

Food Saving Tips

For Reducing Food Waste



S A I N T P A U L – R A M S E Y C O U N T Y P U B L I C H E A L T H

Reducing Food Waste

Recycling food scraps is a great option, but reducing the amount of food we waste is even better! More than 30% of food in the United States is wasted. In most homes, more food goes in the trash than any other material, and this can cost a four-person family up to \$1,500 per year. Food waste also means all the resources that went into producing that food are wasted. Here are some tips to help you reduce food waste:

Store it Right

To make it last, make sure you're storing your food correctly.

- **Milk:** Don't store it in your refrigerator door, where your refrigerator is warmest; instead, put it in the colder parts of your refrigerator.
- **Bread:** If you won't be eating it within a couple of days, freeze it.
- **Fruits and veggies:** Most will last longer if you wait to wash until you're about to eat them.
- **Bananas:** Store them away from other fruit (unless you want the other fruit to ripen faster).
- **Onions/potatoes:** Do not store these two near each other – the onions will cause the potatoes to sprout.

Another storage tip is to create a shelf in your refrigerator just for food that needs to be eaten soon. For more food storage tips, visit the [Save the Food website](#).

Freeze it to Make it Last

Your freezer can greatly extend the life of foods – use it to store food that you won't be eating right away. Here are some tips using your amazing freezer:

- Freeze in portions. For example, freeze bread in slices, and freeze meal-size portions of soups.
- Make sure whatever you are freezing is in an airtight container to preserve flavor.
- Most liquid foods will expand in the freezer, so be sure to leave some space at the top of containers to account for this.
- Don't worry if water crystals form on frozen foods – those are normal and the food is safe to eat.
- The best ways to defrost food are to place it in the refrigerator, in your microwave, or in a bowl of cold water. Do not defrost on the counter or in warm water.



Need Help with Food?

There are multiple resources to help with food access in the county. Click [here](#) for food assistance information.



Tips for Reducing Food Waste

Understanding Food Packaging Dates

Ninety percent of us occasionally throw away food too soon, and over half of us do it regularly – this is all due to misunderstanding about package dates. Here's some information on what those dates really mean:

- **Best before, best by, and use by:** Dates listed along with these phrases do not relate to food safety. They are related to quality and are the dates by which a brand stands by its product. So those chips with a *best by April 1, 2020* date may not have been as fresh on April 20, 2020, but they were still totally safe. An exception is infant formula – formula should be used by the date on its packaging.
- **Sell by:** Don't worry about these dates, as they're intended for store staff and account for food being good beyond that date.
- Be careful about leaving food that should be refrigerated in your car or on the counter for too long, as this can cause it to spoil before its expiration date.
- Your senses of sight, smell and taste are your best tools for determining food safety – if it looks, smells or tastes bad, toss it.

More information on food package dates can be found on the [United States Department of Agriculture website](#).

Fix that Food

Do you have food that's wilted, stale, or too salty? Here are some tips to save food that's on the brink:

- **Wilted:** A quick soak in ice water can revive veggies like carrots, celery, broccoli and salad greens. Veggies that don't perk up can still be great in cooked dishes.
- **Stale:** Put stale crackers or chips in a toaster oven for a minute to crisp them back up. Stale bread can be toasted to make toast!
- **Too salty:** Add lemon juice, vinegar or brown sugar, or dilute with water or lemon juice.
- **Burned:** Discard the burned portion of the dish, and then put the unburned food into a new pot and cover with a damp cloth for ten minutes. This should remove much of the burnt flavor.

Make a Plan

Before shopping for food, look at what you have in your refrigerator and pantry to make sure you're not purchasing items that you already have. A look in your pantry and refrigerator can also give you ideas for what you might purchase to help you use what you do have. (Maybe some milk would help you eat up that cereal before it gets stale!) Save the Food offers tools to help you better [plan meals and minimize waste](#) – whether you're cooking for one or your whole family!

Information provided here comes from [the Save the Food website](#).
Visit [Save the Food](#) for more great information on reducing food waste.