

# Leyla Weighs In: Take part in reducing food waste



According to the USDA Office of The Chief Economist in 2010, “31 percent of food loss at the retail and consumer levels corresponded to approximately 133 billion pounds and \$161 billion worth of food.” As a result, the USDA, EPA, and even the FDA are responding with a plan even I can get behind—the national food waste goal: To reduce food waste by 50% by the year 2030.

While the only way for consumers to harvest food losses at the retail level may be to go dumpster diving (please don’t!), there is much we can do at home to reduce food waste. Here are some tips:

First, don’t be afraid of “ugly” produce. Produce that doesn’t meet exact specifications by retailers for how they “look” are usually left unsold and eventually discarded. But there is a treasure trove of nutrition here! I’m not talking about produce that has lost its color or is beginning to rot or become moldy, I mean produce that might have a couple of blemishes or are somewhat misshapen (i.e., a smaller than usual apple with a bruise or a weird-looking carrot). These imperfections are innocuous; the food is perfectly edible. An advantage of ugly produce is they’re usually on sale—a boon to your pocketbook.

Preplan your menu(s) and make a shopping list before going to the grocery store. Stick to your list so you don’t buy more than you need, especially perishable items. Be sure to check your fridge and pantry to see what you already have on hand before your shopping excursion.

Use your freezer and check out the [FoodKeeper App](#) to guide you in determining how long different foods can be stored in your freezer.

Check the “Use by” or “Best by” dates on food packaging to determine the freshness of the item. It’s after that date when quality begins to diminish, although it’s still edible. Never consume food that looks rotten, is discolored, or smells bad.

If you have more food on hand than you will ever use, donate to your local food pantry or find out about food drives in your area.

To your health!

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