



GROCERY STORE FOOD LOSS

P R E V E N T I O N T I P S



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
HEALTH SYSTEM

The EPA created this list of ideas and activities that grocery stores can implement to prevent food loss and waste.

- Perform a food waste audit:** Pick a day and monitor waste bins with volunteers, recording the following:
 - What is being thrown out
 - Weight or number of items
 - The reason the food is being disposed
 - The expiration date of the product when applicable
 - Whether the food was still wholesome/edible before being thrown out
 - Identify the most wasted to least wasted items
- Clarify date labeling and date encoding to reduce confusion to customers:** Work with your supply chain to clearly label or define the difference between safety-based and quality-based dates. Some options might include:
 - Make “sell by” dates invisible to the consumer
 - Use more “freeze by” dates where applicable so customer knows they have that option
 - Remove "best before" or other quality dates from shelf-stable, non-perishable foods for which safety is not a concern
 - Make sure printed dates on products have descriptive language
- Call a meeting to brainstorm and discuss food waste prevention**
- Share practices** with other businesses to improve waste reduction industry-wide

PURCHASING TIPS

- Take an accurate inventory** first and base orders on what you currently have
- Buy surplus or odd shaped produce** from farms or wholesalers that would otherwise be wasted and sell them at a discount
- Send order estimates more frequently** to suppliers to better align production planning with order timings
- Start or increase regular communication with suppliers**
- Revise your supply contracts** to require that suppliers have a food waste reduction or food donation program
- Change contracts** to include methods to prevent food loss (e.g., use innovative packaging such as vacuum sealed meat)
- Make food waste reduction a key performance indicator** in operations, supply chain and employee performance

PREP AND STORAGE TIPS

- Use leftovers from the day before: Steak can be used for beef stew the next day
- Train staff on knife skills to make more efficient knife cuts to prevent waste
- Use as much of the food as possible: Cook up carrot greens and don't peel cucumbers or potatoes
- Reconstitute stinky vegetables that have wilted by immersing them in warm water (100°F) for 15 minutes
- Marinate meats to extend their shelf life for a few more days
- Refresh staff on storage techniques for different foods (e.g., don't store tomatoes and lettuce in the same container or near each other)
- Use see-through storage containers: Easily see what is available and fresh
- Cook, freeze, juice, or otherwise process foods that are approaching the end of their peak freshness to prolong their useful life

STORE SET UP AND DISPLAY TIPS

- Set up a discount shelf for ripe, near-to-expire, discontinued, or slightly damaged food: Provide clear communication about this reduced price section
- Redesign product displays with less excess: Instead of using a pile of produce, have a back support that makes it look like a pile to keep produce fresher
- Allow prepared foods to run out near store closing: Track these items and only make as much as you can sell

ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMERS

- Provide taste samples: Train staff to remind customers that they can try a sample to see if they like a product before they buy it
- Have best storage practices information available including how long food should last when stored properly
- Offer various options to your customers on produce (e.g., whole, sliced, and mixed fruit). This will assist them in eliminating food loss in their own homes

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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