

# Saving Money

## A Word About Waste

According to the USDA, up to 40% of food is wasted every year, which adds up to an estimated \$1,500 per family. Here are some ways to avoid wasting food and money:

- Plan your meals. Having a plan with a shopping list is one of the simplest ways to avoid food waste. Include recipes and meals using leftovers.
- Proper food storage is key. Many foods and leftovers can be frozen for later use if they will not be used right away.
- Learn about ways to use “distressed” but safe produce. Vegetable soup doesn’t require flawless veggies; use overripe bananas in bread or smoothies; if you have a variety of aging vegetables, simply chop them up and roast in the oven with a little oil, salt and pepper for a healthy side dish.
- Shop the entire store for different forms of fruits and vegetables. Frozen or canned fruits and vegetables, for example, have a longer shelf-life, are affordable and create nutritious meal accompaniments.
- Use the concept of first-in, first-out. Many foods simply get “lost” in the back of the refrigerator or pantry and go bad before they can be used.

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Understand that best-by codes do not mean a product should be thrown away. Look at [www.StillTasty.com](http://www.StillTasty.com) to look up the average shelf life of all foods.

- A “**Best if Used By/Before**” date indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- A “**Sell-By**” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
- A “**Use-By**” date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula.

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- Recognizing signs of true spoilage is an important skill to help prevent food waste as well as illness from spoiled foods. Spoiled foods will often develop an off odor due to spoilage bacteria. Pathogenic bacteria, bacteria that can cause illness, and mold can also grow in foods that have gone bad.
  - Keep things like apples, pears, bananas, and oranges in a bowl where they are easy to grab for quick snacks and are more likely to be consumed before they go bad.
  - If your kids insist they don’t like fruits and vegetables by themselves, offer some veggie dip, hummus, cottage cheese, or yogurt to go with them.
  - Consume the most perishable foods that you purchase first. Fresh foods should only be purchased as far as a week in advance and should be used as soon as possible. Foods with longer shelf life, such as frozen or canned foods, can be used later.