



“One Person’s Trash...”

Your guide to reducing, reusing and recycling

A Newsletter of City of Santa Cruz
Public Works Department



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Recipe for Cutting Food Waste

Keep your food and hard-earned cash out of the trash



By Mary Simmons,
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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 40% of all the edible food in the U.S. is not eaten. Instead, the wasted food is thrown away and fills up our landfills. The amount is staggering: 36 million tons of food worth \$162 billion—that is enough food to fill a large stadium like the Rose Bowl every day of the year. As a nation, we throw away more food than our most common recyclables, including plastic containers, paper, metal cans and glass. And the scary thing is that this number is growing. We are throwing away 50% more food now than we did in 1990 and three times more than the average food discards of the 1960s. Worldwide, roughly one-third of the food produced never gets eaten, and at the same time one in nine people suffers from chronic hunger or food scarcity. Not only is the food wasted, but also all the resources that went into growing, processing and transporting it. That is a tremendous amount of wasted water, energy, land and money. Consider the versatile red, ripe tomato. 31% of fresh tomatoes bought in U.S. grocery stores and farmers’ markets are thrown out—21 tomatoes per person per year. We are throwing out \$2.3 billion a year in tomatoes alone!

“Food waste is a complex problem with losses occurring throughout the supply chain from ‘farm to fork,’” according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. The reasons for food waste at home vary but in general can be placed in the following four categories:

1. Over-buying: we buy too much food.
2. Spoilage: we store our food incorrectly.
3. Overcooking: we cook too much food.
4. Plate waste: we throw away leftovers.

Right this minute, you might have some wilted lettuce, blemished apples or a science experiment growing in a container in the depths of your refrigerator. Chances are, you wasted some food this week. So how can we keep our food and cash out of the trash? Making small changes can make a big difference in the way we shop for, prepare and store food.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) are two national organizations tackling this problem. Both offer tips and tools to help. Here are some of their suggestions:

Shop Wisely

- Shop your fridge, cupboards and pantry before you head to the store to avoid purchasing things that you already have.
- Plan your meals for the coming week and use a shopping list. By purchasing what you expect to use you are more likely to use it up before it goes bad.
- Shop the bulk bins whenever possible rather than buying items that are pre-packaged.
- Avoid impulse buys and super deals like “buy one, get one free,” especially on infrequently used or perishable items.
- Be careful not to overbuy perishable items when shopping at a large box store. Chances are, things will go bad



- before you can use them.
- Grocery shop on a full stomach and not when you are hungry.

Buy Funny-Looking Fruits and Veggies!

Many fruits and vegetables are thrown out because their size, shape or color is slightly irregular. They are perfectly fine to eat, just not perfect to look at. Often you can buy funny-looking produce at the farmers’ market or elsewhere and sometimes at a discounted price. By purchasing imperfect produce, you are keeping it from being wasted.

Get Savvy as to When Food Goes Bad

Labels on food such as “use by” or “sell by” are very confusing and can be misleading. They are based on manufacturers’ suggestions for peak quality and are not federally regulated for food safety. Most foods can be safely consumed well past the “use-by” date. Here is a website with helpful information on how long different foods can be stored: www.stilltasty.com.

Smart Storage

Keep food fresh by storing it correctly. The EPA “Food: Too Good To Waste” program has a storage guide with tips on how to store almost every type of food. Many other food storage and food safety guides are available online. Create an “Eat Me First” bin or shelf in your fridge. Place things there that need to get used up. If you keep them together up front, they won’t get pushed to the back and forgotten.



Use Your Freezer

The life of many foods can be increased by freezing them. Wrapped single-serve portions and containers of leftovers can be stored in the freezer. Label and date items so that you can find and use them later. Fruit, such as grapes and berries or peeled, ripe bananas, can be frozen and used later in smoothies. Frozen broth can be used for a future soup stock. The life of dairy products like butter and cheese can also be extended with freezing.

Request Smaller Portions

When you eat in a restaurant, request a small portion or bring a container and take



half of your meal home or back to the office to use for another meal. With the “super-size” portions at many food establishments, we generally get more food than we can eat. Many restaurants offer half-sandwich specials or a-la-carte menus where you may order just the right amount.

Eat Leftovers

Only about half of Americans take leftovers home when they dine in a restaurant. Get in the habit of taking leftovers home. Use them for a second meal rather than letting the food go to waste. The same goes for cooking at home. Keep leftovers in mind; use them for lunch or dinner the next day. Fun leftover recipes from Hawaii can be found at www.opala.org. Look for their “Food: Too Good To Waste” cookbook.

Compost Food Scraps at Home

Composting food scraps in your backyard or in a worm bin keeps organic material out of the landfill and turns it back into valuable nutrients. You can use the finished compost in your garden, landscaping and plant pots. To encourage home composting, the City offers residents a \$40 rebate when they purchase an approved compost or worm bin. For more information, visit www.cityofsantacruz.com/homecomposting.



Donate

You can donate non-perishable food to a local food bank such as Second Harvest or a local soup kitchen. You may also donate non-perishable food to the Homeless Services Center in Santa Cruz.

Small But Mighty Wins the Day

By the rude bridge that arched
the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze
unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers
stood,
And fired the shot heard 'round
the world.

~ From "Concord Hymn"
by Ralph Waldo Emerson

These words were penned six decades after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Those battles, on April 19, 1775, represented the beginning of an armed conflict that resulted in the formation of the United States of America. These familiar words conjure mental images of ragtag colonists standing up to the superior power of Great Britain. In the same Massachusetts town where that familiar struggle started, a modern-day drama has taken place. It also involves a small, poorly funded group standing up to a well-organized, deep-pocketed, more powerful foe.

It is now illegal to sell bottled water in Concord, MA. Specifically, Section 1 of the relevant bylaw states: "It shall be unlawful

to sell non-sparkling, unflavored drinking water in single-serving polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles of 1 liter (34 ounces) or less in the Town of Concord on or after January 1, 2013." This bylaw was passed at the town's annual meeting in April 2012 and approved by the Massachusetts Attorney General in September of that year.

While seemingly unremarkable, it is worth noting that Concord is the first and, so far, only municipality to pass such a law. And, passage of the law did not transpire without controversy and struggle. It all began in 2009 when a local resident's grandson told her about plastic pollution in the ocean. Specifically, Jean Hill's grandson told her about the North Pacific Garbage Patch, a patch of floating plastic debris



larger than Texas accumulated and trapped by a "gyre," or vortex, in the ocean's currents.

Concern over the effects of plastic pollution inspired Hill to propose a town ban on the sale of single-use water bottles in 2010. While the motion passed in that year's annual meeting, it was rejected by the state attorney general. Hill then found allies who helped her draft a bill which, if passed, would meet with approval from the attorney general. However, the revised bill failed to pass at the 2011 town meeting by a narrow margin. This set the stage for a struggle leading up to the 2012 meeting which is the subject of an award-winning documentary, *Divide in Concord*, released in 2015.

Jean Hill is a determined woman. Now in her mid-eighties, she is given to bold statements and fiery pronouncements. In the film trailer, speaking before the vote that finally passed the law, she states: "I consider myself a warrior, and warriors have to be prepared for any enemy. In this case, my enemy is the bottlers." The International Bottled Water Association was among those fighting the ban with telephone and mail campaigns. Her opponents also included some local merchants concerned about tourism and other citizens who viewed the ban as an attack on their personal freedoms.

Hill was far from alone on her side of



the issue, as well. Her primary collaborator in leading the struggle to pass the ban was Jill Appel. Hill and Appel were recognized for their efforts with a 2015 Environmental Merit Award by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at a ceremony on April 22.

Before the ban was approved, the always-colorful Hill said in the film: "I'm going to keep on going because I'm too mean to die." Concord is once again an example of how big things could happen when determined people pull together for a cause. It is also a perfect example of someone initiating a local action that, if repeated elsewhere, can have a global impact. Nearly two and a half centuries after the battles of Lexington and Concord, Jean Hill and the people of Concord have fired off another "shot heard 'round the world."

California faces another year of drought and new water restrictions

California is in its fourth year of its most severe modern-day drought. On April 1, 2015, Governor Jerry Brown ordered the first mandatory water restrictions with the intent of cutting water usage statewide by 25%.

Brown made the announcement in a bare meadow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, which had the lowest snow pack in recorded history this past winter. Since the Sierra snow pack accounts for roughly 30% of the state's yearly water supply, this barren landscape illustrated the severity of the drought, causing worries for California and beyond. The reservoirs have about a year of water left in them, and the low snow pack meant little snowmelt to replenish the reservoirs this spring.

Last year's water restrictions remain in effect. This includes no watering of sidewalks and driveways, no watering that creates visible runoff, and the use of shut-off nozzles for washing cars at home. New water restrictions include water by request only at restaurants and limitations on landscape watering after rain.

Learn more about conservation efforts at: www.cityofsantacruz.com/waterconservation.



At Lake Shasta, California's largest reservoir, water levels are currently about 72% below normal.

QUOTES REQUIRED



Thousands have
lived without
love, not one
without water.

W. H. Auden, 1907-1973
Anglo-American Poet

Ready to Start Composting?

Take advantage of the City of Santa Cruz Home Composting \$40 Rebate Program. You can compost leaves, grass clippings, fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, egg shells, stale bread and just about anything else that is vegetable-based. Composting at home helps to keep food scraps out of our landfill. Using finished compost in your garden also helps plants retain moisture, saving water. For more information on how to get started, visit www.cityofsantacruz.com/homecomposting or call 420-5593.



9 Tips for Summertime Shopping

Ahhh...summertime. Family vacations, lounging by the pool, picnics with friends and back-to-school shopping. Whether you're getting ready for school yourself, getting someone else ready for school, or just taking care of your own summer shopping, there are things that you can do before, during and after your shopping trip to reduce your waste, improve our environment and save money, too.

1. Clean out your closets and cabinets. If you are sending a student off to college, you may find that you have plenty of towels and sheets without buying new ones. If you're sending a student back to school, you might discover unused notebooks, pens and pencils or remember that last year's backpack is in great shape. If you're shopping for housewares, garden supplies, or even food, you may learn that what you need is already sitting on your shelf!
2. Organize what you already own. We've all watched those organization (and hoarding) shows on TV. How many times have you watched someone find more than one coffee maker or enough white T-shirts or tank tops to clothe everyone on the block? While most of us aren't quite that organization-challenged, we often have some area—a junk drawer, a pantry shelf, or a bedroom closet—that could use some attention. When you organize what you have, you'll find things you can still use. This is also a great way to find the stuff you no longer want that you could sell or give away.



© iStock.com | Pamela Moore

3. No matter where you are shopping, plan ahead and make a list. Going to the hardware store? Make a list. Going to a clothing store? Make a list. We all know that we make fewer impulse purchases at the grocery store when we shop from a list—the same is true at other kinds of stores, as well.
4. Shop for reused items first. Before you hit the mall, check the neighborhood garage sales or stop by thrift stores or secondhand shops. You can find clothes, shoes, appliances, books, toys, games, office supplies, household goods, DVDs and more.
5. Look for recycled-content products. Since it will soon be back-to-school season, paper is a great place to start.

The average American uses over 500 pounds of paper each year. Recycled-content notebooks, loose-leaf paper and printer paper are readily available, high-quality and cost-competitive. According to the Environmental Paper Network, making new paper from recycled paper uses 31% less energy and creates 53% less water pollution than making the same paper directly from trees. And don't forget recycled-content tissues and paper towels. These items are often on school supply lists. You'll be teaching a great lesson to the whole class by sending recycled-content tissues or paper towels to school.

6. Paper isn't the only recycled-content product, of course! Look for pens, pencils, scissors, rulers, file folders, binders, storage containers, jewelry and outerwear, such as fleece pullovers and scarves, to name just a few. If you don't find recycled-content alternatives, tell the store manager that you want them. The store may be able to order them for you now or stock them in the future.
7. Select durable, reusable products that also reduce your waste or energy use at home. For example, if you have a drying rack, you won't need to use your dryer as often. When you purchase electrical appliances or electronics, look for the Energy Star label, which guarantees an energy-efficient product. Choose reusables, such as refillable mugs and insulated cold cups. Many stores will refill your mug or cup—sometimes at a slightly discounted price.
8. Shop for food and flowers at farmers' markets. These markets provide fresh food without extra transportation or excess packaging. Wouldn't it be nice to enjoy fruits and vegetables without throwing away a lot of plastic bags and containers? National Farmers' Market Week is the first week of August, so go out and show your support for our local farmers. For more information about farmers' markets, go to www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/.
9. Say "no thanks" to overly packaged items. Ask yourself, "If I buy this item, how many layers of packaging are going to go straight into my recycling or trash?" If your answer is more than two, see whether an alternative product is available that has less packaging.



A prep cook drops fish skin and fat into a food scrap recycling container. (Photo by Justin Sullivan © iStock.com | EdStock)

From Fork to Farm Law targets commercial food waste for recycling

Last fall, Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 1826 (AB 1826) into law. This new law expands on the success of California's commercial recycling law (AB 341), which took effect in 2012. AB 1826 targets a specific component of commercial waste—organics, such as food scraps, food-soiled paper, green waste and landscape and pruning waste. Organics constitute about one-third of the waste placed in California landfills each year.

"Food waste alone is the single largest component of the waste stream," said Assembly Member Wesley Chesbro, AB 1826 sponsor. "Landfilled food and other organic materials are a major contributor to climate change."

Chesbro continued, "California is on the forefront of the farm-to-fork movement, but the next step is to move the entire state full circle and transition from fork-to-farm." The new law phases in recycling

requirements for organics. First, by April 1, 2016, businesses that create 8 or more cubic yards of organics per week, such as large supermarkets, convention centers, venues and food processors, will be required to recycle this material. Many of these large businesses already have organics waste recycling programs in place or have plans under way.

Second, on January 1, 2017, businesses that create 4 or more cubic yards of organics per week, such as large restaurants, will also be required to begin recycling this material.

Finally, by January 1, 2019, all businesses that generate 4 or more cubic yards of any type of solid waste per week will be required to recycle organics.

To comply with the law, businesses will have the option of recycling organic waste on-site, self-hauling organics to a recycling facility, contracting for separated collection and recycling, or subscribing to a mixed waste processing service that captures and recycles organic waste.

Phasing in the requirements allows both businesses and haulers time to plan for the changes that will be needed for collection. It also gives the processing industry time to prepare for the influx of organic materials.

Organics can be recycled by composting or by conversion to renewable energy through a process known as anaerobic digestion. Compost has many landscape and agricultural uses. Anaerobic digestion breaks down organics using

bacteria in an enclosed, oxygen-free space. It creates two useful products—biogas and solid residue. Biogas can be used to power electric generators or as a vehicle fuel. Solid residue can be used as a soil amendment in certain types of agriculture.

Recycling organics keeps material out of landfills, creates California jobs, results in useful products and reduces our production of greenhouse gases.

To learn more about the new commercial organics recycling law, visit www.CalRecycle.CA.gov/recycle/commercial/organics.



Conserve water as you recycle

Help out—we're still in a drought. Santa Cruz is in the second year of mandatory water restrictions. Here are tips for cleaning your recyclables without using extra water:

- Most beverage containers don't need to be rinsed. Simply empty them and leave them upside down in the sink or dish drainer for several minutes to allow all of the liquid to drain out.
- For jars or cans that held peanut butter, jelly, spaghetti sauce, soup or other sticky food, clean the inside of the jar or can with a spatula or a paper towel. If all of the residue is removed, place the jar or can in your recycling cart.
- If you have containers that you need to rinse, use dishwasher or reuse water after rinsing vegetables or cooking pasta.

When you are running water to let it heat up, don't send it down the drain—



To remove sticky residue, use a spatula or paper towel first. Then, if you still need to do a little rinsing, use water that has already been used once to cook pasta or rinse fruit.

capture it! Use a basin or bucket to catch water in the shower, tub or kitchen sink. This water has never been used and is perfect for filling pet bowls, watering plants or rinsing recyclables.

Water-Wise Choices

With the drought in California, we are all thinking about saving water. As consumers, we also think about saving money. We complain when gas prices go up every summer, but we fork over a couple of bucks to buy 16 ounces of water in a plastic bottle.

Marketing executives try to make bottled water seem pure and exotic. But in truth, 40% of bottled water is plain old tap water. So why are we paying big bucks for plain water? Most of the cost of bottled water (over 90%) is in the bottle, lid and label with the alluring mountain scene. Bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is required to be "as good as" tap water—not better.

The other problem with

all of those bottles of water is the bottles themselves. They are designed with a single use in mind, and although recyclable, about 85% still end up as garbage or litter. It is estimated that 3 million empty water bottles go into the trash every day in California.

With summer upon us, the answer is crystal clear. Have plenty of reusable water bottles on hand for the whole family. Fill them at home with pure City of Santa Cruz water right from the tap. If you like your water cold, refrigerate it before you leave home or make small ice cubes in specially designed water bottle ice cube trays. Support the ideals of "shop local" and "eat local" by extending the concept to B.Y.O.B. of local water.



NEW Programs!

Home Waste Audits

The City of Santa Cruz is offering free home waste audits! An audit can help you **Recycle Right!** There may be materials in your garbage bin that can be recycled. When you Recycle Right, you keep valuable material out of the landfill.



Recycling Center Tours

Do you ever wonder what happens to your recycling? How is it handled and where does it go? Find out! Tour the City of Santa Cruz Recycling Center. Tours are available for City of Santa Cruz residents from 10–11:30 a.m. or 1–2:30 p.m. on Friday, July 24 and on Friday, August 21. Children and youth (under 18 years) must be accompanied by an adult.

To schedule an audit or make a tour reservation, call 420-5593 or email: bjensen@cityofsantacruz.com.

What About All That Food Packaging?

Walk down the aisle of any grocery store and you are faced with a dizzying array of food products and packaging choices. There are plastic bottles and containers in all shapes and sizes. There are shelf-stable aseptic packages of soup and soy milk. You can find meat and eggs in polystyrene foam trays. There are containers with a mix of materials, like the cylinder of the parmesan cheese that has a metal bottom, cardboard sides and plastic top. There are crinkly chip bags, plastic mesh fruit bags and pouches of juice. Most of these packages contain some sort of plastic. There are literally millions of items packaged in different types of plastic.

What do we do with all of these containers? Not all types of plastics are recyclable in the City of Santa Cruz. Plastic bottles, jars and tubs have a number code located on the bottom of the container. To make things more confusing, a number (1-7) is inside the chasing-arrows recycle symbol. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that the item is recyclable. The number indicates the type of resin the container is made from. In general, containers marked with #1-5 and #7 are recyclable in the City of Santa Cruz. Place these empty, clean and dry containers in your recycle bin.

At this time, cartons (both milk and aseptic) are not accepted for recycling. Neither is #6, polystyrene plastic foam. These items should go in the trash.



Please don't litter.
The difference you make is real.



www.ProtectYourCentralCoast.org

Spot Crab image courtesy of California Coastal Commission and Goodby Silverstein & Partners

We want your suggestions, questions and comments!



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The Santa Cruz Public Works Department provides the City of Santa Cruz with a variety of services including engineering design, traffic engineering and maintenance, storm water management, street maintenance, resource recovery management, wastewater management, flood control and parking control. The Public Works Department is committed to bringing the Santa Cruz community the highest possible quality of life.

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