

FOOD (WASTE) FOR THOUGHT

FIVE TOP TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR FOOD WASTE



Approximately 9.52 million tonnes of food waste is generated by the UK every single year, costing the country around £19 billion annually. As the UK's leading manufacturer of refuse collection vehicles, we know just how important it is to ensure best practice waste management is adhered to, so have created a handy guide to help you improve your approach to food waste.



Don't confuse Best Before with Use By

This is one of the most common mistakes when it comes to food waste, and an easy one to make. 'Use By' dates specify when your food is good until; you don't want to eat it after this date has passed as it will no longer be safe to do so. 'Best Before' dates instead let you know when your food is at its best. Just because an item reaches its Best Before, that doesn't necessarily mean it's gone off or is unsafe to eat. Check for any signs of spoilage, and if not, bon appetite! Too often food is thrown away once it reaches its Best Before date and isn't given the opportunity to live up to its full potential. Don't cut your food down in its prime: check the label, and if your Best Before item still looks tasty, it's likely fine to consume. For detailed food safety advice, visit: www.food.gov.uk.



Plan meals ahead, or based on food's shelf life

A key thing to remember before you take a trip to your local supermarket is to check what you already have in your cupboards and fridge at home. You never know – that pasta sauce you've got a taste for might be hidden behind a few other jars, and there might still be a few carrots to use up before buying a new bunch. Remind yourself what you've got, make a list of what you need, and plan a few specific meals you know you're going to stick to throughout the week. If you're going to be eating out at any point during the week, account for this too and don't buy any more than you need. Doing your food shop online instead of in person can also reduce the temptation to buy surplus food. Using supermarket apps helps to streamline your shop and be more selective about what you're adding to your basket.



Freeze it to eat later

Once your food gets back to your fridge or freezer, take a note of what's going to go off first so you know to prioritise it – items such as meat products don't have a long shelf life, so if you've been looking forward to that steak all week, don't let it end up in the bin. If you notice food is about to pass its Use By or Best Before date, put it in the freezer before it reaches that point. It's important to note that not all food is freezable, so make sure you check the label to clarify whether it can be frozen first. If the answer is 'yes', you've just bought your food a lot more time. Similarly, a lot of food can already be bought frozen – even some healthier foods like fruit and vegetables. As a lot of frozen veg comes ready-sliced or diced, these often help you skip some of the time-consuming prep work for larger meals too.



Use leftovers for lunches, or get creative

How often do you measure out too much pasta or rice than you need for a meal? It can be difficult to 'eyeball' this accurately, so it's important to either weigh out portions before they go in the pot or put any leftovers into Tupperware for use the next day. We're also all guilty of throwing away vegetable peels, but often the peel can be the healthiest bit provided you wash it first. Full of rich nutrients, it's a shame to see this condemned straight

to the food caddy. You can bake peels for the occasional healthy treat, boil them to create your own vegetable stock, or blend and freeze them for use later. You can even roast and blend any leftover tomatoes to make your own scrumptious pasta sauce, saving you from trying to locate the one at the back of your cupboard. Plan your weekly meals around what is left to eat, or make all-encompassing recipes like spaghetti bolognese, soups, or stir-fries to use up remaining veg.



Put food waste in your caddy, not your bin

With the recent introduction of Simpler Recycling legislation in 2025 and March 2026, food waste is now being collected separately to general waste across most of the UK. This now requires residents to put their food waste into caddies rather than their usual rubbish bin. While many are still adjusting to this change, it's essential to ensure food waste is discarded separately, enabling this to be broken down into fertiliser, composted, or converted into energy – a far better outcome than simply adding it to landfill. Both cooked and uncooked food can go into your caddy, so any inedible veg, leftovers, and even used tea bags can go straight in. Importantly, it's better to use compostable food waste bags to line your caddy rather than plastic bags, or your efforts will quite literally go to waste.

Together, we can reduce our food wastage, ensure this is correctly disposed of, and ultimately make a difference to our community, saving money and helping to save the planet.