

# Edinburgh Community Food on avoiding food waste

Stephanie Scott who is Food and Health Development Worker with Edinburgh Community Food gives readers advice on avoiding too much food waste.

With both Zero Waste Week and Waste Less, Live More Week taking place throughout the month of September you may have seen information regarding the reduction of food waste in the media recently. Current figures have shown that Scottish households waste an average of £35 of food each month – this adds up to £460 per year! While some of this is due to things that cannot be eaten – such as bones, tea bags or peelings – the majority of food waste is made up of things that are, or were, perfectly good to use.

The majority of food we waste comes from either buying and preparing too much or from not using food before it goes off. As food prices continue to rise making some quick & simple changes to reduce the amount of food we throw out could save us all a lot of money, not to mention the positive effects it will also have on the wider community and the environment.

Below are some simple yet effective ways to reduce food waste in your home. To start off, why not aim to make one change per week and build it up slowly? You will soon notice the difference in the amount of food you are throwing away as well as the money you are saving at the till!

## **It pays to plan before going shopping**

- Before you go to the supermarket, take a quick look around your kitchen and think about the meals you can make from the items you already have. Remember to check your freezer too!
- Look at the dates shown on any packaging and make a note of anything which needs to be used soon.

- Plan out your meals for the week and stick this on your fridge. This will not only help you to reduce food waste but will also help you to eat more healthily and reduce the likelihood of picking up last-minute convenience meals (which are often high in sugar, salt and fat).
- Once the above steps have been done you can write a shopping list of items that will help you make up your meals for the week. This will save you time in the supermarket and help you to avoid being tempted by offers that you don't really need. These tips will not only save you time and money but will also make your trip to the supermarket much quicker!

### **In the supermarket**

- Stick to your shopping list – try not to buy anything else in the supermarket and this will help you minimise potential food waste.
- Buy what you need – People are more likely to waste food when they do a big shop and do not plan what they need beforehand. Try to do a shop once a week and top it up every couple of days with foods which have a short shelf life to reduce waste. Buying loose rather than pre-packed items is another good way to reduce food waste.
- Cook in batches – If you are tempted by offers such as buy one get one free why not make a big batch of food on the day you purchase it and freeze it in portions to use another time?
- Check labels – Check 'best before' and 'use by' dates on products and refer back to your menu planner to make sure you will be able to use the food before it goes off.

### **Food Labels What this means**

**Use by Date** This is important for food safety. You should never eat food after the use by date stated on the packaging as while it may look or smell fine, the food could be unsafe to eat.

**Best Before** Best before dates refer to quality rather than food safety. They show how long foods will be at their best. After the best before date, the food is still safe to eat.

However, it might not have the same flavour and texture.

### **At home**

- Know your portions – One of the main causes of food waste is cooking more than we need.
- Store things correctly – this will help your food to keep better.
- Cooking once and using twice – Making extra and using it for the next day or freezing it will not only save you time but also help to reduce your energy bills too.
- When freezing foods – make sure to label them clearly so that you know what is in your freezer and when you cooked it. Foods can be kept for up to three months in the freezer.
- Using leftovers – If you do end up with leftovers try to think of creative ways to use them up. Some of the most common foods which are wasted include bread, rice and vegetables. Below are some practical tips on how to use them up.

### **Commonly wasted foods How to make use of them**

Bread or rolls Breadcrumbs or a base for a homemade pizza

Vegetables Add to soups, curries or stews to bulk up meals or add to omelettes

Pasta or rice Make a pasta or rice salad by adding chopped fruit or veg – perfect for lunchtime

Meat or fish Are perfect for making a curry, stew, pie or Bolognese and can then be frozen in portions for use at a later date. Alternatively, simply use a combination of herbs to marinade your meat or fish and bake for a quick, simple meal

For more information on all things related to food waste, please visit <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com>

Edinburgh Community Food are currently working in partnership with Changeworks and Citizens Advice Edinburgh to deliver a city wide programme which supports families with children to better manage rising energy/ food costs and to maximise income. This project is funded by Big Lottery Support and

Connect Fund. If this is something that you would like to find out more about please contact Stephanie at Edinburgh Community Food on 0131 467 7326, or by email: [sscott@edinburghcommunityfood.org.uk](mailto:sscott@edinburghcommunityfood.org.uk)

Submitted by [Stephanie Scott](#)

