

Feds launch app to help consumers avoid food waste

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Agriculture Department officials want Americans to pay less attention to those “use by” dates on food because the overly cautious expiration dates lead to massive amounts of food waste.

“Many products may have a sell-by date of say April 1 but they could be good in your pantry for another 12 or 18 months,” the USDA’s Chris Bernstein said in a recent video. “And by throwing those out, what you’re doing, is you’re contributing to food waste in the United States.”

According to the government agency, every American wastes about 36 pounds of food each month — that accounts for about 21 percent of the food available in the U.S.

USDA officials hope that the release of a new “FoodKeeper” app will help Americans do a better job of conserving food and storing perishables in the best way for longevity and food safety.

“This application will help reduce food waste by showing users how to store foods properly, and reminding them to use items before they are likely to spoil,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement. “This can help consumers save money and reduce the amount of safe food going to landfills.”

According to the USDA’s website, the app has the following features:

- *Specific product pages for more than 400 items. These offer users storage timelines for the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry.*
- *Cooking tips for meat, poultry, seafood and egg products. Cooking advice is offered to*

ensure users prepare these products in ways that eliminate foodborne bacteria.

- *Calendar integration, which allows users to enter the purchase date for products and offers notifications when products are nearing the end of their recommended storage date.*
- *Users can search the application with swipe gestures or voice control.*
- *If a user has not found the information they are looking for about a product, they can submit a question to USDA using the 'Ask Karen' feature of the application. 'Ask Karen' is USDA's 24/7 virtual representative. The system provides information about preventing foodborne illness and safe food handling, storage, and preparation of meat, poultry, and egg products.*

The application, which could prove beneficial to penny pinchers and preppers, is available for both [Apple](#) and [Android](#) devices.