



# I VALUE FOOD: TOO GOOD TO WASTE

## Group Challenge Toolkit

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*A group approach to reducing household food waste*

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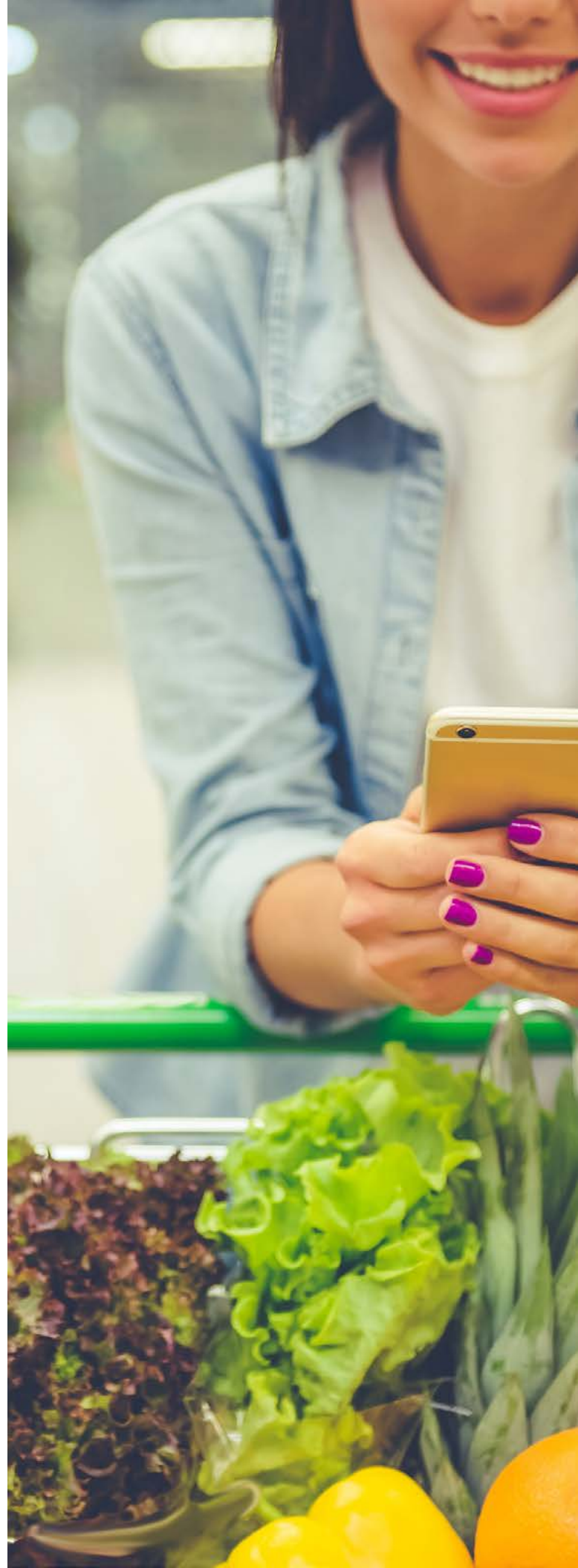
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## ABOUT SUSTAINABLE AMERICA

Sustainable America is an environmental 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to make the nation’s food and fuel systems more efficient and resilient. Through broad public education we work to reduce oil usage and increase food availability in the United States.



**SUSTAINABLE**  
— AMERICA —



## LEARN TO WASTE LESS, TOGETHER

Are you part of a group or organization looking to make a lasting impact on environmental issues? Food waste prevention is one of the most important projects you can tackle. And the “I Value Food: Too Good to Waste” Challenge is just the jump-start you need.

### What is the “I Value Food: Too Good to Waste” Challenge?

This 4-week food-waste prevention program is based on successful strategies developed by the U.S. EPA. Through this program, many families have reduced food waste by up to 50%.

During the first week, participants will track their preventable food waste to analyze what is going to waste and why. During the following 3 weeks, participants will be emailed tips, tools, and strategies to try as they continue to track their waste. By the end of the month, our online tracker will compare those three weeks to week 1 to calculate how much waste they were able to prevent.

### Why should we prevent food waste?

Food waste is one of the most pressing problems we face. In the U.S., as much as 40% of the food we produce never gets eaten<sup>1</sup>. Most of it ends up in landfills where it produces methane, a major contributor to climate change. This wasted food is also a waste of the valuable land, water, and fuel that goes into producing it. Households are responsible for the biggest slice of America’s total food waste. In fact, it’s estimated that the average person wastes close to a pound of food per day<sup>2</sup>, costing a family of four up to \$1,500<sup>1</sup>.

### Why is this a good project for a group?

The “I Value Food: Too Good to Waste” Challenge is a proven method for reducing food waste at the household level. While the Challenge can be done on your own, we’ve found that doing it as a group keeps people engaged, encourages competitiveness, and inspires a valuable exchange of ideas. Group challenges generate excitement and hold participants accountable. And if you offer an incentive for people to participate and succeed, they will be more likely to stick with it and learn something new.



<sup>1</sup> Dana Gunders, *Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill*, Nat'l Res. Def. Council (Aug. 2017), <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Conrad Z, Niles MT, Neher DA, Roy ED, Tichenor NE, Jahns L (2018) Relationship between food waste, diet quality, and environmental sustainability. *PLoS ONE* 13(4): e0195405. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0195405>

## CHALLENGE OBJECTIVES

Pinpoint why good food is going to waste in the home. Each week participants will track what food is going to waste and why.

Learn how to shop, store, and prep food to better serve yourself and your household.

Save money for families, individuals, and your community.

Explore human behavior around food waste. We provide ideas for engaging your group in discussions and idea exchange.

By supporting this challenge, your group will:



Learn new food habits that will last a lifetime.



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Support the US EPA and USDA's goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030.



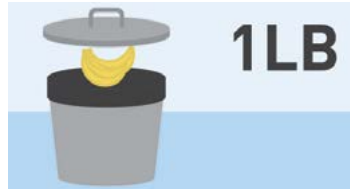
Reduce the average of 340 pounds of wasted food per person annually.



## FOOD WASTE FACTS



40% of the food we produce doesn't get eaten.<sup>1</sup>



The average American wastes close to 1 pound of food per day.<sup>2</sup>



Wasted food produces 11% of U.S. methane emissions, a major contributor to climate change.<sup>2</sup>

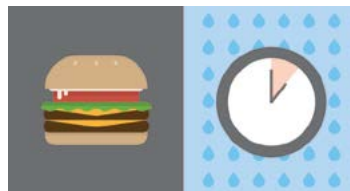
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**Reducing wasted food has been identified as the third most effective measure to reverse global climate change.<sup>5</sup>**

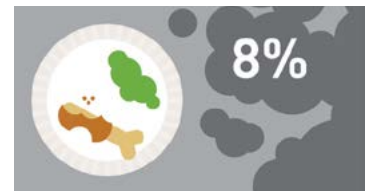
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Wasted food costs us \$218 billion a year.<sup>1</sup>



Throwing out one hamburger wastes as much water as a 90-minute shower.<sup>1</sup>



Food waste is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>3</sup>



U.S. food waste has tripled since 1960.<sup>4</sup>



25% of the food consumers buy is wasted.<sup>1</sup>



Food is the largest category of waste going to U.S. landfills, taking up 22% of space.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Gunders, Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill, Nat'l Res. Def. Council (Aug. 2017), <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>

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<sup>3</sup> FAO. Food Wastage Footprint: Full-Cost Accounting, Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

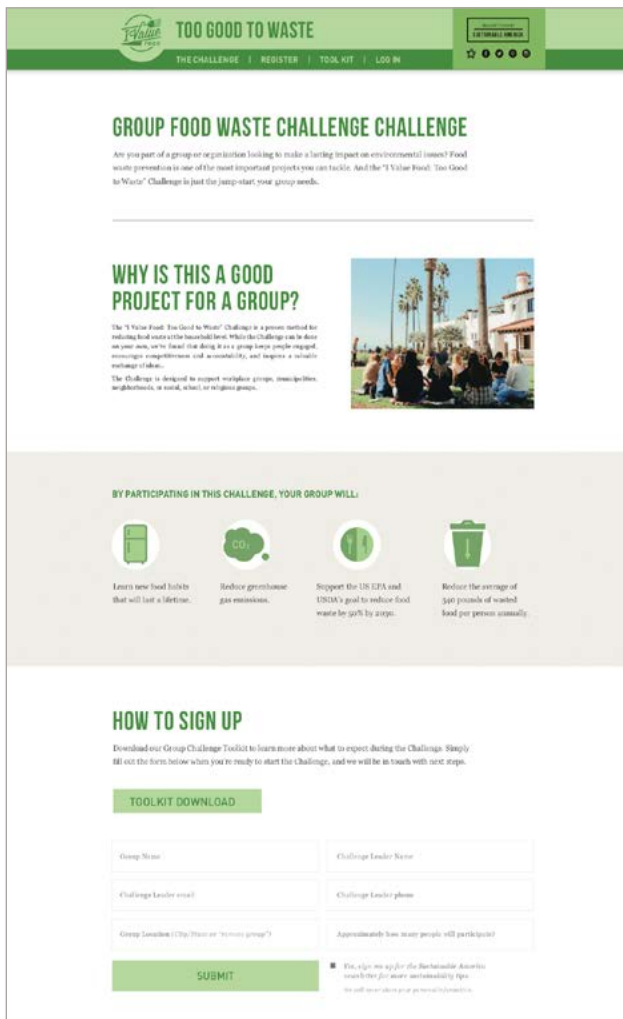
<sup>5</sup> Hawkin, P. (2017). Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

# CHALLENGE LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Your group will need to choose a Challenge Leader to lead the Challenge. Once a Leader is chosen, complete the following steps:

## REGISTER YOUR GROUP

1. Fill out the Group Challenge Sign-Up form at [challenge.ivaluefood.com/groups/](http://challenge.ivaluefood.com/groups/)



2. Once your form is received, we will send you an email with a “GROUP CODE” that we will use to track the progress of your group.
3. Collect the names and email addresses of your group.
4. Choose the date you want the group to start the 4-week challenge.
5. Reply to your “GROUP CODE” email with your chosen start date and email list. We will upload the names and send the Challenge welcome email on your start date. Alternately, you can enter the names and GROUP CODE yourself on the start date at [challenge.ivaluefood.com/#challenge](http://challenge.ivaluefood.com/#challenge).
6. The week before your Challenge start date, make sure you let your group know when the challenge is starting and tell them to watch for an I Value Food Welcome email from [info@sustainableamerica.org](mailto:info@sustainableamerica.org). The Welcome Email will explain how the challenge works. You can also share this video, which explains the Challenge: [challenge.ivaluefood.com/howit-works/](http://challenge.ivaluefood.com/howit-works/)

The participant’s email address is all they will need to log in and track their waste. The emails also include links to pre- and post-challenge surveys that we encourage all participants to fill out.



## **DURING THE CHALLENGE**

We will send your Challenge Leader reports throughout the Challenge on your group's progress and a final report at the conclusion of the Challenge. You can use these reports to let your group know about their overall progress, highlight certain participants, and build excitement for the challenge.

We recommend that you encourage communication and dialogue during the challenge to keep participants engaged and excited.

Schedule a weekly meeting to talk about progress, issues, challenges, tips, etc. Use the Group Discussion Guide on page 6 to facilitate discussion.

Use an existing Facebook group or other social media group to discuss the Challenge online, post resources, share tips, etc. Encourage participants to post pictures and thoughts about the challenge.

## **AFTER THE CHALLENGE**

Prepare a post-challenge wrap-up report that celebrates how much food waste your group was able to prevent. Incorporate participant quotes and tips that people found most useful.

Encourage participants to share what they've learned with their friends and family and encourage other groups to participate.

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

If your group is able to meet in person each week, you can use these questions to spark conversations about the Challenge. Encourage participants to share their food waste challenges, tips, and successes.

If you have a social media group, you can post these questions, as well as links to I Value Food resources to get discussions going online.

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### Pre-Challenge Questions

Set some goals for yourself. How are these goals measured? In money saved, wasted food reduced, or meal prep time condensed?

How do you expect your habits to change during the course of this challenge?

How do you expect other members of your household to react to this challenge? How will you encourage participation?

Determine how you will measure success for yourself and as a group. Think about how this will realistically be achieved as a group and in individual households.

*Special thanks to Cincinnati's Green Umbrella Waste Reduction Action Team for developing these questions.*

### Week 1 Questions

In your initial week of monitoring your wasted food, what surprised you the most about your current habits?

What were some of the main reasons you wasted food?

How did tracking your waste affect decisions you made about food during the week?

### Week 2 Questions

Week 2 tips included meal planning and shopping guide tips. If you used these, did you find these practices affected your usual grocery bill?

Did you find these tips to be helpful? Did you find places of inefficiency in your typical grocery shopping habits?

Did you take advantage of the A-Z Food Storage Tips? Which tips did you use?

### Week 3 Questions

Week 3 offered tips for better food prep practices. Did you use any of the advice? Is this a sustainable practice going forward in your household?

Week 3 also offered a Portion size guide meant to help plan the amount of food prepared during meal prep. It is estimated that one-third of all wasted food can be attributed to people preparing too much food. Is over-preparing a major source of food waste for you? If so, how do you plan to implement better practices?

Did anyone find the freezer labels useful to your weekly routine?



## Week 4 Questions

How did the tips this week help you rethink leftovers? Did you find yourself storing more or less food than normal, or storing it any differently?

Does your household already do a “leftovers” night, or did this challenge encourage you to implement one? How can you expect this to save time and money in your weekly routine?

Were you able to record any leftover “big wins”? Did you salvage stale bread, make soup or compost vegetable scraps? Share the best ones with the group.

How did these practices affect the children in your household? How did they like eating and combining leftover food?

What did you learn from the guide to food expiration date labels?

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## Post-Challenge Questions

Looking back over the last four weeks, what surprised you the most about your previous habits, if anything?

Thinking about the variety of tips and guides you reviewed during the Challenge, what tips are you going to carry forward into your weekly shopping and cooking routine?

Were family members helpful in completing and tracking food waste during the Challenge? What were some concerns in your family? How did their opinions change over the course of the Challenge?

Think back to the goals you set at the beginning of the Challenge. Did you reach those goals? If not, do you feel like you have the knowledge to reach them in the future?

If you did reach your goals, do you think you can still improve on reducing your food waste further? Are there new goals you'd like to reach?

# I VALUE FOOD PRINTABLE RESOURCES

For your reference, this section includes Challenge instructions and some helpful printable resources and templates that will be used throughout the Challenge. You can print these out and distribute to participants to provide more support for their food waste reduction efforts.

## This section includes:

“How It Works”  
Challenge Instructions



Recording  
Worksheet



Freezer  
Labels



## Kitchen Inventory Sheets:

Pantry  
Inventory Sheet



Refrigerator  
Inventory Sheet



Freezer  
Inventory Sheet



“Eat Me First”  
Label



Meal Planner and  
Shopping List





**TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE**

# HOW IT WORKS

## I VALUE FOOD: TOO GOOD TO WASTE

Congratulations on joining the I Value Food: Too Good to Waste Challenge! You're on your way to wasting less food, saving money and helping the planet. Let's get started!

Read through the Challenge instructions below and explain them to members of your household to get them on board with wasting less food.

1.

### COLLECT YOUR WASTE

Over the course of the four-week Challenge, place all of your PREVENTABLE\* food waste into a quart-size zip-top bag or container (like a plastic deli container). Keep a tally of how many containers you fill throughout the week. You can discard the contents once it gets full, as long as you record it. (Use the Recording Worksheet on page 3 or your online Food Waste Log to keep track.)

2.

### RECORD WEEKLY WASTE

Week 1 is your "baseline" week where you'll stick to your regular routine to find out how much food you typically waste. At the end of the week, tally up the number of containers you filled and record it in your Food Waste Log. Don't worry if you forget, we'll email a reminder.

3.

### TRY OUR TIPS

After the baseline week, it's time to try out the tips and tools in our Toolkit for shopping, storage and cooking. Explore on your own, or follow the tips in our weekly emails. Continue to track and record your weekly waste as you did in Week 1.

4.

### DISCOVER YOUR SAVINGS

By the end of Week 4, you'll discover your savings! Many families have reduced their food waste by 50% by following these strategies.

*\*PREVENTABLE food waste is food you bought to eat but has since spoiled, or food that was prepared but was not eaten then thrown away. This does not include non-edible food waste such as banana peels, egg shells or chicken bones. Do not collect liquid waste, such as soup.*



**VISIT [IVALUEFOOD.COM](http://IVALUEFOOD.COM) FOR MORE FOOD WASTE RESOURCES**

Adapted from the EPA's Food: Too Good to Waste Toolkit

# WASTE COLLECTION TIPS

- Make sure you use the same size container throughout the Challenge.
- You can throw the empty containers away before they're full as long as you record the total containers filled for the week.
- Keep containers in the fridge or freezer if you're worried about odor or pests.
- If you come to the end of a week and the last container is partially filled, estimate the portion to the nearest quarter (*ex. .25, .5, .75*).

## 'TOO GOOD TO WASTE' STRATEGIES

Here are a few of the smart strategies from the online Toolkit to try during weeks 2-4 as you continue to measure how much goes to waste each week. Keep notes on what works to reduce food waste and what doesn't, why food is going to waste, and the types of food you are wasting the most (are you wasting mostly produce, meat or something else?)

### SMART SHOPPING

#### BUY WHAT YOU NEED

Make a shopping list with the Meal Planner & Shopping List template based on how many meals you expect to eat at home before your next shopping trip. By buying no more than what you expect to use, you will be more likely to use it up and keep it fresh.

### SMART STORAGE

#### KEEP FOOD FRESH & AVOID SPOILAGE

Store produce so it stays fresh longer with the help of the Quick Reference Food Storage Guide.

### SMART SAVING

#### EAT WHAT YOU BUY

This involves being mindful of leftovers and old ingredients that need using up. An "Eat Me First" label can be used to designate an area in your refrigerator for leftovers and food that won't keep long.

### SMART PREP

#### PREP NOW, EAT LATER

Use the Smart Prep Guide to learn how you can save time and money.



**VISIT [IVALUEFOOD.COM/CHALLENGE](http://IVALUEFOOD.COM/CHALLENGE)  
FOR MORE FOOD WASTE RESOURCES**

Adapted from the EPA's Food: Too Good to Waste Toolkit



TOO GOOD TO WASTE

# TAKE THE CHALLENGE

## I VALUE FOOD: TOO GOOD TO WASTE

## RECORDING WORKSHEET

Print this form and keep it near your trash can. Each time you fill a container, record it here. At the end of each week, record the total containers in the online Food Waste Log. Visit [bit.ly/29RovJd](http://bit.ly/29RovJd) to log in and record your waste.

### IN THE NOTES SECTIONS, TRY TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Why was this food wasted? Maybe a meal was burnt or you forgot about a container of leftovers that was pushed to the back of the fridge.
- What types of food are you wasting the most?
- Who in your house is generating the food waste? Are children wasting more than adults, or is everyone wasting about the same amount?
- Did anything unusual happen in household that caused you to waste more or less than you might have?

### WEEK 1: BASELINE

WEEK 1	Start Date: _____	Notes: _____
	Number of Containers: _____	_____

### WEEKS 2-4

WEEK 2	Start Date: _____	Notes: _____
	Number of Containers: _____	_____

WEEK 3	Start Date: _____	Notes: _____
	Number of Containers: _____	_____

WEEK 4	Start Date: _____	Notes: _____
	Number of Containers: _____	_____

### WEEKS 2-4 TOTALS

Total Containers: _____ (Add weeks 2 to 4)	Average Number of Containers: _____ (Total containers ÷ 3)
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(Print on labels or plain paper. Use to identify what is in your fridge or freezer and keep track of when to eat it.)



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE

CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

CREATED ON: \_\_\_\_\_

FROZEN ON: \_\_\_\_\_

EAT BY: \_\_\_\_\_



# REFRIGERATOR INVENTORY

Date

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Item

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Developed in cooperation with the U.S. EPA and Sustainable America

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [IVALUEFOOD.COM](http://IVALUEFOOD.COM)**







# EAT ME FIRST



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**TOO GOOD  
TO WASTE**

# MEAL PLANNER AND SHOPPING LIST

## WEEKLY MENU PLAN

- Check what you already have in your fridge, freezer, and cupboard
- Plan your menu around your weekly activities
- Place your menu plan on your fridge

## SHOPPING LIST

- Write your shopping list from your menu plan
- Identify how much you will need
- Remember to take your list to the grocery store

MENU PLAN
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SATURDAY
SUNDAY

ITEM/AMOUNT NEEDED	ALREADY HAVE
FRUITS & VEGETABLES	
BREADS & CEREALS	
DAIRY & FROZEN ITEMS	
MEAT & FISH	
NON-PERISHABLES	
DRINKS	
OTHER HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	



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