



DON'T WASTE FOOD SC

A Guide for Reducing Food Waste at Home



SC DEPARTMENT of
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

WHY FOOD WASTE?

FOOD IS THE NO. 1 THING AMERICANS THROW AWAY



The United States wastes more food than any other country. Each year an **estimated 30 to 40 percent** of the nation's food supply – **about 76 billion pounds** – is never consumed. Wasted food also results in wasted labor, energy, water, land, and other resources used to produce, process, package, and pass food from the farm to our plates.

Households are responsible for the largest portion – **40 percent** – of food waste nationwide. On average, American families each **throw away 21 percent of food they buy**, costing as much as **\$1,800 per year**. Overall, **71 percent of the food tossed at home could have been consumed**.

*All of this while **more than 44 million Americans are food insecure**. At home, **1 in 10 South Carolinians are food insecure**, including 141,110 children.*

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Will my effort make a difference?

Simply put: **YES.**

So often, it can seem like the efforts of one person make little difference in the face of big environmental problems. But when it comes to food waste, individuals can and will make the biggest difference. This problem lives in home kitchens more than anywhere, and if families take responsibility and make changes, those behaviors will create much bigger change.

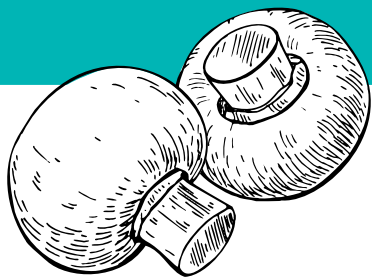
This guide is designed to provide the information and inspiration needed to do your part at home – one small adjustment at a time.



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HOW DO I GET STARTED?



*The first step to fixing food waste is to **know what you waste and why**. If you're the fridge-keeper in your household, you probably already have a good idea of this. If you don't, figuring it out can be easy.*

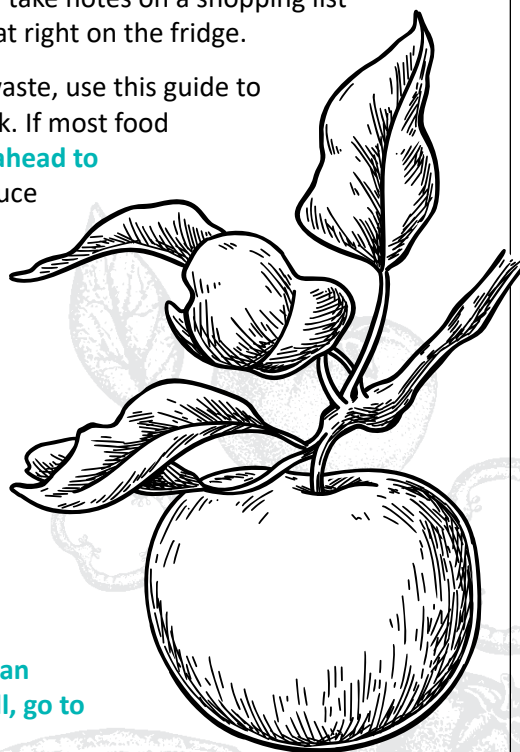
Start by tracking what goes in the garbage bin. You can use a food waste diary to record what's thrown away for a day or a week, including which foods, how much, and why.

Don't Waste Food SC offers a food waste diary at des.sc.gov/dwfsc. If that isn't your cup of tea, you can take notes on a shopping list or other scrap paper and keep that right on the fridge.

Once you know what's going to waste, use this guide to develop strategies for cutting back. If most food going in the bin is leftovers, **skip ahead to Meal Planning on page 3**. If produce goes bad before you get to it, **check out Long Live the Produce! on page 9**. Whatever the challenge, this guide aims to help.

Finally, no matter how skilled you get at saving food, some won't get eaten. Always ask yourself if food can be donated before counting it as waste.

See page 14 for basic donation guidance. For information and resources about **options other than sending food waste to the landfill, go to page 15.**



*Don't Waste Food SC (DWFSC) is a collaborative outreach campaign **designed to empower all South Carolinians to prevent food waste.***

It was created by the S.C. Department of Environmental Services' (DES) Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office), and founding partners included the S.C. Department of Commerce and the S.C. Department of Agriculture.

The Office serves as campaign lead, develops material, and operates as home base for the campaign, but DWFSC itself is now a living, breathing part of the community, and therefore belongs to each of you. The idea is that you will take responsibility for reducing food waste in your home and help spread knowledge to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

For more information, contact DWFSC via the Web, email, or social media.



des.sc.gov/dwfsc



dontwastefoodsc@des.sc.gov



[@dontwastefoodsc](https://www.instagram.com/dontwastefoodsc)

MEAL PLANNING

REDUCE WASTE & SAVE MONEY

What's for dinner? Meal planning (considering what's practical for your family to figure out meals in advance) can answer that question. This stress-relieving strategy can make grocery shopping less time consuming, decrease the effort put into last-minute cooking, enable healthy eating, cut your food bill, and reduce wasted food.

Here are 10 steps to get started.

1 Be honest with yourself before you begin. If two out of three eaters in your family don't like leftovers, meal prepping probably shouldn't be part of your meal plan! It's better to recognize what works than prep a week's worth of food and throw it away. Overwhelmed? No worries. Help is everywhere online, including **free grocery list and meal planning templates** (DWFSC has both! **For printable PDFs, check out des.sc.gov/dwfsc**.) as well as plenty of apps for recipes, planning meals, and shopping lists.

2 Start slow and grow. Planning can be for one or all your meals – it's up to you. If you buy veggies for healthy snacks but know you won't feel like cleaning and cutting them later in the week, do that when you get home from the store. It'll shorten their shelf-life, but eating some is better than throwing away whole vegetables at the end of the week.

3 Eat food you love! Turn to foods that are already a hit at home. Testing new foods while developing a meal planning routine is a recipe for overwhelm! Remember: Keep it simple. Planning a

Essentials are essential. Keep your family's favorite dry goods and spices in stock. These tools enable you to make a meal from just about any perishable food in your fridge. Only buy things in bulk if you're sure you'll use them in a reasonable timeframe – the cliché of a can disappearing into the back of a cupboard is a cliché for a reason!

multi-course meal for every night will make cooking more work than fun.

4 Check out the trash. Figuring out what food you waste each week can help guide your planning. **Check out [How Do I Get Started?](#) on page 2 for more details on keeping a food waste diary.**

5 Meal match. Pick out recipes that use similar ingredients.

6 Build foundations instead of mapping out meals. Rather than planning meals down to the garnish, choose a few key building blocks that your family can mix and match to make multiple meals. Cooking a protein, a whole grain, vegetables, and sauces means Monday you can have a Mediterranean chicken bowl, while Tuesday those same elements become tacos.

7 Pay attention to portions. As much as one-third of the food waste created at home is the result of over-preparing. Consult a portion guide and plan accordingly. Not only will it reduce food waste, it could help your health.

8 Create your shopping list. It sounds obvious, but it makes a difference. Shopping without a list leads to impulse purchases and forgetting ingredients. Keep amounts in mind: If you need 8 ounces of tomato sauce for your chili recipe, buy an 8-ounce can so you don't have to figure out what to do with the extra.

9 Shop at home before the store. Take inventory of what's already in the fridge, freezer, and pantry. Not only will you avoid buying duplicates, but you can get creative with substitutions: If one of your recipes calls for cooked kale, and you have some spinach that needs to be used, swap it in and save some money!

10 Go shopping. Buy only what you need for your planned meals (and planned snacks). **See [Smart Shopping](#) on page 4.**

SMART SHOPPING:

Food Waste Begins (& Ends) with What You Put In Your Cart

You've planned meals for the week and made a list of what you need to buy (including amounts). You've pre-shopped your pantry. Wait a second, though! There are still a few steps to take before you head to the store.

- **Is there an app for that?** Apps are available for keeping recipes, finding coupons, checking grocery prices, and more. Your favorite store probably has their own app where you can check out sales and clip coupons before you leave home.
- **Beware of sales gimmicks.** "Family size," "buy one, get one free" (BOGO), and other discounts look appealing, but buying too much can lead to wasted food (and money). Find out if your store offers a sale price when you buy less than the advertised quantity (e.g., you pay half price on one item when it's advertised as BOGO).
- **Remember the short life of fresh produce.** Fruits and vegetables are key to a healthy diet. Did you know that flash-frozen produce retains its nutrients even better than fresh, since freezing stops the decaying process? Frozen fruits and veggies can be kept for much longer and are often cheaper, too. Review your list to see if there's anywhere you can substitute frozen for fresh. **See Long Live the Produce! on page 9 to learn more about fresh produce storage.**
- **Have a snack before you leave home.** Eating before you're surrounded by appetizing options helps prevent impulse purchases.

Now you're ready to shop!

Keep these tips in mind when filling your cart.

- **Shop in order.** Keep food safe through strategic shopping. Start in the middle of the store with non-perishable foods, then work your way to the perimeter. Pick up refrigerated and frozen items towards the end of your trip, and shop the deli counter last. Also be sure to group like items in your grocery cart – keeping cold foods together will help retain their temperature.
- **Ask the butcher.** If you need a smaller cut or package of meat than what's in the case, ask the butcher to repackage it.
- **Check dates.** While "best by" and "use by" dates are basic indicators of peak quality, they are useful in making sure you'll be able to use products in a timely manner. **For details, go to page 13.**
- **Stick to the list.** You'll be less likely to waste food if you don't buy too much. Stick to the list to stay on course and reduce your food bill. Reminder: DWFSO offers a free shopping list template at des.sc.gov/dwfsoc.



MAINTAIN YOUR FRIDGE:

KEEP YOUR FOOD SAFE & FRESH LONGER

Proper storage ensures food is safe to eat, maintains its flavor and nutritional value, and reduces waste. Everything has its place, whether it be the cupboard, pantry, counter, freezer, or refrigerator. Your fridge is one of your greatest weapons in the fight against food waste – knowing how to use it properly is essential.

Refrigerator Basics

- **Set the temperature to 37°F.** Since few refrigerator controls show the actual temperature, it's good to buy an inexpensive appliance thermometer and check it periodically. Remember, it's all about balance: if you set your fridge temperature too low, some foods will degrade faster. Anything higher than 40°F isn't safe. 37°F is the sweet spot.
- **Temperature varies.** Not all areas in the refrigerator are the same. Different kinds of food should be stored on the upper shelves, lower shelves, in the door, and in drawers. **See *The Anatomy of Your Refrigerator* on page 7** to know what should go where. **Learn how to use your crisper drawers on page 10.**
- **Find a happy medium (food temperature).** Perishable food needs to go into the fridge quickly. Leaving it out for two hours or more allows bacteria to multiply and can put you at risk of contracting foodborne illness. You should never put hot food in the refrigerator, however, as it causes the fridge temperature to rise and can lead to unnecessary food spoilage and food poisoning. Cool food before putting it away, while staying under the two-hour food safety threshold.
- **Keep food covered but visible.** Store food in clear, covered containers to see what you have. Also label everything with the day you bought the food or a toss date. A few minutes of labeling will save you guesswork and food waste later. When adding food, practice FIFO (first in, first out), rotating older food to the front. Consider making an "Eat this first" area of the fridge.
- **Keep it clean.** Clean spills immediately, and deep clean your refrigerator every three to six months. This reduces the growth of Listeria bacteria (which can grow at refrigerator temperatures).





TEMPERATURE

Keep the refrigerator at 37°F.
The freezer should be at 0°F.

The Anatomy of Your Refrigerator

DON'T OVERPACK!

Cold air needs space to circulate. Refrigerate food within 2 hours of shopping, 1 hour if it's 90°F or warmer outside.

FREEZER STORAGE

The freezer is a great place to store food and stash leftovers. Be sure to label containers and follow storage guidelines to keep foods fresh.

TOP SHELF

Store leftovers and prepackaged foods such as yogurt and beverages.

LOWER SHELVES

This is the coldest part of the refrigerator. Good to store eggs, dairy, and meat.

CRISPER DRAWERS

Store fruits and veggies. Use switches to control humidity. Set one to high (mostly closed) and one to low (mostly open). See page 10 for more details.

DOORS

This is the warmest part of the refrigerator. Store beverages and condiments here. Do not store dairy or eggs in the doors.

BEST FREEZER PRACTICES

Freeze more. Waste less.

You can freeze just about anything. “Can” and “should” are two different concepts, though. Learning about how and when to freeze certain food can be the difference between a delicious future meal and a full garbage bin. Here are some tips to help you become a freezer expert.

1 **Keep the freezer at 0°F and give it space to do its job.** Place an appliance thermometer in your freezer and check it once a week. Filling your freezer to maximum capacity prevents cold air circulation, so it cannot maintain its temperature.

2 **Know when to freeze and for how long.** Food frozen at peak quality tastes better than food frozen near the end of its useful life. Though food will be safe indefinitely at 0° F, quality decreases the longer food is in the freezer. Tenderness, flavor, aroma, juiciness, and color can all be affected. Check **The Anatomy of Your Refrigerator on page 7** for information on how long items can be stored in the freezer.

3 **Know what not to freeze.** Some foods become unappetizing after freezing. These include milk, mayonnaise, canned goods, cheese, cucumbers, watermelon, lettuce, cabbage, (uncooked) tomatoes, oranges, grapes (unless you plan to eat them frozen), green peppers, celery, ketchup, gravy, baked and boiled potatoes, cooked pasta, fried foods, whole eggs, yogurt, rice, and anything carbonated. (Please note: while these items aren't awesome once thawed,

many can become great again if you cook them! Think: frozen peppers on pizza or frozen celery in soup.)

4 **Cool and package well.** If placed in the freezer when warm, ice crystals form and keep the overall temperature of food at unsafe levels. After cooling, place food in square or rectangular air-tight containers. They stack well and take up less space. Also, remember to label food with dates and descriptions.

5 **Freezer burn does not mean food is unsafe.** Freezer burn is a quality issue – not a food safety issue. It appears as grayish-brown leathery spots. Avoid it by securely wrapping food in air-tight packaging.

6 **Don't forget to defrost the freezer itself!** Doing so keeps your food at the right temperature and extends the life of your freezer. If the sides of your freezer are covered in ice, it's time. Store food in another freezer or cooler, then unplug the freezer and let the ice melt. Bring it back to 0°F before replacing the food.





PRODUCE

LONG LIVE THE

6 Simple Steps to Save Fruits & Vegetables

20 percent of the fruits and vegetables we buy are never consumed.

- 1 Buy produce in small quantities.** Choose loose fruits and vegetables over packaged ones to prevent over-buying and eliminate overly bruised or otherwise damaged pieces.
- 2 Shop at farmers markets and local produce stands.** Local produce stays fresh and maintains nutrition longer since it doesn't travel as far as most large-scale produce. Be sure to ask about ugly produce at the market, too! Imperfect fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as the "pretty" ones, and you may get them at discounted prices.
- 3 Learn about ethylene gas and proper storage.** Every piece of produce needs a particular climate to last. Sticking all your fruit in one bowl on the counter or piling all your produce in one crisper drawer is a bad idea for longevity! **Ethylene** is a gas produced by certain fruits that causes increased ripening in other produce. Different fruits and vegetables have different levels of sensitivity to ethylene. Simply put? You want to keep ethylene producers away from fruits and veggies that are ethylene sensitive. **See Produce Storage Cheat Sheet on pages 12-13** for more information.
- 4 Make soups, skillet meals, casseroles, and frittatas.** Chop up extra veggies and throw them into one-size-fits-all dishes. Fruit can be used similarly in yogurt parfaits and smoothies.
- 5 Take stock of what you've got.** Use vegetable scraps to make homemade stock. It tastes better than store bought, saves you money, and reduces waste.
- 6 Freeze your fruits.** Vegetables can be frozen, but they usually involve cooking. Fruits can be flash frozen by laying them on a baking sheet in the freezer. Once frozen, dump them into a zip-top bag or other container for long-term storage.

MYSTERY SOLVED

PROPERLY USING THE FRIDGE'S CRISPER DRAWERS

Confused about the bottom drawers of your refrigerator? You're not alone. Say hello to your crisper drawers. They are designed to store and extend the life of fresh produce. With a little adjusting, they can save you money and reduce food waste.

Crisper Crash Course

Crisper drawers have different levels of humidity than the rest of the refrigerator. Most are adjustable (That's what the dials do!) to prevent loss of moisture from produce or to allow ethylene to escape – preventing produce from rotting quickly.

Organize drawers front to back and use dividers or bins to create separate spaces to protect delicate things. Place items that have a shorter shelf life in the front. You'll see them first and use them before they spoil. Remember not to over- or under-fill the drawers. They work best when about two-thirds full.

LEFT DRAWER: LOW HUMIDITY (FRUITS)

Things that tend to rot go here. This includes fruits and veggies that emit ethylene, like apples and pears.

Leaving the window open on this drawer gives that gas a chance to escape.

- Apples
- Apricots
- Avocados (once ripe)
- Citrus
- Kiwi
- Mangoes
- Papayas
- Peaches
- Pears
- Peppers
- Plums

RIGHT DRAWER – HIGH HUMIDITY (VEGETABLES)

Things that wilt go here. By having the window closed, water vapor is held in the drawer, which keeps veggies like greens fresher longer.





































Keep ethylene-sensitive fruits and vegetables in this drawer to separate them from ethylene producers.

- Asparagus
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Cucumbers
- Green beans
- Herbs
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Okra
- Parsnips
- Peas
- Radishes
- Spinach
- Summer squash
- Swiss chard

ETHYLENE:

Keep It Simple (& Keep Them Separated)

Keep in mind whether produce is ethylene sensitive, an ethylene producer, or both before storing it with other fruits and veggies!

ETHYLENE SENSITIVE		ETHYLENE PRODUCERS	
 <i>Apples</i>	 <i>Kiwi</i>	 <i>Apples</i>	 <i>Peppers</i>
 Asparagus	 Lemons	 Apricots	 Plums
 <i>Avocados</i>	 Lettuce	 <i>Avocados</i>	 Tomatoes
 <i>Bananas</i>	 Limes	 <i>Bananas</i>	
 Broccoli	 Onions	 <i>Cantaloupe</i>	
 <i>Cantaloupe</i>	 <i>Peaches</i>	 Figs	
 Collard Greens	 <i>Pears</i>	 <i>Honeydew</i>	
 Cucumber	 <i>Peppers</i>	 <i>Kiwi</i>	
 Eggplant	 Squash	 Nectarines	
 Grapes	 Sweet Potatoes	 <i>Peaches</i>	
 <i>Honeydew</i>	 Watermelon	 <i>Pears</i>	

NOTE: Items in italics are both ethylene sensitive and ethylene producers. If you overcrowd these sensitive producers, they'll spoil very quickly.

PRODUCE STORAGE CHEAT SHEET

PRODUCE ITEMS		LOW OR HIGH HUMIDITY DRAWER	STORE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE	ONCE RIPENED, REFRIGERATE	REFRIGERATE IMMEDIATELY
	APPLES Store in breathable bag, separate from other produce	LOW		✓	
	ARTICHOKE Sprinkle cut end with water; seal in a plastic bag	HIGH			✓
	ASPARAGUS Place stem-end down in an inch of water				✓
	AVOCADOS Leave on counter to ripen; to speed up ripening, place in paper bag			✓	
	BANANAS Once ripe, they can last 5-7 days in the refrigerator; skins will turn black, but fruit will be fine			✓	
	BASIL Trim stems and place in glass of water; cover with loose plastic bag		✓		
	BEETS Separate greens, store in breathable bag; can last up to 2 months if properly stored	HIGH			✓
	BELL PEPPERS Store in breathable bag	LOW			✓
	BLACKBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES, RASPBERRIES			✓	
	BLUEBERRIES Store berries in a container lined with a cloth; wash just before using			✓	
	CABBAGE Store in a plastic bag	HIGH			✓
	CANTALOUPE Store cut melon pieces in a container			✓	
	CARROTS Remove green tops; store in breathable bag	HIGH			✓
	CAULIFLOWER Loosen the plastic wrap, or place in a breathable bag	HIGH			✓
	CELERY Place root end in glass of water or in an open plastic bag	HIGH			✓
	CHERRIES Store unwashed and uncovered in the coldest part of the fridge			✓	
	CITRUS FRUITS Store loosely or in a mesh bag	LOW		✓	
	COLLARD GREENS Place unwashed in a sealed plastic bag	HIGH			✓
	CORN Wrap ears tightly in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator.				✓
	CUCUMBERS Store in breathable bag with a damp cloth	HIGH			✓
	EGGPLANT Store loose or in a breathable bag in a cool, dark place		✓		
	GARLIC BULB Store, unpeeled, in a cool, dark place		✓		
	GRAPES Store in a breathable bag in the fridge			✓	

PRODUCE ITEMS		LOW OR HIGH HUMIDITY DRAWER	STORE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE	ONCE RIPENED, REFRIGERATE	REFRIGERATE IMMEDIATELY
	GREEN BEANS Store unwashed in a breathable bag	HIGH			✓
	HERBS, LEAFY Trim stems and place in glass of water then cover with loose plastic bag; or wrap in damp paper towel and store in breathable bag	HIGH			✓
	HERBS, WOODY Wrap in damp paper towel and store in plastic bag	HIGH			✓
	KALE Store bagged with a damp cloth	HIGH			✓
	KIWI Once ripe, store loose in fridge	LOW		✓	
	LEEKS Store wrapped in a damp paper towel in a plastic bag in the refrigerator				✓
	LETTUCE Whole head: put stem in water and keep on counter, out of sunlight; loose: store with a cloth in an airtight container in the refrigerator	HIGH	✓		✓
	MANGOES Store on the counter until ripe, then move to the fridge	LOW		✓	
	MUSHROOMS Store in a paper bag on lower fridge shelf				✓
	ONIONS Store in a cool, dry area; don't store near potatoes		✓		
	PAPAYAS Store on the counter until ripe, then move to the fridge	LOW		✓	
	PEACHES/ PLUMS Store on the counter until ripe	LOW		✓	
	PEARS Firm, unripe pears should be left on the counter to ripen.	LOW		✓	
	PINEAPPLES Place whole pineapple on the top shelf of the refrigerator			✓	
	POMEGRANATES Store in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight; refrigerated, they can be stored 1-2 months		✓		
	POTATOES Store away from onions in cool, dark place.		✓		
	RADISHES Remove green tops; store unwashed radishes in a breathable bag				✓
	SCALLIONS Place in a cup of water with one inch of water or a storage container/plastic bag with a damp cloth				✓
	SQUASH (SUMMER) Store dry, whole squash in a breathable bag				✓
	SQUASH (WINTER) Store in a cool, dark place		✓		
	SWISS CHARD Store bagged with a damp cloth	HIGH			✓
	TOMATOES Don't refrigerate until fully ripe; bring to room temperature before using	LOW		✓	
	WATERMELON Cut-up melon should be wrapped or stored in a container in the refrigerator				✓

FOOD DATE LABELS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

“Best if used by.” “Best if used before.” “Use by.” “Sell by.” “Freeze by.” What do these labels mean? What is the difference between them? These labels are confusing, and many of us are uncertain about whether food can be eaten once a date has passed. This same confusion leads to an estimated 20 percent of the food waste created at home.

Federal law does not require food product dating – except for infant formula.

Most date labels are an indicator of food quality – not food safety. Food producers and manufacturers voluntarily add the labels to be sure consumers eat food at its peak quality and flavor and to help stores keep track of how long to display products.

The table below provides a quick reference for common phrases found on food. Understanding these labels will help you reduce food waste and save money.

PHRASE	MEANING
“Best if Used By”	Indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
“Best if Used Before”	Indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
“Use By”	Indicates the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except when used on infant formula.
“Freeze By”	Indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality.
“Sell By”	Tells the store how long to display the product for sale.

These dates are not an exact science. If stored properly, food should be safe and of good quality after its quality date. Many food safety experts say the best way to tell if food is good to eat is to look at it, smell it, taste it, and trust your own judgment. If in doubt, throw it out.

If you’re not confident in your smell tester, you can use the **U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) FoodKeeper app** for timeframes regarding safe storage for specific foods. **Go to [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) for more information.**

It is important to note federal legislation (the Food Date Labeling Act of 2023) has been introduced that would standardize food date labels across the United States.



DONATION

HELP FEED YOUR COMMUNITY

One in 10 South Carolinians – including one in eight children – are food insecure, according to Feeding America. Donation of wholesome food is necessary to help feed those in need.

Anyone can be a food donor. Farmers, manufacturers, grocery stores, and businesses can arrange to donate all kinds of items to various food recovery organizations. Restaurants, caterers, hotels, and other food service establishments can donate ingredients and prepared food to rescue organizations. Individuals can donate nonperishable items to food banks. All food safety requirements (agriculture.sc.gov) must be followed when donating food.

Where can I donate food?

Feeding the Carolinas provides a food bank finder on the web at feedingthecarolinas.org. Be sure to reach out to the food bank about what is accepted and what is needed before dropping off items.

Am I protected when I donate food?

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects donors from civil and criminal liability should the item(s) donated in good faith later cause harm to the recipient. **USDA provides additional information** on the federal legislation at usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/donating.

In addition, **South Carolina law provides similar liability protection for food donors** through S.C. Code of Laws §§ 15-74-10 et seq. To review the state's liability protection, please visit scstatehouse.gov/code/t15c074.php.

Are there tax incentives?

ReFED's US Food Waste Policy Finder at policyfinder.refed.org/federal-policy/federal-tax-incentives spells out the basics of federal tax incentives and deductions.

What CANNOT be donated to food banks by individuals?

- Items needing refrigeration
- Leftovers
- Food with damaged packaging
- Baked goods
- Home canned or jarred products
- Cans without labels (Donations must be made in their original packaging)

What CAN I donate to a food bank?

Food banks accept dry and canned food donations from individuals. They often need these items:

- Applesauce
- Beans (dried, and in 1-pound bags)
- Canned fruit and vegetables
- Canned chicken and tuna
- Cereal (particularly those low in sugar and high in fiber)
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Macaroni and cheese (boxed)
- Pasta (1-pound boxes)
- Peanut butter
- Ramen noodles
- Rice (one-pound bags)
- Single-serve boxed breakfast items
- Single-serve pop-top canned meat
- Soup, stew, and chili

Always check to see what is accepted and needed as well as food date and safety requirements before donation.

Put your food waste to use.

Prevention is the key to reducing food waste.

Despite all our best efforts, there will always be scraps, peels, coffee grounds, and more. There are options other than throwing away food waste, though.

Some South Carolina counties and municipalities offer food waste recycling opportunities, and more are expected in the next few years. Visit des.sc.gov/recycleheresc to learn if there is a program in your community.

Consider composting at home.

Setting up composting – which you can do with or without a backyard – to manage food waste and yard trimmings is not difficult or expensive. Making compost keeps food waste out of the landfill, preventing the release of methane – a potent greenhouse gas. Instead of contributing to the problem, you can create a nutrient-rich amendment to feed your garden, whether it's a yard's worth or a window box.

You can get started (including figuring out what kind of composting works best for you!) by checking out DHEC's **"Composting: Simple Steps for Starting at Home"** at des.sc.gov/compost.



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