Climate…Changed! Recap
Food Waste Prevention From April 4, 2023
RI Resource Recovery

What is food waste? Food that is produced, but not eaten.

Strategies to Prevent Food Waste

1. Understand product dating
    a. There is NO federal rule for expiration dates except for baby formula. Sell By, Best by dates are tactics to get your to buy more frequently. The date does not indicate spoilage or danger.
    b. Harvard Videos https://green.harvard.edu/tools-resources/video/expired-food-waste-america
2. Only buy what you need. Don't overbuy because it is on sale.
    a. Plan meals and snacks
    b. Plan multiple meals using what you have i.e. If you have a large squash and the recipe calls for ½ squash, double the recipe and freeze the extra.
    c. Check fridge/pantry before you go shopping
3. Keep fruits and vegetables fresh
    a. Wash before you eat, NOT before you store
    b. Store in crisper: set high humidity for vegetables; low humidity for fruit
    c. If not used in a few days, freeze
    d. Some fruits give off gas called Ethylene which causes some fruit to ripen faster: https://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Food%20Storage_Ethylene_%20English.pdf
    e. Cilantro, parsley, etc. can last up to 10 days sitting like flowers in a glass of water.
    f. Alexa is equipped to give advice on proper food storage!
4. Prep now, eat later
    a. Clean and chop up veggies as soon as you buy them so they are ready to use when you need them.
    b. Cook grains in advance - you are more likely to use them if you do
    c. Freeze fruits and veg if you see that you are not going to use them soon.
5. Eat what you Buy! - know the contents in your refrigerator.

Suggestions from the audience for preventing food waste

Have left over night for dinner – get creative!
Wrap onions, lettuce or other vegetables a damp paper towel inside a plastic bag or container will make them last longer in your fridge.
I save the ends of my bread to make croutons
Cook grains in advance, so you can make a quick salad bowl
Plan meals around vegetable leftovers
When Italian bread is too hard to eat, make bread crumbs
Soup from vegetable odds and ends

Background and research on the cost of Food Waste

How Much? Globally, one third of food is wasted.

In the US, it is 40%
Veg/Fruit: 33%
Proteins 14%
Dairy 19%
Grains 14%
Other 20%

64% of waste is food that was once edible.
18% is food that is possibly edible, like potato peelings, spinach greens
18% is inedible like egg shells, bones.

Why: too much prepared or served(40%), not used in time (55%)

Why does it matter? Wasted food = wasted resources
Energy: fuel, labor
Water: irrigation, processing
Fertilization
Landfill: Food represents 22% of solid waste in US landfills

Resource Recovery landfill will be at capacity in 17 years (2040).
100,000 lbs of food waste is delivered to the state landfill each year.

Food waste creates methane, a greenhouse gas. In US, it represents 2.6% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Annual cost of wasted food in America (growing, processing, transporting): $218B
$144B (66%) is from individual households. It makes a difference to prevent food waste!
Annual cost of wasted food per family of four = $1800

Food insecurity: 42M Americans
Less than one third of wasted food would be enough to eliminate food insecurity in the US!

Additional Resources

Rhode Island Resource Recovery Center www.rirrc.org
Video of the life of a strawberry: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTaFYF1nA4c
Food Waste Prevention Tools: https://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Food%20Waste%20Mobile%20Apps_Web%20Tools_English.pdf
United States 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal: https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/united-states-2030-food-loss-and-waste-reduction-goal#U.S.%202030%20Food%20Loss%20and%20Waste%20Reduction%20Goal