

Reducing Food Waste

This factsheet provides information about Reducing Food Waste in your homes.

Australian households waste over 4 million tonnes or \$8 billion worth of edible food every year.

Good waste is a major problem around the world, especially in a rapidly growing country like Australia.

The increasing level of food waste, currently being generated in Australia, is unsustainable and greatly impacts the environment. If trends continue, the effects of this behaviour will become more and more obvious.

What impact does food waste have on the environment?

Wasting food has significant and direct impact on climate change. When food is thrown into our general waste bin it ends up buried in landfill where it breaks down together with other organic materials. This decomposition process generates methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide, which can escape into the atmosphere.

In addition to landfill emissions from food waste, Australia's food supply chain is responsible for approximately 23% of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions. This makes it the second highest emissions generating activity in the country after power stations.

The food supply chain is also a significant consumer of natural resources such as water, energy, and land. When food is thrown out, it is more than just a waste of food itself, it is also a waste of all resources invested to grow, harvest, transport, package and sell that food.

Types of food waste

The food ends up in our rubbish bin can be classified as one of two types; 'avoidable' food waste and 'unavoidable' food waste.

Avoidable food waste constitutes the majority of food we put in the bin. This is the food that was purchased to be eaten but was thrown away due to poor planning and management.

Common types of avoidable food waste include:

- Mouldy fruit, opened jars and bread;
- stale crackers;
- unused pantry staples such as flour, rice and dried herbs/spices;
- soft or spongy vegetables;
- cans, jars and bottles of food and sauces past their use-by and best-before dates.
- leftover prepared foods from plates, pots, takeaways, and lunch boxes.

Unavoidable food waste constitutes a smaller portion of food we put in the bin. This is the inedible part of the food that was removed while preparing or eating (does not include the food's packaging).

Common types of unavoidable food waste include:

- Fruit and vegetable seed, cores and peelings;
- meat bones
- tea bags and coffee grounds;
- used cooking oil.

Why do we waste food?

Identifying why we waste food is the first step in helping to reduce food waste from the home.

People throw away for a number of reasons;

- they may buy too much and cannot use it all;
- the product might expire before it is used;
- the product goes off because it has not been stored correctly (e.g., not refrigerated)

Have you ever encountered these problems at home? Considering the following steps may help.

Problem	Solution
Buying too much?	Ask yourself – do I need this product? What will I use it for? Have I got this product already? Is this product on my shopping list?
Food going off?	Think I will use this product before it expires?
	Ask yourself – can I freeze this product if I don't want to use it all straight away?
	Think – what is the best way to store this product to make it last?
Cooking too much?	Place cooled leftovers in a safe container and freeze for use at a later date.
	Take leftovers for lunch the following day.

How to reduce food waste at home

Food waste can easily be avoided by following some simple steps. Below are some helpful tips to prevent food from being wasted in your home.

- Plan what you are going to eat for the week before going shopping;
- write a shopping list that takes into account existing food in the fridge or pantry;
- don't go food shopping when you are hungry, reducing the risk of impulse buying;
- check 'use by' and 'best before' dates. (Remember – you should not consume food past it's 'use by' date. however, if something is past it's 'best before' date it can often still be safe to consume but may not be as fresh.
- place frozen food straight in the freezer when you return home from shopping.
- always store and prepare food according to instructions;
- do not store opened foods in cans – tin or iron can dissolve into the food and spoil it.

Disposal of food waste

Approximately 23% of the waste we throw into our garbage bins is food waste. One portion of that waste is fruit and vegetable scraps and other organic material which is ideal from composting and worm farming.

By simply separating your organic waste and recycling it through a backyard composting or worm farming system, you can do your bit to help reduce the amount of food waste that is sent to landfill.

See Council's 'D.I.Y. Composting' and 'D.I.Y. Worm Farming' factsheets for more information on creating a backyard organic waste recycling system.

Further Information?

You can contact Council for further information in any of the following ways:

- ✉ South Burnett Regional Council
PO Box 336
KINGAROY QLD 4610
- ☎ (07) 4189 9100
- @ info@sbrc.qld.gov.au
- 👤 Visiting a Customer Service Centre