



FOOD: TOO GOOD TO WASTE



A FOOD WASTE REDUCTION GUIDE

**DEVELOPED BY CITY OF NEWTON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Food: Too Good to Waste is a guidebook designed to educate City of Newton residents about how to reduce food waste generation through small, easy changes in the way they shop for, prepare, and store food. The information in this guidebook is based on the US EPA *Food: Too Good to Waste* campaign and inspired by the City & County of Honolulu's *Food: Too Good to Waste* educational booklet publication.

The City of Newton encourages residents to reduce food waste generation by planning, shopping, cooking, and eating smart. Taking steps to reduce food waste will also stretch food budgets by properly storing food and rethinking leftovers.

WHAT IS FOOD WASTE?

Food waste refers to food or parts of food that are discarded instead of eaten. Food waste can be unavoidable or avoidable.

Unavoidable food waste includes parts of food that are not edible. Examples include:

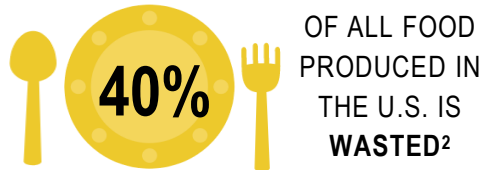
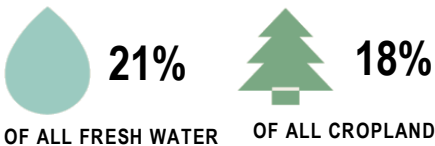
- Pineapple skins
- Teabags
- Bones & shells

Avoidable food waste is edible food that goes uneaten. It is generated by:

- Buying or cooking more food than can be consumed in a timely manner
- Storing food incorrectly

BY THE NUMBERS

FOOD WASTE CONSUMES 1:

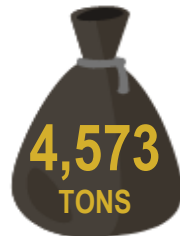
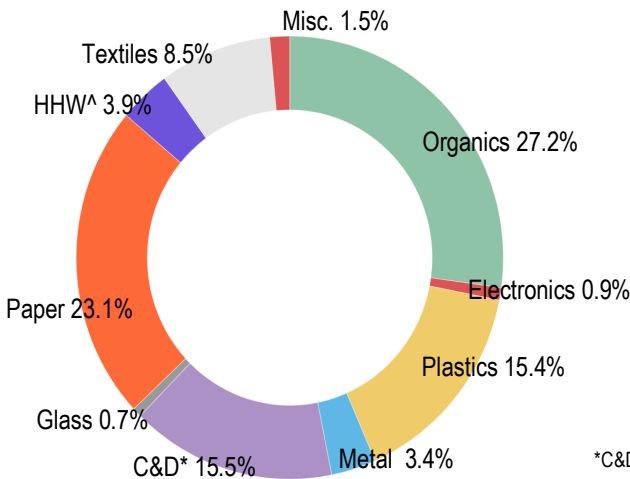


THE COST OF ALL U.S. HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE³



ORGANIC WASTE IN MASSACHUSETTS

ORGANICS ACCOUNT FOR 27.2% OF TRASH STREAM⁴



AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE IN NEWTON'S TRASH IN 2017⁵

*C&D: Construction and demolition materials

^HHW: Household Hazardous Waste

FARM TO FORK: WASTED FOOD OCCURS ALL ALONG THE FOOD CHAIN

Food is sometimes left in fields because it costs more to harvest than what it could be sold for.

Food that travels long distances is more likely to perish in route.

At the retail level, food is wasted when grocery stores or restaurants buy more of a perishable food item than they can sell.

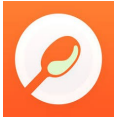


Wasted food wastes the water, fuel, energy, labor, pesticides, land, and fertilizers used to make the food. The nutrient value of the food is lost when food is sent to a waste-to-energy facility. When we throw food in the trash, we're throwing away much more than the food itself.⁶

MEAL PLANNING TOOLS

APPS & WEBSITES

Preventing food waste begins with **meal planning**. This is simply a list of what your household will eat each day. Many meal planning tools exist to help you stay organized and offer recipe ideas. Some examples of meal planning tools*:



Springpad (free): Note-keeping app with a special section devoted to planning weekly meals and grocery shopping. Search for this product in the App Store or on Google Play.

MealBoard (\$3.99): App to help you organize your meals by day of the week and meal type. Visit mealboard.com for more information.



Plan to Eat (\$4.95/month or \$39/year): Complete a free 30 day trial of this site dedicated to making eating a home easier. If so, purchase a subscription to the website service. Visit plantoeat.com for more information.

SEARCH FOR MORE MEAL PLANNING TOOLS ONLINE



Do a simple online search to find meal planning tools specific to your needs. Try searching these examples:

- ◆ “Meal planning for a family”
- ◆ “Meal planning for two”
- ◆ “Meal planning to save time”
- ◆ “Meal planning to save money”

*The City of Newton does not endorse these particular apps/websites, nor does it have any affiliation with them.

SMART SHOPPING

MAKE A SHOPPING LIST WITH MEALS AND PORTIONS IN MIND

Once you have put together your **meal plan** for the week, use it to make your **grocery shopping list**.

First, shop your fridge and cupboards to avoid buying food you already have. Make note of what you have on your list.

Include quantities on your shopping list so you buy just what you need. Choose loose fruits and vegetables over pre-packaged items to control the quantity you purchase.

Grocery shop with a full stomach – this can help you stick to your list.

Avoid marketing gimmicks that encourage you to buy more than you need. If you purchase 10 avocados for \$10 and then are only able to eat five before they spoil, that's \$5 and 5 avocados wasted. It may seem like a deal, but it's a net loss.



SAVE MONEY & REDUCE WASTE: THINK BEFORE YOU BUY³



31% of fresh tomatoes bought by U.S. households are thrown out– that's 21 tomatoes a year per person! Throwing out that many tomatoes costs us over \$2.3 billion a year. Prevent food waste by thinking about how much food you actually need before buying.

TIP: Stash reusable bags in your car so you won't forget them on your next shopping trip.



SMART STORAGE

Knowing how and where to **store food** once it is purchased will help to maximize its freshness. Use this chart as a guide for storage in your refrigerator:

FOOD	ROOM TEMPERATURE (70° F)	REFRIGERATOR (37° TO 40° F)	FREEZER (0 °F)
Apples	3 to 4 days	3 to 5 weeks	-
Avocados	Ripen for 4 to 5 days	2 to 3 days uncut 1 day cut	
Bananas	Store at room temperature. Use within 3 to 5 days	-	-
Tomatoes	Ripen for 3 to 5 days	2 days (cut)	3 to 4 months
Oranges	3 to 4 days	5 to 6 weeks	-
Bell peppers		1 to 2 weeks	3 to 4 months
Lettuce and salad greens	-	1 week	Certain greens: 8 to 12 months
Breads, fresh	Store at room temperature. Use within 3 to 5 days.	Storing in the refrigerator leads to staling.	3 months
Cheese (Hard)	-	6 months, unopened; 1 to 2 weeks opened	6 months
Cheese (Soft)	-	1 week	6 months
Dairy Milk	-	7 days	1 month
Milk Substitutes: Soy, Rice, and Almond	-	85 days, unopened 7 to 10 days, opened	3 months
Chicken or turkey	-	1 to 2 days	1 year
Eggs (fresh in shell)	-	3 to 5 weeks	
Fish (lean)	-	1 to 2 days	6 months
Fish (fatty)	-	1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months
Beef	-	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months

FOOD	TIME	CELLAR ENVIRONMENT
Potatoes	10 to 14 days	55-65° F
Onions	10 to 14 days	55-65° F

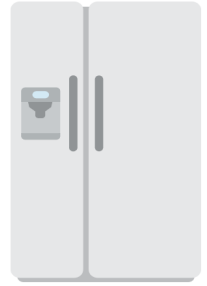
SMART STORAGE & PREPARATION

STORAGE GUIDELINES ³

Place fresh food items in clear storage bags or containers as soon as you get home from the store.

Keep your refrigerator between **37° and 40°F** in the freezer between **0° and 2°F**.

Consider storage bags and containers designed to help extend the life of your produce.



PREP NOW, EAT LATER

Prepare and cook perishable items, then freeze for use throughout the month. For example, bake and freeze chicken breasts, or fry and freeze ground beef.

Batch cook entire meals ahead of time and store in the fridge or freezer

Prep (peel and chop) produce immediately after returning home from the grocery store. This will prevent the avoidance of cooking when crunched for time.

FRUIT

Some produce emits ethylene gas, which hastens the ripening of other items. Store these ethylene emitters away from everything else: Apples, apricots, avocados, cantaloupe, figs, honeydew, bananas, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, tomatoes.

Don't rinse berries, cherries, or grapes until it is time to eat them.

Most fruits can be frozen and used later in baking and smoothies. Follow these steps:

- 1) Peel and chop into bite-size pieces.
- 2) Freeze fruit in a single layer on baking sheet.
- 3) Transfer to an airtight container and store for up to 3 months.



VEGETABLES

Most vegetables can be blanched and frozen to use later.

Save your greens, stalks, and stems to give soups and stews a nutrient boost.



Untie greens and herbs before storing so they can breathe.

Store leafy greens and other vegetables that can wilt in an airtight container with a damp towel.

Store onions, potatoes and sweet potatoes in a cool, dark place.

EGG & DAIRY



Store dairy products on a refrigerator shelf, not in the door where the temperature can fluctuate.

Eggs are safe to eat 3 to 5 weeks beyond the date on the carton.

Hard cheeses can be frozen for later use.

GRAINS

Store bread, pasta, and cereal in airtight containers in your pantry or on the counter.

Crackers and cereal that are going stale can be baked lightly in the oven to recrisp. Some can also be frozen and saved to make breadcrumbs.



MEAT



Portion out meat and freeze in airtight containers if you do not plan on using it within 2 days of purchase.

Freeze bones and carcasses to make stock to use in soups and stews.

SMART EATING

EAT WHAT YOU BUY

Organize the refrigerator and move perishable items to the front or a designated “eat first” area. You can use any available box and make an “Eat Me First” sign to highlight the area.

Use a grease pen or sticky notes to write the dates on food containers in the fridge.

Make a list each week of what needs to be used up and plan upcoming meals around it.



EAT WHAT YOU COOK

One of the most common reasons for wasting food is we cook too much. By getting serving sizes right, accurately measuring and cooking the right amount of food for the number of people you’re cooking for, you will avoid food waste, save money, and reduce the impact on the environment.



Designate one dinner each week as a “use it up” meal. Instead of cooking a new meal, look around in the cupboards and fridge for leftovers and other food that might otherwise get overlooked.

Store leftovers in clear containers. That way you can easily see what you have on hand in the fridge.

Repurpose leftovers and scraps. Use vegetable and meat scraps in homemade stocks, and zest and store citrus fruit rinds to add flavor to other meals.



Compost! Hate potato skins? Don’t feel like turning wilted vegetables into soup stock? No worries; food scraps still don’t need to be tossed. Just start a compost pile in the backyard or seek out a subscription curbside collection convert food waste into a useful resource.

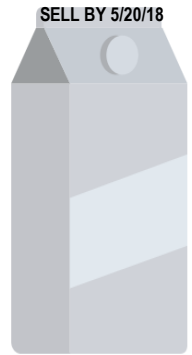
USE-BY, SELL-BY, AND BEST-BY: WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

These labels are required as an “open date” regulation in Massachusetts for packaged food that has a shelf life of less than 90 days. However, there are no federal or state guidelines on expiration dates. While spoiled food is unpalatable, food safety experts say they aren’t particularly hazardous.

“**Use-By**” date and “**Expires on**” dates are the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality, determined by the product manufacturer. These are not a purchase by or safety date.



“**Sell-By date**” tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should purchase the product before the sell-by date.



“**Best if Used By [or Before]**” date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

You can trust and rely on your own **sight and smell** over food dates in most cases!

DONATE

Donate what you won’t use. Never going to eat that can of beans? Donate it to a food kitchen before it expires so it can be consumed by someone who needs it.



The Newton Food Pantry, located on the basement level of Newton City Hall, accepts non perishable foods and toiletries.

COMPOSTING OPTIONS FOR FOOD WASTE



BACKYARD COMPOSTING: Newton DPW offers two compost bin options (\$25 each) and kitchen scrap buckets (\$8 each) at City Hall Customer Service or online at newtonma.gov/billpay. Show proof of payment at the Newton Resource Recovery Center to pick up items.

CURBSIDE PICKUP: There are a growing number of companies that offer curbside subscription service within Newton. The City of Newton is piloting collection options, but does not provide city-wide service at this time.

CITY OF NEWTON ORGANICS COLLECTION

The City of Newton began exploring curbside organics collection with a small pilot program in Spring 2018 to divert food scraps from disposal. The City is exploring curbside organics collection to better understand the cost and environmental impacts of separating food waste from the waste stream. Newton DPW plans to hold a larger pilot for a longer duration in 2019.

Other municipalities that offer organics curbside collection include:

- Cambridge, MA (as of April 2018)
- Hamilton/Wenham, MA
- San Francisco, CA
- Minneapolis, MN
- Denver & Boulder, CO
- New York City (being phased in)
- Alameda, Santa Clara, and Palo Alto Counties, CA



As Newton takes steps to recover food waste from the trash, we will reduce our environmental impact, increase awareness, and make our city more sustainable. In the long term, it is feasible that pulling food waste out of the trash will mean a cost savings and the generation of less trash.

REFERENCES

- ¹ ReFed. 2018. *27 Solutions to Waste*. Available at <http://www.refed.com/?sort=economic-value-per-ton>
- ² NRDC. 2012. *Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill*. Available at <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>
- ³ US EPA. 2017. *Food: Too Good to Waste Implementation Guide and Toolkit*. Available at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-too-good-waste-implementation-guide-and-toolkit>
- ⁴ Wheelabrator Millbury, Inc. 2017. *2017 Waste Characterization Study Report*. Available at <http://www.mass.gov/eeal/docs/dep/recycle/solid/wcs16mil.pdf>
- ⁵ City of Newton Department of Public Works, Division of Environmental Affairs data analysis.
- ⁶ US EPA. 2017. *Sustainable Management of Food Basics*. Available at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics>

Contact Us

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City of Newton
Department of Public Works
Environmental Affairs Division

Get Connected



Use the *Recycle Right Newton* app or website tool to view the collection calendar, receive trash day reminders, and search best disposal options.