

## Monthly Eco-Tip for July: Preventing Food Waste

According to [Project Drawdown](#), the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming, in order to reach “drawdown,” the point in which the future levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and begin declining, we as humans will need to focus on several key areas. The number one area of focus is food waste!

Did you know that for every 100 apples picked, only 36 make it into people’s mouths? Here’s the breakdown: 20 apples are lost at the orchard, three are wasted post-harvest, one is wasted in packaging, 12 are wasted at the grocery store, and 28 are wasted at home. Only 36 are NOT wasted.

Wasting food wastes everything! Water, land, energy, labor, money and the love that farmers put into their work. Food is wasted or lost at two levels, actually:

- Food Loss – This occurs upstream in the food supply chain (production, harvest, storage, at farms)
- Food waste – This occurs downstream (at the restaurant, store, or consumer level)

How to reduce food waste at home:

1. Plan your meals ahead for good nutritional value and for minimum food waste.
2. Plan your shopping trips. Check to see what you have at home before shopping, make a list, buy smaller amounts of foods that expire quickly (fruits and vegetables), and for less hardy produce, opt for frozen produce.
3. Declutter your fridge and cupboards – we can’t eat what we don’t see.
4. Plan your food storage (In your cabinets and refrigerator, move older products to the front, use older foods first, create an “Eat

First” section for leftovers. To extend shelf-life, freeze food that you will not use before they expire, label your frozen foods with the date you froze them, and separate foods into smaller portions for freezing.

5. Use it, don't lose it – Use your leftovers before creating new meals, offer leftovers to friends and neighbors, donate unopened, non-perishable foods you will not be using to your food bank, learn to preserve foods (pickling, freezing and fermenting), and consider backyard composting for any waste.
6. Clean out fridge and cupboards.
7. Download USDA's [FoodKeeper app](#).

Thank you to Sara Elnakib, RD, MPH, for providing information on food waste and how we can make a difference. Sara is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences for Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Certified Health Education Specialist, and doctoral candidate in the Rutgers University School of Public Health. Here is [a link to her full presentation](#).