

TAKE THE CHALLENGE:

KEEP GOOD FOOD FROM GOING TO WASTE



WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Did you know that the average American household throws out more than a quarter of their food purchases? Research shows that nearly everyone wastes more than they think they do. The challenge is about helping you figure out how much food is really going to waste at home and what you can do to waste less. A second purpose of the challenge is to collect data that will help in the design of future programs to reduce food waste.

PHOTO DIARY INSTRUCTIONS

The challenge takes place over two weeks:

- Step 1:** Use the provided diary worksheet to document what type of food and how much food you currently waste at home with “before” photos.
- Step 2:** Test a new strategy to reduce your food waste.
- Step 3:** With that strategy in place, add to your diary worksheet the types and amount of food wasted with “after” photos.

WHAT DO I NEED?

- Kitchen scale
- Digital camera or mobile phone with camera
- Photo diary worksheets (enclosed)
- White plate or paper towel (optional)

SOME DEFINITIONS

- **PREVENTABLE** food waste is food you bought to eat but has since spoiled or food that was prepared but not eaten and thrown away.
- **NON-EDIBLE** food waste includes items such as egg shells, bones, fruit pits, and non-edible peels – food parts that are typically discarded during food preparation or consumption.
- A **FOOD WASTE INSTANCE** is an occurrence of food waste attributable to a single cause, for example, the plate waste left over after serving too much food at a meal or the salad greens that had to be thrown out because they started to get slimy.

KEEP IN MIND!

During the period of the challenge, keep to your usual routine as much as possible with the exception of the new strategy you try. For example, if you do not regularly clean out your refrigerator, please don't start now.

DIARY INSTRUCTIONS

DAYS 1-3: BASELINE MEASUREMENT

- Explain the challenge to members of your household and ask for their participation
- Choose three days when your family is at home. If possible, make one day a weekend day. The days don't need to be consecutive.
- For those three days, weigh and document each instance of **PREVENTABLE** food waste in the Photo Diary Worksheet: Table 1 (before photos) as follows:
 - A. Take a photo of each instance and record a unique number for each photo. Hint: use the numbers assigned by your camera. Also, if possible, place the food on a white background such as a piece of paper or white paper plate to photograph.
 - B. Using a kitchen scale, weigh each instance of waste and record the weights in Table 1.
 - C. Label each instance with a description of the food (e.g. berries bought at farmers market, lunch salad gone soggy) and your thoughts on why the food went to waste.
 - D. List the corresponding letters of strategies you think might have helped to prevent waste in the last column of the table.



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DAYS 4-10: IMPLEMENT A NEW FOOD WASTE REDUCTION STRATEGY

Select one (*only one please!*) of the following strategies to test.

- ☐ Make a shopping list with meals in mind: This involves making a list based on how many meals you expect to eat at home before your next shopping trip. Specific directions on this strategy can be found on the meals-in-mind shopping list template.
- ☐ Buy no more than you need: This involves buying less at a time, focusing on your immediate needs.
- ☐ Keep fruits and vegetables fresh: This involves storing fruits and vegetables so they stay fresh longer. See the Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide for specifics.
- ☐ Prep now, eat later: This involves preparing fruit and vegetables as soon as possible, preferably post-shopping, for use later as snacks and in meals.
- ☐ Eat older food items and leftovers first: This involves being mindful of leftovers and old ingredients that need using up.

DAYS 11-13: POST IMPLEMENTATION MEASUREMENT

After a week of trying the strategy, repeat the weighing of your food waste as you did in Days 1-3 and record your after photos of food waste instances in Table 2. Note: These three days can be scheduled for your convenience but try to complete the after pictures 1-2 weeks after adopting the strategy.

DAY 14: EVALUATE AND SEND

Compare your “before” and “after” pictures. What stands out to you? Select three instances of both before and after pictures that you think typify the pattern of waste in your house. Email [\[data collection person\]](#) for data transmission instructions.

SAMPLE PHOTO DIARY WORKSHEET ENTRY

photo number	food description	weight (in oz.)	thoughts on why this food item went to waste	possible strategies
55	Limp carrot, small, starting to rot	0.5	Hidden at bottom of vegetable bin under other produce	C and D



THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE CHALLENGE!



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PHOTO DIARY WORKSHEET

TABLE 1: BEFORE PICTURES

Date Started: _____

Date Ended: _____

photo number	food description	weight (in oz.)	thoughts on why this food item went to waste	possible strategies

***Possible Strategies to Prevent Food Waste (identify all applicable strategies by letter)**

- A. Make a shopping list with meals in mind
- B. Buy no more than you need/expect to use
- C. Prepare perishables sooner than later
- D. Store fruits and vegetables for maximum freshness
- E. Eat older food items and leftovers first



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PHOTO DIARY WORKSHEET

TABLE 2: AFTER PICTURES

Date Started: _____

Date Ended: _____

photo number	food description	weight (in oz.)	thoughts on why this food item went to waste	possible strategies

***Possible Strategies to Prevent Food Waste (identify all applicable strategies by letter)**

- A. Make a shopping list with meals in mind
- B. Buy no more than you need/expect to use
- C. Prepare perishables sooner than later
- D. Store fruits and vegetables for maximum freshness
- E. Eat older food items and leftovers first



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PHOTO DIARY DATA TRANSMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Go to [\[survey monkey url\]](#) to complete a short online survey.
2. Fill out the attached spreadsheet with the data you collected for the two three-day documentation periods and return to this to [\[insert email address here\]](#).
3. Upload your selected pictures to [\[insert ftp url here\]](#)