



BE A ZERO-WASTE CHAMPION

In honour of Zero Waste Week this September, *Veggie* finds out how you can be savvy and creative to curb your food waste

Here's some food for thought: a third of all food produced for human consumption is ultimately thrown away or lost, globally. In the UK, every year, about 100,000 tonnes of food that is edible and readily available is never eaten. And while food waste can occur at any point of the chain, around 69% of food waste in the UK is from households, according to the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

It might all sound a bit doom and gloom, but the good news is that you can curb your own waste by taking simple steps; from being careful about where you source your produce from, to



getting more experimental in the kitchen. In fact, according to campaign group Feedback, reducing food waste is the third-most effective way to tackle the climate emergency! And with Zero Waste Week being marked from 2-6 September, now is the perfect time to get a grip on your food waste with these easy ideas.

Use your voice

There's no need to be 'fruitist': wonky produce deserves to be eaten, too. "When I was a child, we loved misshapen things: apples with faces, carrots that were multi-pronged! We don't



eat these anymore,” says Rosalind Rathouse, founder of The Cookery School on Little Portland Street (cookeryschool.co.uk). That’s where companies like Riverford (riverford.co.uk) and Oddbox (oddbox.co.uk) come in,

offering fruit and veg subscription boxes packed with surplus and wonky produce rescued directly from farms.

As Oddbox’s co-founder, Emilie Vanpoperinghe, says, every decision has an impact: “We can choose to shop for our fruit and veg from local greengrocers, or directly from farmers through farmers’ markets and farm shops, where the produce doesn’t have to pass such strict requirements regarding size, shape and colour.”

Be a smart shopper

Life is busy, and it can be difficult to plan ahead, but doing so is a great way to drastically reduce your food waste.

“If you are able to plan out your meals for the week ahead, then I think that’s the perfect solution – but how many people really do that in their busy lives?” Rosalind says. “Try not to shop randomly, but think about what you’re going to use and purchase less, because I think we’re all guilty of over-buying.”

Store items properly

It might seem like common sense, but food that isn’t stored properly will spoil more quickly. Be sure to store open items and leftovers in sealed containers, and organise your fridge from front to back, according to what needs to be used first before it goes off. You can store herbs and greens like kale in glass jars with water to keep them fresh, and keep bread in a cloth bag to keep mould at bay. Don’t be afraid to use your freezer, either. Grated cheese, herbs, and bananas can all be frozen, ready to use at a later time.

Save the scraps

To save offcuts from going to waste, the Riverford organic team recommends what it calls ‘compleating’: essentially, using up all of the edible parts of produce. Particularly if you are purchasing organic produce, many vegetables can simply be washed rather than peeled (even butternut squash!). If you’re using root vegetables like bunched carrots, beetroot, or bunched onions that have tops to them, you can still use those bits that you’d usually throw away. Try making a carrot-top pesto, adding celery leaves to a salad or sautéing beetroot greens in some oil and garlic. Making smoothies, soups, or having a stockpot on the go are also great ways to use up every bit of goodness from your whole pieces of fruit and veg.

Play with your food

Even with the best of intentions, you may still end up with food at home that goes stale. But instead of chucking it away as soon as it starts to go off, think of alternative ways

to use it. Remember that anything mouldy definitely needs to be thrown out, as it won’t be safe to consume. So, it’s all about catching these just as they start to turn, but aren’t quite spoiled.

Bread and milk are two of the most wasted foods. If the milk is going sour, why not use it to make scones or pancakes? You can also try whizzing stale bread into breadcrumbs and sautéing them with some garlic and chilli to sprinkle over pasta; or cut it into cubes and roast with some oil and seasoning to make croutons for your bottom-of-the-fridge soup!

Brown bananas? Why not try blending them up in a smoothie, or making banana bread? Other fruits like apples, plums and pears that are going soft can be pipped, then popped into the microwave. Heat them up until they soften and you’ve got a homemade, sugar-free fruit compôte!

Or perhaps you have wilted greens... don’t fret: cooked, wilted lettuce is bang on trend at the moment, Rosalind says. Just drizzle a bit of oil over your leaves (spinach works well here, too), put them on the griddle, and cook until they go crispy and charred, then serve them with your favourite dressing. If these all sound like simple waste-free solutions, it’s because they are! “Cooking is much easier than you think,” Rosalind says. “Just think outside of the box and be creative.”

Monitor your waste

Many of us probably don’t realise how much we’re really throwing away. A great way of becoming more aware of this is to monitor what you discard. Try keeping a separate compost bin to track your food waste each week or month, and then challenge yourself to reduce this next time. Remember that if you have a compost heap in the garden, it’s okay to use it, but try to keep your additions to a minimum.

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