

TAKE THE CHALLENGE: KEEP GOOD FOOD FROM GOING TO WASTE



WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Did you know that, on average, American households throw out more than a quarter of their food purchases? Research shows that nearly everyone wastes more than they think they do. The Food: Too Good to Waste Challenge will help you figure out how much food is really going to waste in your home and what you can do to waste less. By making small shifts in how you shop for, prepare, and store food, you can save time and money, and keep the valuable resources used to produce and distribute food from going to waste!

GET SMART: SEE HOW MUCH FOOD (AND MONEY!) YOU ARE REALLY THROWING AWAY

WEEKS 1 & 2: Measure how much food your family wastes in a week and record the volume.

WEEKS 3 through 5: Try out one or more of the smart strategies listed below while continuing to measure how much goes to waste each week. Keep notes on what works to reduce food waste and what doesn't.

- **Smart Shopping: Buy What You Need** – Make a shopping list with the Meals-In-Mind Shopping List template based on how many meals you expect to eat at home before your next shopping trip. By buying no more than what you expect to use, you will be more likely to use it up and keep it fresh.
- **Smart Storage: Keep Fruits and Vegetables Fresh** – Store produce so it stays fresh longer with the help of the Fruits and Vegetable Storage Guide.
- **Smart Prep: Prep Now, Eat Later** – By preparing perishable foods as soon as possible, preferably post-shopping, you'll make it easier to serve snacks and meals later in the week, saving time, effort and money.
- **Smart Saving: Eat What You Buy** – This involves being mindful of leftovers and old ingredients that need using up. The "Eat Me First" prompt can be used to designate an area in your refrigerator for leftovers and food that won't keep long.

Week 6: Measure and record your final weekly food waste amount. See how much food (and money) you saved compared to weeks one and two.

GET READY

You can find all the printed materials you need to take the Challenge available for download at <http://westcoastclimateforum.com/food/wasteless>. They include:

- **A printed "measurement" label** for taping to a brown paper lunch bag (size 5-1/8" x 3-1/8" x 10-5/8") for collecting food waste. Print one label for each week you take the challenge, then tape the labels on the paper bags with the 1/8th volume measure at a uniform distance from the bottom of the bags.
- **This instruction sheet** which includes the recording worksheet.
- **Meals in Mind Shopping List Template**
- **Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide**
- **Eat Me First Prompt**



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TIPS FOR TAKING THE CHALLENGE

1. Explain the challenge to members of your household/community and ask for their participation.
2. Decide how long you will take the challenge. We recommend 6 weeks – 2 weeks to get an idea of how much food is wasted on average and another 4 to establish your strategies as habits. Once you get started, it should take no more than 15 minutes a week to measure and record your food waste.
3. At the start of each week, line one brown paper lunch bag (size 5-1/8" x 3-1/8" x 10-5/8") with a green compostable bag. Fix the measurement label to the bag so that the 1/8th mark is an even distance from the bottom of the bag as the distance between any two 1/8th markings. Over the course of the week, place all your PREVENTABLE food waste into the bag. Discard non-edible food in the usual manner. (PREVENTABLE food waste is food you bought to eat but has since spoiled or food that was prepared but was not eaten and then thrown away. This does not include non-edible food waste such as banana peels, egg shells or chicken bones.)
4. At the end of each week, measure the volume of food waste in the bag using the fractions on the printed label. Record the volume on the attached worksheet. If you have a kitchen scale at home, you may use that to weigh the food waste for a more accurate measurement.
5. If the bag fills before the end of 7 days, weigh or record the volume of the full bag and record how many days you collected food in that bag. Then begin collection in a new bag. At the end of the week, total your weight and/or volume of food waste for the entire week.
6. After you record the volume of food wasted for the week, you can place the collection bag, including food, either in your curbside yard waste cart (if you have one) or in the garbage.
7. Except for the new strategies you try in weeks 3, 4 and 5 keep to your usual routine as much as possible during the challenge. For example, unless you regularly clean out your freezer, do not clean it throughout the challenge.
8. At the end of week 6, compare your totals for weeks 1 and 2 to weeks 3 through 6 and see how much food you saved from going to waste! Many families have reduced their food waste by 25% or more.

ADDITIONAL WASTE COLLECTION TIPS:

- If you are concerned about leakage, then you might use a plastic bag as a second liner.
- If concerned about odor, you can clip the top of the bag shut; or you can start using a new bag mid-week, as long as you track the total volume of waste for the whole week.
- Do not collect liquid waste such as soup or food-soiled paper products.

AFTER THE CHALLENGE

We'd love to hear your feedback on the Challenge. Please go to this website, <http://bit.ly/15HPznk>, to share your successes and lessons learned. (Note: All data is anonymous and will only be used to inform the scale-up of this pilot program to a national audience.)

For more information, please visit our website, <http://westcoastclimateforum.com/food>, or email the West Coast Climate and Materials Management Forum at westcoastclimate@epa.gov. The Forum is an EPA-convened partnership of state and local governments that develop and share ways to drive climate action through lifecycle materials management policies and practices.

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RECORDING WORKSHEET

WEEK 1

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

WEEK 2

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

Totals – Weeks 1 and 2

_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight

Averages – Weeks 1 and 2

Total Volume ÷ 2 = _____ Total Weight ÷ 2 = _____

WEEK 3

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

WEEK 4

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

WEEK 5

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

WEEK 6

Start Date: _____ Day of Week: _____
_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight
_____ # of days collected

NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

Totals – Weeks 3 through 6

_____ Bag Volume _____ Weight

Averages – Weeks 3 through 6

Total Volume ÷ 4 = _____ Total Weight ÷ 4 = _____