

## UnFed: Creating Equality in Our Food System



### Food Waste: Save Money and the Environment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWlr1gDUun8>

Imagine if we could feed more people, save money, and rebalance our environment, just by making a few important changes to our daily routines. In a time when we face growing hunger in America, growing costs of managing our waste, and increased environmental imbalance, it's important to know that paying attention to how we manage our food waste can help to improve all of these problems. In this webinar, Ann Marie Gianni and Sean Fitzpatrick illustrate some simple steps we can all take that can collectively make huge positive impacts in addressing all of these challenges.

When Ann Marie moved to Berkeley California, she noticed that the relative size of the garbage, recycling, and compost bins was different from other places she lived. Where she grew up, garbage bins were biggest, then recycling, then composting (if there was composting). In Berkeley, it's reversed. The garbage is the smallest and the recyclables and food scraps are the biggest. This is the direction we want to be going. So where do we start?

#### Individual Practices

As individuals, we can make an impact with our choices about how we shop, what we cook, how we prepare our food, how we store it, and what we do with the waste. The habits of many Americans are to go to restaurants and get take-out food, or to buy processed food at the supermarket. These two practices result in a tremendous amount of trash and food waste.

One of the best things you can do a personal level is to get into meal planning. Go shopping with a list of what you're going to cook. Look in the refrigerator and plan what you are going to cook with the food that is in there. If you are going to cook a big meal, think about think about leftovers. You could freeze portions for some meals down the line, or store it to eat the next day. Both are great strategies.

Here are some tips for how to reduce food waste in your home.

1. Meal planning. Shop with a list of what you are going to cook and eat in the next few days.
2. Store your leftovers in the fridge or freezer, and plan meals around them.
3. Compost your food scraps. Composting directs food waste where it is best used – in the production of rich new soil needed to grow more food. If you don't have your own compost pile, find out where you can bring your food scraps locally.
4. Awareness. Notice how much you throw out each day and make it a priority to eat what you buy.

When you start to develop these habits, you'll notice that your trash bins will start to look more like the bins that Ann Marie saw in Berkeley. You'll have less garbage, you'll have extra cash in your pocket because you aren't purchasing food that ends up getting thrown out, and you'll reconnect with what composting is and how essential it is to our soil, food, and our health.

### **Community Policies**

Food waste happens at every step along the food supply chain, from farms to supermarkets and restaurants, to your own refrigerator. At every step along the way there is a surplus of food, so at the community level we need systems in place to make sure the surplus gets distributed efficiently to everyone who needs it, and that food waste is not managed as garbage but rather as the valuable resource that it is.

At the community level, surplus can be coordinated and donated to food pantries and soup kitchens. If you have a heart that is involved in the animal world, you can support animal shelters that need food. There are shelters for domestic pets, farm animals, and injured wild animals. There are incentives on town and state levels that we want to be aware of. We want to think about how we get these programs going and how can we be incentivized as a community to compost more and move our food through a system where all of it gets to where it is needed most.

Support the following practices in your community:

1. Distribution of surplus: food markets and restaurants can donate surplus to food banks, soup kitchens to feed people in need.
2. Donating food scraps to animal shelters
4. Community education on composting.
5. Public facilities to accept and transform food scraps to useful resources that can be used in farming and land management.

The whole game of composting, growing some of your own food, and chopping and cooking more, means that you do have to transform some of your habits. Embracing the practice is part of the overall process. If we make these small changes now we can all look back in a couple of years and see that we are making a difference that improves all of our lives.

### **Resources**

Book: **Waste Free Kitchen Handbook**, by Dana Gunders.

Website: **ImperfectFoods.com** - <https://www.imperfectfoods.com/food-waste-101>

Articles:

**Expiration, Use-By and Sell-By dates: What do they really mean?**

<https://news.extension.uconn.edu/2019/10/30/expiration-use-by-and-sell-by-dates-what-do-they-really-mean/>

**Effects of Food Waste on the Environment**

<https://sustainability.uconn.edu/2016/02/>