

# Food Bytes

HEALTH & NUTRITION PROGRAM, SNAP EDUCATION



## Here's How You can Help Reduce Food Waste

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Did you know that \$90 billion of edible food in the United States goes to waste each year? That's the weight of 123 Empire State Buildings!

The amount of food waste is a growing concern. Wasted food items make up the single largest component of items going to landfills, but many foods tossed out are still safe to eat. Fortunately, people are making system changes in producing, processing, storing, and preparing foods to reduce waste. But there are things you can do to cut food waste at home, too. Following are some tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) website.

### Plan and Save Food (and Money)



Plan a weekly menu making a grocery list with the ingredients you'll need. Begin by looking in your refrigerator. Are there any foods or leftovers that your family should eat before they spoil? Put recipes on your weekly menu that feature your leftover foods. You'll avoid throwing out those leftovers — and get the most for what you paid for them.

### Be a Smart Shopper

Now that you've developed your grocery list, stick to it so you don't buy any food you won't use. You can also be a smart shopper to prevent food waste. For example, let's say kiwi fruits are on sale, 5 for \$1.00. Your initial thought is to buy 5. But then you notice the kiwi are already ripe and you remember you have other fresh fruit in your refrigerator that your family needs to eat this week. You choose to buy 2 kiwi rather than 5 — and throwing out 3 because they spoiled before you could eat them.

### Understand Food Product Dating

The dates on food packages can be confusing. Here are two key things to know: A "sell-by" date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.



### BEST IF USED BY

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A "best if used by (or before)" date is recommended for best flavor or quality.

Many people throw out products after the "best if used by" date expires, thinking they're not safe to eat any more. But that's not necessarily the case. Assuming you have stored foods properly and the "use by" date occurred a relatively short time ago, you can still eat those foods. Learn more about food product dating and safe storage of foods in this USDA fact sheet. Again — your goal is to prevent food waste.

### Get Organized

Foods are less likely to go bad when you eat older items first. Keep your pantry and refrigerator clean and organized, with older items in front and newer ones in back. Label leftovers with content and dates so they can be used within the next few days.

### Give Leftovers New Life

Give new life to leftover foods that are no longer at peak quality by using them in recipes that hide their problems. For example, add raw slightly limp broccoli to a salad, or blend overripe fruit into a low-fat smoothie. Also remember to freeze fresh fruits you don't consume right away so they don't lose their luster in the first place.



## Don't Toss It — Compost It



Instead of throwing out food scraps, create a compost bin. Don't have a yard? Your city may help you find

composting or recycling options that are right for you.

Make it a goal this month to reduce food waste!

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). [Let's talk trash.](#)

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### ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 4 medium root vegetables (potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, parsnips, sweet potatoes, etc.) | 1 medium onion, chopped     |
| 2 medium carrots, diced   | 2 tablespoons vegetable oil |
|   | 1 tsp garlic powder         |
|   | Salt and pepper to taste    |

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Peel and cut vegetables into similarly sized bite-sized pieces. Place vegetables in a medium bowl and pour oil over top. Add garlic powder and mix well. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Spread mixture into a baking sheet or shallow baking pan. Stir and check vegetables every 10 minutes. Vegetables are done when they show signs of crispness and browning, and are easily pierced with a fork. Roasting time will average 30-60 minutes, depending on the type of vegetables and size of pieces.

4 Servings; Serving size 1/4 of recipe: calories 172, carbohydrate 26g, sodium 117mg; fat 7g, protein 3g

Source: What's cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

### SKINNY FRENCH FRIES

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4 medium potatoes           | Salt or other seasoning |
| 2 tablespoons vegetable oil |                         |

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Lightly oil a 9 x 13 inch pan.

Wash the potatoes and pat dry on towels. Cut them into skinny strips. Spread strips of potatoes in one layer in pan. Distribute remaining oil evenly over potatoes.

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until potatoes are golden brown and tender. Turn frequently. Season to taste.

8 Servings; Serving size 1/8 of recipe: calories 71, carbohydrate 10g, sodium 0mg; fat 4g, protein 2g

Source: What's cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

Substitute sweet potatoes for the regular potatoes. In place of salt, try a new seasoning such as garlic powder, Cajun seasoning, paprika, or mesquite seasoning.

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact the MN Food HelpLine at 1-888-711-1151.

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