and leave to cook large quantities is perfect for satisfying a household of any size and for freezing servings to enjoy another day. Check out Zero Waste Chef for a few one-and-dump vegetable soup recipes.

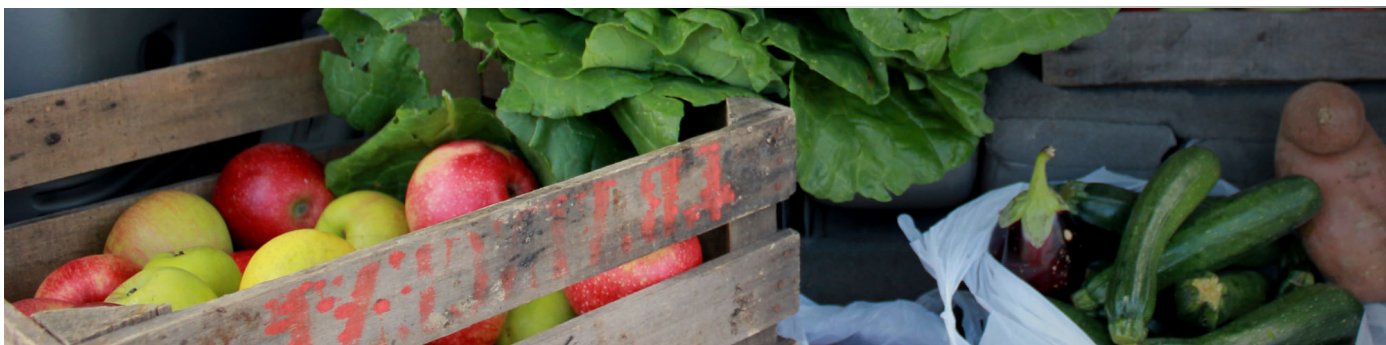
<sup>3</sup> From *Waste Free Kitchen Handbook*, Dana Gunders, 2015.

## | Clear storage containers

Being able to see all the food in your fridge makes planning meals and snacks much easier – and more productive, too, sparking creativity as you try not to throw anything away. Glass containers are better for multi-purpose cooking and serving use; plastic containers are good for on the go.

## | Two large zip-top freezer bags

Dedicating one re-sealable bag for smoothie ingredients (fruits on the verge of going bad) and one bag for soup stock scraps (veggies wilting in the fridge, leek, mushroom, broccoli and kale stems, carrot, sweet potato and onion peels) will make preparation much easier (and quicker).



## Step 3: Stock up on staples.

### | Staples to always have on hand

Olive oil, high-heat oil (safflower, rice bran, canola, avocado), sesame oil, vinegar (cider, balsamic, rice), soy sauce, mayo, mustard, onions, garlic, canned diced tomatoes, honey, crushed chiles, bay leaves (for soups).

### | Hero condiments to rescue flavor in a pinch

Maple syrup, hot sauce, barbecue sauce, lemon juice, soup bouillon, dried onions, parmesan cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, raisins, almonds and pickles.

### | Meal rounders to help complete a use-it-up meal

Eggs, meat, tofu, beans (canned), frozen fish, grains (rice, pasta, quinoa, couscous) and frozen vegetables (corn, peas, spinach, broccoli, edamame).

### | Spices bought in bulk

Don't be afraid of the bulk section! Spices sold in plastic or glass containers tend to be pricier than those sold in plastic bags. Experimenting with spices is a great place to start in making your trip to the bulk aisle a new and good habit.

## Step 4: Experiment and try new foods.

### | Use other protein-rich foods in place of meat sometimes

Ribs, among other meat products, can rack up the price on your bill – and greenhouse-gas emissions, as “a staggering 51% or more of global greenhouse-gas emissions are caused by animal agriculture.”<sup>4</sup> Experiment with other protein-packed foods such as tofu, quinoa, lentils and chickpeas (garbanzo beans). The possibilities are endless!

### | Make your own dressings and sauces

You know those cutesy brands and mysteriously named bottled dressings at the store? You don't need those! Since most vinaigrettes are simply 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar, you can easily create your own dressing using spices and ingredients at hand. Dump everything in a Mason jar with a lid, and shake!

### | Give tofu and quinoa a(nother) try

Did you try tofu back when it first became popular and then swore off it forever? Give it another chance. Tofu soaks in the scrumptious flavors of whatever it's cooked in, so try it in your favorite dishes or new, flavorful ones! Quinoa is called a superfood because it has twice the protein content of rice and is a good source of calcium, among other nutrients. Check out [bbcgoodfood.com](http://bbcgoodfood.com) for how to cook your quinoa into a fluffy, creamy delight.

## Keep Nutrition in Mind

Not sure how much to buy or serve? [MyPlate](http://MyPlate) is the USDA's guide to helping you find your healthy, non-wasteful eating style and build on it for life.

<sup>4</sup> *Livestock's Long Shadow*, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report, quoted in *The World's Leading Driver of Climate Change: Animal Agriculture*, [new-harvest.org](http://new-harvest.org), accessed 19 April 2018.

The mission of 412 Food Rescue is to prevent perfectly good food from entering the waste stream. Volunteers transport donated food to people who need it, redirecting good food from feeding landfills to feeding people.

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