Food Waste: Let’s Talk Trash!

Kate Yerxa, Extension Educator

About 90 billion pounds of food is wasted each year. There is the need to reduce food waste as the population grows. Food waste costs each person $370 per year. Plus, food waste goes to feeding landfills and not to feeding people. If wasted food was food we could eat, it would feed 25 million more Americans each year.

What is food waste? Food waste is food that goes uneaten. This may be fresh food that goes bad before it is eaten, or canned food that is past its expiration date.

How can you reduce food waste? Below are a few tips to get you started:

- Plan your meals.
- Store fresh foods to reduce the chance they go bad.
- Organize your refrigerator and cupboards to make sure you use the oldest food first.
- Use leftovers for lunches and other meals.
- Freeze leftovers to eat at a later time.

Small changes can add up and help you reduce food waste.

Looking for ways to save money on food? The Eat Well newsletter has always given you great ideas on how to save money on food. Now these ideas are even easier to spot. Look for this picture in the Eat Well newsletter to find great tips to save money on food. SAVE MONEY.
Food Bites
Keep It Clean
By Kimberly Thomas, ISU Dietetic Intern

When feeding your family a healthy diet, it is important to eat enough of fruits and vegetables. Try to make half your plate fruits and vegetables at each meal. All forms of fruits and vegetables are healthy, including fresh, frozen or canned. Check out www.choosemyplate.gov to view the recommendations for fruits and vegetables.

Following these safety tips for cooking, storing and buying fruits and vegetables will keep you from getting sick.

Purchasing Fruits and Vegetables

- Do not buy fresh vegetables or fruits that have bruises or cuts in the skins.
- Do not purchase canned fruits or vegetables if cans are dented or rusted.
- Do not purchase frozen fruits or vegetables, if bags are dirty or torn.

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables in cold water before peeling, cutting, eating or cooking, even fruits and vegetables with skins that will be peeled.
- Fruits and vegetables like broccoli or leafy greens should soak in cold water for two minutes. Dry the leafy greens with clean paper towels before preparing.
- Once washed, refrigerate fruits and vegetables immediately unless using. Your refrigerator should be kept between 35- 40°F.
- Do not re-wash fresh produce that has already been washed.
- Special fruit and vegetable washes are not necessary.
- Always wash your hands with warm soapy water before preparing or eating fresh fruits or vegetables.

Adapted from The University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bulletin #4336, Best Way to Wash Fruits and Vegetables http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/4336e/.
Winter months are the time to enjoy fresh citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruit and clementines. Frozen berries and peaches make great replacements for fresh fruit. Try this recipe and enjoy fruit all year long.

**Ingredients**

1 cup lowfat or nonfat vanilla yogurt  
¼ cup frozen fruit  
¼ cup cereal (for example, Cheerios)  
2 orange slices

**Directions**

1. Choose a tall clear glass.  
2. Put a large spoonful of yogurt in the bottom of the glass.  
3. Next put half of the frozen fruit pieces on the yogurt.  
4. Put another spoonful of yogurt on top of the fruit.  
5. Next put half of the cereal on top of the fruit.  
6. Follow with another spoonful of yogurt and the other half of the frozen fruit.  
7. Finish with a small scoop of yogurt and top with the rest of the cereal and the orange slices. Enjoy!

Makes 1 serving  
Serving Size: 1 cup  
Cost per serving: $1.55
**Ask Eat Well**

**Diane Qualey**
Community Education Assistant, Cumberland County

Diane has worked for the UMaine Cooperative Extension Eat Well Program for 20 years and has been an active 4-H leader for over 40 years. She takes pride in ensuring that her clients and youth members understand the value of healthy living and eating. In her free time, Diane enjoys playing with her five grandchildren, quilting and camping. Diane actively volunteers for the Special Olympics, her town library and for several country fair associations.

**Q. What is the best way to store winter squash?**

**A.** The best way to store winter squash is to keep them in a cool, dry place. The different Maine varieties of winter squash are acorn, butternut, buttercup, hubbard, and spaghetti, which are available from September to February. My favorite is buttercup squash.

Winter squash will keep for several months after harvesting and are always eaten cooked. Most varieties have orange flesh that is slightly sweet with a nutty flavor.

For an extra treat, you can save the seeds and bake them. Wash the seeds, add a little salt or cinnamon and sugar and then toast them in your oven at 350°F for 20 minutes.


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### Preparing Winter Squash

| Steaming         | 1. Wash, peel and cut the vegetable into two-inch cubes.  
|                 | 2. Steam for 25-40 minutes, or until the vegetable is fork-tender.  
|                 | *Another option is to steam larger pieces with the rind left on. Once they are cooked, the rind can easily be removed. Once steamed, the squash and pumpkin can be served cubed or mashed.*  
| Baking           | 1. Wash squash. If the squash is smaller just cut in in half. If it is large, cut it into individual portions to shorten the baking time.  
|                 | 2. Once cut, scoop out all of the seeds and fibers.  
|                 | 3. Bake the vegetables at 400°F for 1 to 1 ½ hours.  
|                 | *Best types of squash to bake are acorn or butternut squash.*  

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Proper shopping, storage and preparing of foods will keep money in your pocket and reduce food waste.

**Four Tips to Keep Your Food Safe**

**CLEAN**
- Wash hands and countertops with warm soapy water before preparing any food.
- Wash cutting boards and utensils in warm soapy water.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating or preparing, scrub those with rough skin.

**SEPARATE**
- Keep meats and eggs separated from fresh foods in your grocery cart, bags and refrigerator.
- Use separate cutting boards for meats and vegetables or fruits.
- Do not put cooked food on a plate that held raw food.

**COOK IT RIGHT!**
- Use a meat thermometer and cook foods to safe internal temperatures – *See chart in next column.*
- Never eat raw or under cooked eggs.
- For microwaves: Always use microwave safe dishes and wraps and cook according to package directions.
- Always heat leftovers and sauces until the temperature is 165°F.

**CHILL PROMPTLY**
- Refrigerate or freeze meats and produce within two hours of purchase.
- If freezing, wrap with plastic or aluminum foil over original packaging.
- Never defrost meats at room temperature. Instead defrost in the refrigerator for 24 hours.
- Place leftovers in small portions in shallow containers and refrigerate.
- Keep food uncovered after cooking to cool down more quickly. Refrigerate within two hours.
- Use gel packs, in insulated lunch bags, to keep packed lunches cold.

### SAFE INTERNAL TEMPERATURES CHART

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Safe Temperatures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground Meat and Meat Mixtures</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, pork, veal, lamb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey, chicken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh beef, veal, lamb, steaks, roasts,</td>
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<td>chops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken and turkey, whole Poultry breasts,</td>
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<tr>
<td>roasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poultry thighs, legs, wings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duck and goose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh Pork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ham, fresh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eggs - cook until yolk and white are</td>
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<td>firm and egg dishes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leftovers and casseroles</td>
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Quick and Easy Eat Well Recipe

Creamy White Bean Chili

This recipe is terrific for leftover turkey or chicken!

**Ingredients**
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cups chopped, cooked chicken (chop into ½ inch cubes)
- 2 (15.5 oz) cans low-sodium white cannellini beans
- 1 (15 oz) can low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (4 oz) cans chopped green chilies (drain off liquid)
- 1 tablespoon of low-sodium taco seasoning
- ½ cup lowfat plain yogurt
- ½ cup shredded lowfat cheddar cheese (optional)

**Directions**
1. In a large saucepan, add oil and sauté onions over medium heat for approximately 10 minutes.
2. Add chicken and stir.
3. Drain and rinse the beans. Add the beans, broth, green chilies and taco seasoning.
4. Heat until boiling. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook uncovered 30 minutes.
5. Stir in yogurt.
6. Top each serving with one ounce of shredded cheddar cheese, if desired.

Makes 6 servings   Serving size: 1½ cups       Cost per recipe: $10.00     Cost per serving: $1.66

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**Nutrition Facts**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount Per Serving</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Sodium</td>
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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

| Total Fat | Less than | 65g |
| Saturated Fat | Less than | 20g |
| Cholesterol | Less than | 300mg |
| Sodium | Less than | 2,400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate | | 300g |
| Dietary Fiber | | 25g |

Calories per gram:
- Fat 9
- Carbohydrate 4
- Protein 4