

2020 CAMPAIGN WORK WELL + LIVE WELL

Tips for Reducing Food Waste at Home



TIPS FOR REDUCING FOOD WASTE AT HOME

Work Well + Live Well Campaign

The average household in Canada wastes 140 kilograms of food a year. That's equivalent to more than \$1,100 worth of groceries. Food waste is a major problem for households, especially during COVID-19 as people stock up on groceries and buy more than they need. This guide includes simple tips and resources to help you save more money and waste less food.

WASTE LESS, SAVE MORE

Organize your refrigerator, freezer, cupboards, and pantry. Move the oldest food to the front so you eat it first. For optimum freshness, Health Canada advises to set your refrigerator to 4°C or lower and your freezer to -18°C or lower to prevent bacteria growth. The back of the fridge is always colder than the door so put items like milk towards the back and condiments like jam on the door shelves. Consider keeping an inventory of your cupboards and pantry so you know what you have on hand and can reduce the likelihood of food expiring before you have a chance to enjoy it.

Check “best before” dates. If an unopened product has been properly handled and stored, “best before” dates indicate that it should be of high quality until the specified date. “Best before” dates do not guarantee product safety. However, they do give you information about the freshness and potential shelf-life of unopened foods. “Best before” dates are generated by food manufacturers to indicate the quality of a product, such as the freshness, flavour and nutritional value. You can typically buy and eat food after the “best before” date has passed, it just may have lost some of its freshness, flavour, and nutritional value. However, it is always best to follow “best before” dates for products like meat and dairy to be safe. Visit the Government of Canada’s website for more information about [how to read food date labels and packaging](#).

Store fresh food properly. Learn how to prolong the life of perishable food using Love Food Waste Waste Canada’s comprehensive resources that explain how to properly handle and store groceries, including a [Produce Guide](#), [Fridge Guide](#), [Freezer Guide](#), and [Shelf Life](#). Below are examples of how to properly store some common household foods according to Love Food Waste Waste Canada:



Blueberries: Do not wash until ready to use. Store either in their original container or in a covered bowl or container in the refrigerator. When freezing, it is best to first spread them out on parchment paper on a cookie sheet, freeze them, and then place them in bags for use later on.



Strawberries: Do not wash until ready to use. Wet strawberries soak up every bit of moisture, increasing the likelihood of them spoiling faster and becoming moldy. Store them in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator, evenly spaced on a flat surface with a dish cloth or paper towel, which helps to maintain humidity. If space is limited, store in multiple layers separated with cloth or paper towel. Leave the green caps on until ready to eat.



Bread: Buy bread on sale and freeze it when you get home. You can toast the frozen bread when you need it or defrost it in a sealed bag or container overnight.



Milk: If you don’t think you’ll use milk before it spoils, pour it into freezer-friendly containers and freeze it for later use. It will keep for up to three months.



Meat: Place meat in a freezer bag, pour in a marinade, and freeze. Remember to write the date on the bag so you know what to use from your freezer first. When you defrost the meat, it will be marinated and ready to cook!



Potatoes: Do not wash until ready to use. Store away from sunlight in a cool, dark, dry, well-ventilated place, in a bag with ventilation—mesh, paper, burlap, or perforated plastic. Do not store near onions, which produce and emit ethylene gas and speed up the ripening process causing nearby potatoes to spoil faster.

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Plan meals ahead of time. When you plan meals in advance you are less likely to waste food. Try using a meal planner like [Meal Prep Mate](#) that provides portioned shopping lists, meal inspiration ideas, and tips to waste less.

Store dry goods in airtight packaging. This helps them last longer and helps keep out bacteria and moisture. Consider investing in some glass jars and containers like [these ones](#) from Canadian-owned Bulk Barn.

Buy frozen fruits and vegetables. Frozen produce is a simple and healthy way to cut down on waste since it retains its nutrients. Use only what you need from the freezer and save the rest for later use.

Substitute missing ingredients. Often times you can [find replacements for missing ingredients](#) that will still work, and might even help improve a recipe!

Revive and repurpose food. For example, wilted veggies can often be reinvigorated by a quick soak in ice water for 5 to 10 minutes. If bread is starting to go, toast it up and use it as croutons in a salad or as a soup topper. If you've overcooked vegetables, turn them into soups or sauces by tossing them in the blender with some soup stock, milk, or cream as a base. This typically works well with broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and potatoes.

Do a batch cook. Make chilis, soups, or stews and freeze them in portions for later enjoyment.

Get creative with leftovers. For inspiration, check out Love Food Hate Waste Canada's [Leftover Food Recipe](#). Remember to always handle, store, and enjoy leftover food safely. The Government of Canada's [food safety tips for leftovers](#) is a great resource.

Experiment with preserving foods. If you have time and want to explore other ways to preserve fruits and vegetables aside from using your freezer or refrigerator, try [fermenting](#), [pickling](#), [drying](#), or [canning](#) food.

Compost if possible. Composting food scraps is a resourceful way to turn food waste into energy for plants and save it from ending up in landfill where it emits harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Check with your municipality to learn more about what items are accepted in their Organics program.