

The # 1 thing we send to the landfill is food

Did you know that the #1 thing that Americans throw away is food? According to the National Resource Defense Council, 40% of the food we buy ends up in the garbage leading to America wasting \$165 billion per year. The most common foods that people throw away in the United States, unsurprisingly, tend to have short shelf lives; these items include:

- Fruits and Vegetables
- Seafood
- Grain Products
- Meat
- Milk

Unfortunately, when we waste food we are also wasting valuable resources, including water. To put things into perspective, let us measure wasted water in terms of shower minutes: 1 pound of tomatoes would be equivalent to 5 shower minutes, 1 pound of white rice would be 60 shower minutes, and 1 pound of beef would be a staggering 370 shower minutes!

How is our food waste in Washoe County?

In order to see what Washoe County residents were throwing away, Washoe County completed a Waste Characterization Report in 2018. After literal dumpster diving, it was found that 55% of what Washoe County residents were throwing away was considered organic materials. This includes food waste, yard waste, and even dry recoverable fiber (also known as paper). Almost half of the organic materials we throw away consist of food waste.

What can I do to reduce my food waste?

Reading, guessing and racing against expiration dates can be very confusing and frustrating, so where should you start? Many people know the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle); here at KTMB, however, we preach the 5Rs! The 5Rs are:

- Refuse
- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Rot

The awesome thing about this list is that it tells you where you should start!

How can I incorporate the 5 Rs into my daily life?

- Refuse food that you already have or that you don't need
- Do you already have this item hidden in your cabinet or fridge? Make sure you take inventory of the food in your kitchen before you buy more food.
- Reduce your food waste by using your food before it expires
- When you buy your food, read the expiration dates and make an attempt to plan ahead as to when you will eat this food or how you will use it before it goes bad. If you notice that the expiration date is soon, eat it up!
- Reuse/Recycle your leftover food to enjoy it all over again
- Use online resources to find delicious and fun recipes to use up your leftovers.
- Rot - give your food a second life through composting
- If your food has gone bad and it is compostable, you can throw it in your household compost. If you don't have a compost bin and are interested in composting, KTMB gives talks to the public and businesses about a variety of subjects including composting! If you have a group that is interested, request a presentation by visiting www.ktmb.org/adult-education

There are simple things we can all do to make a difference, all it takes is remembering that there is no "away".



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