

Tips to Reduce Your Food Waste



Each year, Australians **throw out one in five bags of groceries** we buy. In dollar terms, that means each household throws away \$616 per year. As a nation, that's about \$8 billion dollars' worth each year!^{1,2}

Not only is that a lot of money wasted, but the food we throw away ends up in landfills, fermenting and producing methane. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Because the wasted food in landfills is trapped under layer after layer of other rubbish, it doesn't have access to oxygen to help it break down, which means it produces this damaging greenhouse gas.

Throwing food in the bin is also a huge waste of the resources required to produce, transport and store it, such as water, fuel, fertiliser and packaging. For example, it takes:

- 500-4,000 litres of water to make just 1 kilogram of wheat and
- 5,000-20,000 litres of water to make just 1 kilogram of beef³

Food waste happens anywhere from 'field to fork'. This includes farms, factories, supermarkets, restaurants, workplaces, healthcare and foodservice facilities as well as households. Population levels are predicted to rise to 9.5 billion people by 2075;³ change needs to occur at all levels to make sure we can continue producing enough food for the growing population and ensure a sustainable future. Different organisations are working hard to reduce food waste such as [Oz Harvest](#), [Second Bite](#) and [Food Bank](#),⁴ but it's important that we all make changes in the home too.

Each of us can play a role in reducing food waste and make a difference. Doing your bit to reduce food waste not only helps you save money, but helps the planet too!



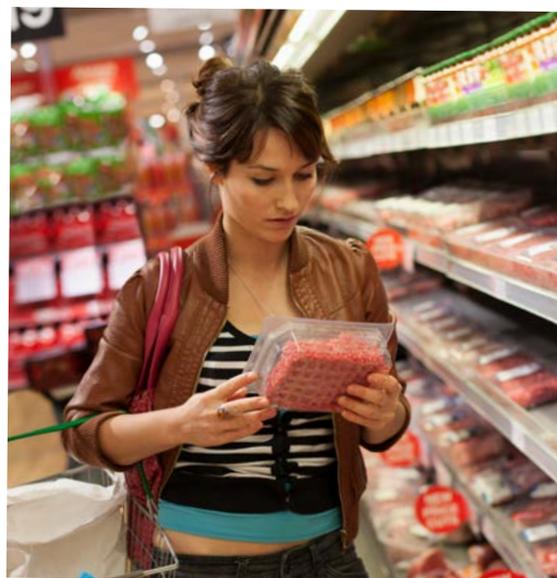
Reduce your food waste - planning and purchasing foods

1. Plan your meals in advance, so that you only buy the food you need and check the cupboard and fridge before you go shopping – this will help you stop buying things that you already have.
2. Some supermarkets sell discounted fruits and vegetables - called 'imperfect picks' - that previously would have ended up in the bin because of cosmetic imperfections. Around 25% of fresh produce is rejected and binned because of these imperfections. This produce is just



as nutritious as the other fruit and vegetables, and is often discounted! Buying these foods means you are doing your bit to help reduce food waste and saving money.

3. Choose foods with a long shelf life that won't go off if you don't eat it straight away – e.g. canned vegetables/fruit, canned and dried legumes, rice, pasta, long life milk and frozen goods.
4. Use your freezer to store fresh or prepared foods you won't eat right away. For example, leftovers, vegetables, fruit, cheese, meat and baked goods; see the next page for some tips on freezing foods.
5. Minimise non-recyclable packaging – because it can take up to 10,000 years for plastic to break down, every bit of plastic ever made still exists today.



Try to use as little plastic as possible in all situations – when choosing grocery bags, storage containers, water bottles and if buying individually wrapped food.

6. Know the difference between 'use by' and 'best before' dates. Foods that must be eaten before a certain time for health and safety reasons are marked with 'use by' dates; foods should be eaten before this date, or alternatively frozen before this date to be eaten later. Most foods have a 'best before' date instead, which means the food can still be safely eaten after the stated date, but it just may not be at its best⁵. Check for the different date marks on your foods and don't be so quick to throw food away if it's after the 'best before' date.



Reduce your food waste - storage

1. Store foods correctly – food may be accidentally frozen if your fridge is too cold, or if it is not stored in a container it may go stale. Use reusable containers rather than plastic wrap to store your food to keep foods fresh and reduce the plastic waste. Extend the shelf-life by cooking, freezing, preserving or dehydrating foods, particularly fruit and vegetables. Older vegetables can be cooked and then blended together to make a homemade sauce or stock paste.



Reduce your food waste - food preparation

1. Cook in bulk and freeze individually portioned meals – this means you'll have meals handy for the future if you don't feel like cooking, and is a great idea if you have groceries that are approaching their use by date.
2. Don't put too much food on your plate. Make sure your serve sizes match your nutritional requirements. Get to know your serve sizes and how many serves you need from the Australian Dietary Guidelines.



Reduce your food waste - Freezing foods and managing leftovers

1. Freeze any leftover meals made and be creative using leftovers. This also goes for eating out - take your leftovers home and use them in other meals. Check out the [Dietitians Association of Australia's Smart Eating Recipes](#) site for some great ideas.
2. Leftover cooked vegetables can be blended, frozen then used later to make soups and sauces.
3. Freezing foods is a great way to reduce food waste:
 - Fruits – the majority of fruits can be frozen, just wash them and you're ready to go!
 - Vegetables - the majority of vegetables freeze and defrost well, but their changed texture will be best suited to be used in cooking. Blanching the vegetables first will keep them at their freshest. Onions, tomatoes, avocado, corn, potatoes, capsicums, peas, broccoli and cauliflower and many more can be frozen. Leafy greens like spinach and kale can also be frozen. High water content vegetables (e.g. cucumbers, iceberg lettuce) are best eaten fresh rather than frozen.
 - Meats/alternatives – all meats can be frozen easily. Individually portion out the meat to make it easier to defrost later. Eggs can be frozen too, however not in their shell. Crack them into ice cube trays for easy storage before freezing.
 - Dairy – milk, cheese and yoghurt can be frozen - allow a little extra space in the top of the bottle for milk to expand.
 - Herbs – all herbs can be frozen; just chop roughly, mix with a little water and store in ice cube trays.
 - Pantry goods –foods like chocolate, marshmallows, nuts and flour can be frozen for long term storage!
 - Baked goods –Bread, cakes, slices and French toast can be frozen and eaten later.
 - Full meals –Casseroles, curries, roasts, pastas, soups and broths can all be frozen and eaten later.



Reusing or repurposing and redistributing excess food

1. 'Food swaps' are growing in popularity; this is where people come together to swap excess home grown produce and gardening extras. For more information on food swaps, go to [Local Harvest Food Swaps](#)
2. Consider community groups in your local area that may provide resources or support such as community gardens, food markets and food recycling organisations.



Recycling your food waste

1. Compost fruit, vegetable and grain-food scraps, or use worm farms, or search [Share Waste](#) to find local composts to contribute to instead. For handy tips on how to make a home compost, check out [Clean Up Australia's Composting Tips](#)
2. Some local government areas in Australia offer [green organic bins](#) which are collected from household kerbsides alongside regular garbage and recycling. Food scraps put into these bins are taken to local composters and repurposed. Contact your local council to request a green organic bin.

Want more tips and tricks?

1. An [Accredited Practising Dietitian](#) can provide personalised advice for enjoying a healthy and varied diet whilst minimising food waste in your household.
2. National Programs and Campaigns:
 - [Love Food Hate Waste](#)
 - [Food Wise Food Waste Tool Kits](#)
 - [Youth Food Movement Australia](#)
 - [Clean Up Australia – Reducing Waste](#)
 - [Australia's National Waste Policy: Less Waste, More Resources](#)
3. State/Territory Government (e.g. Environment Protection Authority [EPA]) Information and Programs:
 - New South Wales:
[EPA NSW – Food Waste](#)
[Love Food Hate Waste – NSW](#)
 - Victoria:
[EPA Victoria – Lower Your Impact Sustainability Victoria](#)
[Love Food Hate Waste – Victoria](#)
 - South Australia:
[EPA South Australia – Waste](#)
[Green Industries – South Australia](#)
 - Western Australia:
[Waste Authority – Western Australia](#)
 - Queensland:
[Queensland Environment & Heritage Protection – Waste](#)
[Sustainable Queensland - State of Waste](#)
 - Tasmania:
[Environmental Protection Authority Tasmania – Managing Waste in the Home](#)
[Environmental Protection Authority Tasmania – Resources for the Community](#)
4. Or contact your local Council and Government agency for further information.

References:

¹[Food Waste in Australia: Future Directions International](#)

²[Food Waste Avoidance Benchmark Study: Office of Environment and Heritage](#)

³[Global Food - Waste Not, Want Not: Institute of Mechanical Engineers](#)

⁴[Working Together to Reduce Food Waste in Australia: Australian Government, Department of Environment and Energy](#)

⁵[Food Standards Australia and New Zealand – Use By and Best Before Dates](#)

This information has satisfied the requirements for the Dietitians Association of Australia's process of endorsement. For expert nutrition and dietary advice contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). Visit 'Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian' at www.daa.asn.au or call 1800 812 942.

