

FOOD WASTE DIARY



In 2019, 66.2 million tons of food was wasted by folks going about their everyday lives in the United States.

This number includes waste from grocery stores, restaurants, and at home. The majority of this waste happens in home kitchens, which is why it's important to learn what you waste and how to cut back.

That's where this diary comes in. It's a tool to help you track what your family throws away and why, so you can quickly and easily figure out how to stop wasting food – and money!

How to Use This Diary

Don't worry: no one is asking you to become a food scientist overnight. This process will take just a few minutes out of your week and will help you gain confidence in preventing food waste.

When you go to throw out food, write down a few details:

- **What food is it?**
- **How much of it is there?** (Seem confusing? See Measuring below for help.)
- **Where does it go** (garbage, compost)?
- **Why is it going away** (looks/smells bad, cooked too much, past use-by date)?

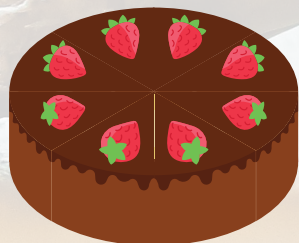
If you're not wasting any food one day, make a quick note of that, and consider why not (went out to eat, skipped a meal, saved leftovers, ate all that was prepared).

Measuring

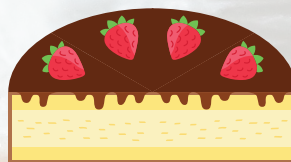
CONCEPT SOURCE: Love Food, Hate Waste Australia

This part should be intuitive: How do you think about food? We recommend using the following concepts, but whatever works for you is what will be most effective, here.

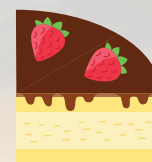
1. "Whole" foods: To most people, "half a loaf of bread" makes more sense than getting out a scale to write down "283 grams" or "10 ounces." We recommend easy fractions:



Whole



Half



Quarter



Less than a quarter

2. Other, "loose" foods like beans, grapes, cereal, etc. Use measurements that are familiar to you – One spoonful (whatever size your household spoons are), one handful, etc.



Spoonful



Handful

That being said, if your brain works best with actual weights and measures, go for it! (Any excuse to get out a kitchen scale is a good excuse.)

What food did you throw away?

DATE: _____

Meal	Food	How much?	Why?
e.g., breakfast	cereal	half a bowl	looks/smells bad

If you didn't throw away any food, please indicate why.

<input type="checkbox"/> Went out	<input type="checkbox"/> Ate leftovers	<input type="checkbox"/> Ate a ready-to-eat meal
Other: _____		

DATE: _____

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Other: _____		

What to Do with Your Findings

Look over the data you recorded throughout the week to see if you can find any patterns. Maybe you threw away a lot of fresh vegetables because you were too busy to prepare them. Maybe you tossed a few foods because they were past their “use by” dates. Once you have some ideas about why you waste food, you can figure out how to cut back by using the “DWFSC Guide for Reducing Food Waste at Home” at des.sc.gov/dwfsc.

Once you start making changes to prevent food waste, fill out this diary again to see how far you’ve come on your food waste reduction journey!



Quick Tips to Cut Back on Food Waste

- **Plan ahead.** Create a meal plan based on what you already have at home.
- **Shop smart.** Make a list of what you need to buy and stick to it.
- **Understand food date labels.** These are almost always indicators of a manufacturer’s idea of when their product will be at peak quality – they are not indicators of food safety.
- **Learn BSPs (Best Storage Practices).** Different foods like to be kept in different ways. For help, see the “DWFSC Guide for Reducing Food Waste at Home” at des.sc.gov/dwfsc.
- **Perfect portion sizes.** Kitchen scales are great for helping figure out how much food to cook. Things like rice are best (and safest) when eaten fresh, and eyeballing how much to cook can lead to a lot of waste. Also, try Save the Food’s Guest-imator at savethefood.com/guestimator.
- **Give leftover makeovers.** If eating the same meal twice doesn’t entice you, maybe eating a brand new dish while skipping half of the cook time does! Not sure where to start with leftover transformations? Follow [@dontwastefoodsc](https://www.facebook.com/dontwastefoodsc) on Facebook or Instagram – reusing leftovers is a favorite topic on these feeds!





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