



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMPERFECT PRODUCE



OFF MENU

# Keep produce janky

BY STEPH RODRIGUEZ / [stephr@newsreview.com](mailto:stephr@newsreview.com)

**Too big. Too small. Too curvy. A little scarred. These** are some of the reasons 20 billion pounds of perfectly good fruits and vegetables are wasted before they even hit grocery stores, according to a report by ReFED, a nonprofit seeking to reduce food waste in the United States.

Enter Imperfect Produce, a San Francisco-based company that figured out that there is indeed a market for wonky-looking fruits and veggies delivered to people's homes.

"At this point, anything can disqualify a fruit or vegetable from going to the grocery store. If a clementine is 2 millimeters too small, it's not going to end up in that bag of Halos or Cuties," Ben Simon, CEO and co-founder told SN&R. "It's not going to make it over to Raley's. It's going to, in many cases, get rejected and go to animal feed or to other destinations."

Imperfect Produce launched in 2015 and now operates in 12 cities, including four in California. In December, Imperfect started deliveries of custom boxes of funky produce in the Farm-to-Fork capital. Depending on the size of the box, prices range from \$11 to \$27 and \$15 to \$43 for organic, plus a \$4.99 delivery charge.

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**Ben Simon**  
CEO, co-founder  
Imperfect Produce

"I believe the biggest injustice in our food system is we have 40 percent of our food being wasted while we have 40 million Americans struggling with hunger," Simon said.

He added that it's not only important to reduce food waste, but to also help all people gain access to fresh produce. Imperfect has already donated 6,000 pounds of fruits and veggies to the Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services.

Also, anyone who qualifies for food benefits—through CalFresh in California—receives a discount on their produce box. Simon said that more than 8,500 families across the country who use Imperfect get the discount. "There's been a lot of talk about food deserts as a growing issue in a lot of cities in America," he said. "To be able to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables that anyone in that city with internet access and an address can access for half of what it costs in the grocery store, and have that delivered to their house, it makes a humongous difference." □

Visit [imperfectproduce.com](http://imperfectproduce.com) to get your very own box of quirky fruits and veggies.

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