



Ten Steps To Waste Less Food This Holiday Season

by [Gina-Marie Cheeseman](#), November 21, 2011, 11:23 pm



About one-third of all food produced for human consumption, approximately 1.3 billion tons, is lost or wasted every year, according to the UN's Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO). Consumers in developed countries are responsible for 222 million tons of this waste, or about the same quantity of food produced in all of sub-Saharan Africa. The wasted food that is not composted ends up in landfills where it produces methane emissions, a greenhouse gas with a warming effect 21 times greater than carbon dioxide.

With the holiday season upon us, it is helpful to know how to avoid wasting food. Thankfully, the [Worldwatch Institute](#) offers 10 steps that will make a holiday meal less wasteful:

1. **Be realistic:** Cook only the amount of food that is really needed for your holiday meal. See the [Love Food Hate Waste organization's "Perfect portions" planner](#) to calculate meal sizes.
2. **Plan ahead:** Create a shopping list before buying the ingredients for your meal. Check out the [Grocery Gadgets shopping app](#) for iPhone, Android, and Blackberry.
3. **Go small:** Use smaller serving utensils and plates to encourage people to eat smaller portions, and reduce the amount of food left on plates.
4. **Encourage self-serve:** Let guests serve themselves so they will take the amount they can realistically eat.

5. **Store leftovers safely:** The USDA recommends that hot foods only be left out for no more than two hours.
6. **Compost food scraps:** Compost vegetable peels, egg shells and other food scraps from meal preparation.
7. **Create new meals:** Use the leftovers from your holiday meal to make new meals. See the [Love Food Hate Waste's recipes](#) from food scraps.
8. **Donate excess:** Donate canned and dried foods you didn't need for your holiday meal to food banks and shelters. See the [Feeding America's Food Bank Locator](#).
9. **Support food-recovery programs:** In some cities, there are food recovery systems that will come and collect your leftovers. For instance, in New York City, [City Harvest](#), the world's first food-rescue organization, collects about 28 million pounds of food each year.
10. **Give gifts with thought:** If you decide to give food, avoid highly perishable items. If you give chocolate, coffee or tea as a gift, choose fair trade certified products. Check out [Global Exchange](#), which lists fair trade certified chocolate, coffee and tea companies.