



## Ask the Expert:

### Food Waste in America & Indiana

Written by Tatum Lohse; Senior in Nutrition and  
Dietetics - Purdue University

You might not give any thought to throwing away food scraps. Yet, the breakdown of food waste gives off methane gas, which adds to global warming. About 38 million tons of food are wasted every year! That's enough food to feed 190 million adults every day for a year. While a good amount of food is lost in the process of harvesting, manufacturing, and distributing before making it to the checkout line, individual customers, like you and me, are actually responsible for over half of the food wasted in America. Making matters worse, compost facility reports found that Indiana is currently falling behind the national average when it comes to recycling food or composting. Only about 1% of food waste is recycled through composting in Indiana (EPA, 2015). The good news is that with small lifestyle changes, we can make a huge, positive difference.

Composting is a great way to reduce food waste. A compost is a mixture of various decaying substances, such as dead leaves or uneaten food. When the waste breaks down, it can be used as a fertilizer for gardening or farming. Composting will not attract pests or bad odors if it is done correctly. To start composting, either pick a shaded, dry spot in your yard to make a pile, or buy a compost bin from your local hardware store. Many different things can be added to a compost such as dead leaves and branches, veggie waste, fruit scraps, coffee grounds, and water that helps break the food waste down.

#### Benefits of composing:

- Reduces the amount of methane emissions
- Replaces chemical fertilizers with rich natural fertilizers
- Adds nutrients to soil and encourages helpful bacteria to grow
- Reduces storm water runoff and soil erosion
- Supports local jobs and economies

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Sources: <https://foodforward.org/2017/09/how-much-food-is-wasted-in-america/>, <https://indianarecycling.org/food-waste-composting/>

## **Food Safety:** Reduce Waste with Food Preparation and Storage

Written by Braelyn Bai; Dietetics & Nutrition, Physiology - Purdue University

### Store Food Properly:

- To allow proper airflow, do not pack your refrigerator or freezer with too much food.
- Use the “Fist In, Fist Out” method to prevent food spoilage.
- Store fruits and veggies separate from meat to prevent cross-contamination.

### Food Product Dates and Food Safety:

- Do not use canned foods with dents, bulges, or broken seals.
- Do not eat foods that have developed a bad smell or flavor.
- Meat should be used or frozen by the “use-by” date.
- Milk is generally fresh for 5-7 days after the “sell-by” date.
- Yogurt is fresh for 7-10 days after the “sell-by” date
- Eggs can be used for 3-5 weeks after the “sell-by” date.



Sources: PennState Extension, “Reducing Food Waste with Food Safety in Mind.” 2017.

## Crackers From Stale Bread

### Ingredients (12 servings)

- 1 stale loaf of bread
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F
2. Slice the loaf into thin slices (if not already sliced) and lay on a baking sheet in a single layer
3. Combine olive oil, salt, and pepper in a small bowl
4. Brush the seasoned oil over the bread slices
5. Bake for about 8-10 minutes, until the bread turns golden brown
6. Remove bread and place the slices on a wire rack to let them cool
7. Store them in an airtight container
8. Serve them with your favorite dips



### **Nutrition Facts (1 serving)**

Calories: 32  
Protein: 0.1g  
Carbs: 0.5g  
Fat: 3.4g

Sources: <https://thecookspjamas.com/4-uses-for-stale-bread/#crackers-from-stale-sourdough-bread>

# Eating Right: How To Go Further With Food

Written by Lydia Conner; Senior in Nutrition and Dietetics - Purdue University

Scraping your plate into the trash after a meal, leaving food on your plate at a restaurant, and forgetting to eat your leftovers, are just little things, right? The problem is that all of these little amounts of food add up. The good news is that there are other little things that you can do to stop wasting food, because the food that just one person wastes matters.

**Plan meals based on the foods you already have on hand.** Look at the foods you already have on hand, and think about the recipes you could make that would use these foods. Write your grocery list based on ingredients you still need to make these recipes. Buy fresh foods in small quantities, or in amounts you know you will be able to eat or freeze within a few days.

**Get creative with leftovers.** Use leftover fruits, vegetables, and meats in salads, soups, or sandwiches. Use leftovers from the night before to take for lunch the next day.

**Master the shelf life of foods.** “Use by,” “Best by,” “Best before,” and “Sell by” dates help you to monitor the quality of the food you have. However, just because the date is approaching or has passed, does not mean you should throw the food away. “Refrigerate after opening” foods are safe to eat after these dates if they are stored properly. Perishable foods may be used a few days after the date if they are stored at safe temperatures.

**Practice good food safety.** Don’t eat anything that you think has spoiled. Leftovers are generally safe to eat for 3-4 days after the meal is prepped if stored in ideal conditions. If frozen, leftovers are safe to eat within 3-4 months. Try storing foods that need to be eaten sooner in the front of your refrigerator or pantry so that you know that these foods should be eaten first. Wait to wash your produce until right before preparing it and eating it. Keeping track of leftover foods can help lessen their waste.

**Go further with food.** Choose smaller portion sizes, share orders, and consider kids’ menu items in restaurants. Bring your own tupperware to restaurants when you know that large portion sizes are served. If you have too many fresh fruits or vegetables, you can dehydrate your produce, freeze it, or donate it to a local food pantry.



*French toast made with stale bread*





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This newsletter is edited by Caroline Parker and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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## In The News: The Indiana Food Scrap Initiative

IN THE NEWS

Written by Caroline Parker, Junior in Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health - Purdue University

The Indiana Food Scrap Initiative started in 2015, with the goal to find the causes and solutions to food waste. Their main goal is to completely eliminate food waste in Indiana! The initiative tries to find ways that Indiana can improve composting, rescuing food from being wasted, and getting the right balance between the food produced and the food used.

Food Rescue is all about collecting edible food before it is thrown away in restaurants, and grocery stores. Food rescue is an especially important part of solving food waste because foods that are not needed in one place can be used somewhere else. Food pantries are one place where good food can be rescued. "About one-third of all food produced each year is lost or spoiled before consumption - addressing this could preserve enough food to feed more than twice the global population of undernourished people".

One of the ways you can help is by donating food you do not need. Meals made in a restaurant or operation that have not been served, and homegrown produce that has not been cooked can both be donated to a food rescue organization.

Sources: <https://indianarecycling.org/project/indiana-food-scrap-initiative->, <https://pixfeeds.com/images/save-nature/1280-157372806-recycle-blue-box.jpg>

### Food Rescue Organizations in Indiana:

1. Cultivate Culinary - South Bend
2. Second Helpings - Indianapolis
3. Hoosier Hills Food Bank - Bloomington
4. Food Finders Food Bank - Lafayette
5. Second Harvest Food Bank - Muncie
6. Terre Haute Catholic Charities Food-bank - Terre Haute

