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## 40% of Canadian Food Ends Up Wasted Per Year

Reducing household food waste is a big way to help the environment and your budget.

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

### Are people concerned about food waste?

As the sustainability of agriculture, farming and eating continues to be of concern for Canadians you may also hear more discussion around being conscious about food waste.

The 2012 Eco Pulse Survey by the Shelton Group found that of any sustainability effort, the highest “green guilt” came from wasting food (which was twice as high as not recycling or forgetting to bring recyclable bags to a grocery store.)

### How much food do we waste?

One-third of food produced for humans (1.3 billion tonnes) is wasted somewhere along the food chain each year (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011).

In Canada per year an estimated \$27 billion in Canadian food ends up in the landfill and composting. This is approximately 40% of all food produced and 2% of the GDP (Food Waste in Canada, Value Change Management, Nov 2010).

### Where does food waste come from?

Fifty-one percent of Canadian waste directly comes from food thrown away in Canadian homes followed by 18% packaging/processing, 11% retail stores, 9% field, 8% food service/hotel/restaurant/institutional food outlets and 3% transportation/distribution.

Specifically for households food waste happens because of cooking/preparing too much, not using food in time and being unsure of how long to keep leftovers.

### Why does food waste negatively influence the environment?

Since food waste creates higher carbon and methane there is economic and environmental benefits to wasting less food. The UK website [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com) provides some insight about waste throughout the food chain.

They used cheese as an example of where waste can happen throughout the food chain. There is the product itself that is lost as well as loss in the energy, water, packaging. There is also loss in human resources used in production, transport, retail/foodservice and home storage. “...(from) feeding and milking the cows, cooling and transporting the milk, processing it into cheese, packing it, getting it to the

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shops, keeping it at the right temperature. If it then gets thrown away, it may end up in a landfill site, where rather than harmlessly decomposing as many people think, it rots and actually releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.”

### **What can we do as consumers at home to reduce food waste?**

Before you shop, plan a detailed list of what you need for the week at the grocery store. Develop a reusable grocery list or download an app that you can use as a family for shopping trips.

Just because it is on sale or in a volume discount package doesn't mean it is a good deal. This is especially true for perishable items. It is not a good deal if you are not using the product in its entirety. Think big but buy small is a good mantra when it comes to managing food waste.

If you are not going to use your homemade leftovers put them in the freezer or share them with someone at the office the next day who would likely appreciate a homemade lunch.

Teach kids about mindful eating and dishing out a small amount first and letting them know there is always permission to have more if they want.

Learn more about how long certain foods last to improve your confidence around food safety. Check out the website and app [www.stilltasty.com](http://www.stilltasty.com) for some insight into the shelf life of thousands of foods. Contact the professional home economists at the Atco Blue Flame Kitchen [www.atcoblueflamekitchen.com](http://www.atcoblueflamekitchen.com) for free advice on questions about food safety.



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