Food: Too Good to Waste

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EPA’s Sustainable Food Management Program

Food Recovery Challenge
Organization Level
www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge

Food: Too Good to Waste
Residential Level

Food Recovery Hierarchy
www.epa.gov/foodscrap
Food is simply too good to waste!

• Costs US $165 billion annually.

• Contributes to 16% of domestic Methane emissions.

• Single largest and least recovered waste stream in the US.

(Sources: USDA, EPA. Photo Credit: Jonathan Bloom)
35 Million Tons of Food Waste Disposed – 2011
# Community-Based Social Marketing Pilot Design

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<th>Behaviors</th>
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<th>Barriers</th>
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<td><strong>Smart Shopping</strong>: Buy what you need</td>
<td>Waste aversion</td>
<td>Dynamic lifestyle</td>
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<td>Saving money</td>
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<td>Automatic behavior</td>
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<td><strong>Smart Storage</strong>: Keep Fruits and Vegetables Fresh</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td><strong>Smart Eating</strong>: Eat what you buy</td>
<td>Waste aversion</td>
<td>Gratification</td>
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<td>Convenience</td>
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Toolkit Components

Main message: Food is too essential to throw away.
- Implementation guide
- Message map

Behavior change tools, including:
- Fruit and vegetable storage guide
- Shopping list template with meals in mind
- Refrigerator prompt to “eat what you buy”

Outreach Tools, including:
- Infographic/poster
- Workshop presentation for community participants
TAKE THE CHALLENGE: KEEP GOOD FOOD FROM GOING TO WASTE

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Did you know that, on average, American households throw out more than a quarter of their food purchases? Research shows that nearly everyone wastes more than they think they do. The Food: Too Good to Waste Challenge will help you figure out how much food is really going to waste in your home and what you can do to waste less. By making small shifts in how you shop for, prepare, and store food, you can save time and money, and keep the valuable resources used to produce and distribute food from going to waste.

SMART: SEE HOW MUCH FOOD (AND MONEY!) YOU ARE REALLY THROWING AWAY

1 & 2: Measure how much food your family wastes in a week and record the volume.

3 through 5: Try out one or more of the smart strategies listed below while continuing to measure what goes to waste each week. Keep notes on what works to reduce food waste and what doesn’t.

Smart Shopping: Buy What You Need – Make a shopping list with the Meals-In-Mind Shopping List template based on how many meals you expect to eat at home before your next shopping trip. By buying no more than what you expect to use, you will be more likely to use it up and keep it fresh.
“Get Smart”

Measurement raises household awareness!
**Shopping List Template**

**SMART STRATEGY:**
Make a Shopping List with Meals in Mind

- Think about how many meals you’ll eat at home this week and how long before your next shopping trip.
- Next to fresh items on the list, note the quantity you need or number of meals you’re buying for.
- Shop your kitchen first and note items you already have.

### FOOD ITEM | AMOUNT NEEDED | ALREADY HAVE
--- | --- | ---
Salad greens | Lunch for a week | Enough for one lunch
2% milk | Gallon | None
Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STORAGE GUIDE

INSIDE THE FRIDGE

- Apples, berries, and cherries
- Grapes, kiwi, lemons, and oranges
- Melons, nectarines, apricots, peaches, and plums (after ripening at room temperature)
- Avocados, pears, tomatoes (after ripening at room temperature)
- Almost all vegetables and herbs

OUTSIDE THE FRIDGE

- Bananas, mangos, papayas, and pineapples: store in a cool place
- Potatoes / onions: store in a cool, dark place
- Basil and winter squashes: store at room temperature—once cut, store squashes in fridge

MORE STORAGE TIPS

- If you like your fruit at room temperature, take what you will eat for the day out of the fridge in the morning.
- Many fruits give off natural gases that hasten the spoilage of other nearby produce. Store bananas, apples, and tomatoes by themselves and store fruits and vegetables in different bins.
- Consider storage bags and containers designed to help extend the life of your produce.
- To prevent mold, wash berries just before eating.

FOR MORE TIPS VISIT: http://makedirtnotwaste.org/prevent-wasted-food
LEARN HOW TO STORE WITHOUT PLASTIC: http://ecologycenter.org/factsheets/veggie-storage.pdf
3. PREP NOW, EAT LATER

Image courtesy of Grant Cochrane/FreeDigitalPhotos.net
“Eat Me First” Prompt
Infographic/Poster and Presentation

Workshop Purpose

Examine the problem of food waste including:

- How much goes to waste
- Why waste happens
- Why waste matters
- Strategies to reduce waste
Original Implementing Partners:

- King County (WA)
- San Benito County (CA)
- Boulder County (CO)
- Seattle (WA) – baseline

Results:

Initial data indicates that pilot implementation could influence a 25% decrease in household food waste.

Current Implementing Communities:

- Honolulu (HI)
- Santa Monica (CA)
- Oakland (CA)
- Chula Vista (CA)
- Gresham and OR Metro (OR)
- King County scale-up (WA)
- Thurston County (WA)
- Oak Park (IL)
- Iowa City (IA)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Authority (MN)
- Rhode Island Food Policy Council
- University of Denver (CO)
- State of Vermont
- Sustainable Jersey City (NJ)
Preliminary Analysis of Results

- Personal recruitment more effective than email.
- Creating food waste awareness is key to lasting impact in food waste reduction.
- Initial data indicates that toolkit use and pilot implementation could influence a 25% decrease in household food waste.
Case: RI Food Policy Council

• Goal of pilot: Reduce the food waste generated by participating families, gain experience implementing FTGTW, and tailor the program for RI, with the ultimate goal of zero waste.
Case: RI Food Policy Council

Budget: $9,000 from EPA and RIFPC
- All participants received a kitchen scale and a food waste collection container at outset
- $25 gift cards were distributed upon completion of the process and submission of data

Length of Pilot: 11 weeks

Families choose one or more tools to implement
Case: RI Food Policy Council

Recruited participants - 10 homes each from 4 sectors:
- “the Friendlies” – friends and family who acted as a ‘pre-pilot’ to give useful feedback prior to the real launch;
- RI Food Policy Council Network members;
- Providence Housing Authority Hartford Park residents;
- The Promenade residents (backup Moses Brown school families)
Case: RI Food Policy Council

Keep Participants Engaged:
- Two group meetings, including food
- Email contacts
- Withhold gift cards till completion

Data Collection: Volumetric/weights. This will show if there is a reduction in food waste. Also survey/group discussion will help tailor program for RI use.

Results: Clear reductions in weight and volume, both total and average, in comparison to baseline.
Case: Iowa City

- Staff at Iowa City Landfill and Recycling Center did a 6 wk pilot this past summer
- Landfill staff worked with the Refuse Division to coordinate curbside pickup of food
- 300 households from 5 nabes across Iowa City were invited; 52 households accepted; 27 households returned the post pilot survey and 32 returned data
- One nabe from each yard waste pickup route was chosen, with the intent to have diverse demographics
- Participants received a food scrap collection bin, scale, Biobag liners, and a pre-pilot survey.
Case: Iowa City

- One week of measurement, 5 weeks of strategies plus measurement
- Iowa City was already picking up yard waste.
- They tried a variety of collection containers, to see which worked best.
- No budget numbers available yet but there was definitely a cost of at least several thousand dollars to implement this.
Case: Iowa City

Outreach: extensive

- Pre-pilot survey mailed with pre-stamped envelope for return
- Door hangers to all 300 invitees to encourage people to participate
- Neighborhood open houses - a place for participants to pick up pilot supplies and have some face to face discussion
- Yard signs as a reminder of important dates
- Weekly emails – check-ins and additional info
- Pilot Facebook page to offer videos, articles, photos, etc.
Weekly Food Waste Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>WEEK 3</th>
<th>WEEK 4</th>
<th>WEEK 5</th>
<th>WEEK 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.22</td>
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Food Waste (lbs.)
Food Waste per Age Group

Age Group | Average Food Waste Produced (lbs.)
---|---
18-30 | 35
31-40 | 35
41-50 | 43
50-60 | 30
61+ | 28
Case: Iowa City

Top Reasons for Preventing Food Waste

Pre-Pilot

- It saves households money (47%)
- It reduces the amount of gases causing climate change
- It saves the resources used to produce, distribute, and prepare the food
- It saves the community money
- It's morally wrong to waste good food (11%)

Post-Pilot

- It saves households money (46%)
- It reduces the amount of gases causing climate change (24%)
- It saves the resources used to produce, distribute, and prepare the food (15%)
- It saves the community money (6%)
- It's morally wrong to waste good food (9%)
Case: Iowa City

Food as valuable resource, NOT waste
**Progress**: 92% agree they are more aware of food going to waste in their household

Smart Shopping was voted the easiest strategy and Smart Prep the hardest.

Reduce food waste in Iowa City
**Progress**: 85% of households found the FTGTW strategies useful, and 96% feel they are likely to continue to use the FTGTW resources

Increased participation in curbside organics program
**Progress**: coordinating with Refuse Division to start curbside food waste collection in spring (all outreach will include REDUCE, then compost)
Case: Iowa City

~1000 lbs of food scraps diverted
- Educational outreach
- Train curbside employees to inspect loads
- Teach residents what is compostable/what is not
Food: Too Good to Waste

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Visit the website to access the Food: Too Good to Waste Toolkit
http://www.westcoastclimateforum.com/food