

What to do with food that is past its "prime" to help cut down on food waste

Food waste is a pressing issue in our country, both at a commercial and consumer level. Not only does excessive food waste hit us hard in our bank accounts, it has a huge impact on the environment that we all share. Over 20% of landfill volume is comprised of food waste and 21% of all fresh water used goes toward the production of food that ends up being discarded. Being mindful of which items in your kitchen are soon to spoil can help drastically reduce your food waste. Check out these common perishable ingredients and ways they can be quickly and easily used before they spoil.

Tomatoes

When your tomatoes start to get a little soft but haven't yet gone mushy on the bottom, it's time to take action! Tomatoes can be roasted in the oven and made into a deliciously smoky salsa, blistered in a skillet and added to pasta or cooked into a rich tomato sauce.

Spinach

Fresh spinach is a powerhouse of nutrients, but those tender leaves spoil quickly! Luckily, spinach is also very universal and can be added to many dishes, like pizza, pasta, grilled sandwiches, mashed potatoes, soups and more. And if all else fails, spinach can be bagged up with fruit and frozen for convenient smoothie packs!

Eggs

Although their refrigerator life is longer than most fresh foods, eggs do not stay fresh forever. If you have more eggs than you can eat, whip up a quick frittata or quiche. They're great for breakfast, lunch or dinner, and provide an excellent opportunity to use up other leftovers that may be in your refrigerator. And, if you absolutely cannot use them immediately, eggs *can* be frozen!

Bread

If you're the type to only use a couple of slices of bread here and there, store your bread in the freezer so that the remainder of the loaf stays fresh until it's needed. But, this isn't the best option for other types of bread like baguettes or artisanal loaves. Don't let that gorgeous bread go to waste, use it to make croutons, bread pudding, a strata, or even homemade breadcrumbs for baking.

Milk

It can be so hard to predict how much milk you'll need in a week and with prices always climbing it's a shame to let it go sour. What better excuse to make a batch of homemade macaroni and cheese? Or how about a creamy and comforting soup? Add a little rice, a few spices and some sugar for an awesome homemade rice pudding. A quick chocolate pudding is sure to be eaten, and if you're feeling a little DIY, you can try your hand at making homemade ricotta.

Carrots

Carrots have a way of hiding in the bottom drawer of the refrigerator until they're limp and rubbery. If you catch them before they get to that point, turn them into these deliciously crunchy and tangy pickled carrots. Pickled carrots are

great for snacking, but also make a great topper for tacos and nachos. Carrots fairly neutral flavor also makes them great for roasting with a variety of spices. Simply toss them in oil, salt, and your favorite spice blend (I like curry), and roast in the oven until they're tender and sweet.

We can take these steps to reduce food waste in our own homes, but still 72 billion pounds of food are wasted every year.