

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the ‘Save the Food’ campaign?

A: “Save the Food’ is the public service campaign designed to reduce food waste directed at consumers. The campaign is a multi-year partnership between the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Ad Council and consists of a new series of public service ads (PSAs), a new website serving as a resource for tips and tools to help consumers take action, new campaign social communities and a host of brand and media partnerships.

The goal of ‘Save the Food’ is to change household behavior to reduce food waste, and in turn, minimize environmental and economic impacts.

Q: Why is food waste bad?

A: Food waste has a massive environmental impact. In the U.S., 40% of all food goes uneaten each year, causing a loss of \$162 billion annually and wasted water, energy, fertilizers, cropland and production costs. In fact, about 25% of our nation’s total fresh water is used to grow food that gets trashed.

Food waste is also the single largest component of solid waste in U.S. landfills. Once there, it decomposes and releases methane—a form of climate pollution that up to 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

If global food waste was a country, it would have the largest carbon footprint after the U.S. and China, as a result of carbon pollution created from growing, cooling, and transporting uneaten food.

Q: Why are you targeting consumers?

A: Consumers are responsible for more wasted food than farmers, grocery stores, restaurants or any part of the food supply chain, accounting for 40% of all food thrown out. In fact, the average family of four throws out over 1,000 pounds of food and spends an un-needed \$1,500 annually.

Q: Why is this effort important now?

A: The topic is timely. This past September, the Obama Administration announced the nation’s first-ever food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50% cut by 2030; days later the U.N. set a similar target internationally. A report released last month by ReFED – a collaboration of over 30 business, government, investor, foundation and nonprofit leaders – identified consumer education campaigns as one of the best ways to cut U.S. food waste and put the country on track to its reduction target.

Q: What can consumers do to affect food waste?

A: We can reverse the food waste trend by inspiring consumer actions and behaviors including:

- **Shopping Wisely.** Plan meals, use shopping lists, buy from bulk bins, and avoid impulse buys.
- **Buying Funny Fruit.** Many fruits and vegetables are thrown out because their size, shape, or color are not "right."
- **Learning When Food Goes Bad.** Most food can be safely consumed well after their use-by dates: "Sell-by" and "use-by" dates are not federally regulated and do not indicate safety, except on certain baby foods. Rather, they are manufacturer suggestions for peak quality.
- **Mining Their Fridge.** There are many online resources that help consumers get creative with recipes to use up anything that might go bad soon.
- **Using Their Freezer.** Frozen foods remain safe indefinitely. Freeze fresh produce and leftovers if you won't have the chance to eat them before they go bad.
- **Requesting Smaller Portions.** Restaurants will often provide half-portions upon request at reduced prices.
- **Eating Leftovers.** Ask your restaurant to pack up your extras so you can eat them later. Freeze them if you don't want to eat immediately. Only about half of Americans take leftovers home from restaurants.
- **Donating.** Non-perishable and unspoiled perishable food can be donated to local food banks, soup kitchens, pantries, and shelters

Q: Why are consumers wasting so much food?

A: There's a disconnect in our homes—no one likes to waste but the vast majority of Americans don't think about food waste as a significant problem. If we recognize food waste in a critical way at all, we tend to associate it with restaurants, agri-business and the food service industry rather than our own households and our own behaviors. Raising awareness of the issue in general and getting consumers to recognize their own wasteful behaviors is the first step in changing the social norm.

Q: What does the public service advertising (PSA) campaign consist of?

A: The 'Save the Food' creative was developed *pro bono* by ad agency SapientNitro and includes TV, outdoor, print and web PSAs. The TV ad poignantly chronicles the life of a single strawberry—from the farm to the supermarket to its ultimate destination: the trash.

The creative was distributed to 33,000 media outlets nationwide. All of the PSAs will run in space and time entirely donated by the media. Ad Council campaigns average \$20 million to \$30 million in donated media annually.