

Fill Plates Not Landfills.

-Amie Sugarman, Newlands Intermediate

Have you thrown away your leftovers? What about the fruit you bought but never got round to eating? Have you thought about what happens when you waste your food and what impact it has on people and the environment? You might be thinking no big deal. It is only one thing, but think about all the people around New Zealand thinking that and how just one scrap of food turns into millions. Food waste is a really big problem. All around the world people throw away their leftover food from dinner and extra food that they brought but never got time to eat. Food waste is a very big problem in New Zealand. Where does this food end up? In New Zealand 122,547 million tons of food gets thrown away a year. That is equivalent to over 21 million loaves of bread. Next time you might think twice about throwing away those leftovers.



Some family throwing away food that could have been eaten.

Throughout New Zealand the most commonly discarded foods are bread, fruit, veggies, and meal leftovers. This is mainly because people don't know what to do with their leftover food. This also has a big impact on NZ's rubbish dumps because of how much of the food is going straight to them. They are already getting overloaded with lots of rubbish and plastic but now on top of that they are getting overloaded with food waste. No wonder rubbish dumps are becoming so full. It is estimated that Kiwis spend over \$872 million on food that gets thrown away uneaten a year, which also had a big impact on the financial side of things. This means that an average family spends about \$563 a year on uneaten food. This may not sound like a lot but it is actually about 3 full shopping carts of uneaten edible food. All this food could feed half of the Wellington population for over a year. This is also equivalent to 271 Jumbo planes. That is a lot.



Restaurants are also a big contributor to food waste. Each day it is estimated they throw away about 7.9 kgs of food per cafe or restaurant. Over a year that equals about 2.868 tons which is about 9 tons per restaurant or cafe. 61% of this waste is preventable through and the restaurants could be keeping it. Supermarkets over a year are estimated to throw away 60,500 tons of food altogether. That translates to about 160 tons per supermarket. Only 15% of that gets donated to food rescue groups and only 23% is sent to the landfill. Another 46% is sent to feed animals and the last 15% is sent to protein reprocessing. Since supermarkets are not allowed to sell food past their expiration date because of legal health reasons. New World, Countdown, and Pak'nsave have all partnered with food banks so people can still eat the food that has passed its best before date that is like canned foods and still safe to eat.

Someone throwing away food that is still edible.

A lot of people don't know what to do about their leftover food so they don't worry about it but here are a few very simple things you can do. When you think about what to have for breakfast, lunch, or dinner do you think about portions or just what you need? Well you should be thinking about portions. That will reduce our food waste astronomically. Also if you do miscalculate your portions you could eat them the next day. You could also add leftover meat to pizza, pies, or panini's. There are also many other things you can add it to but those were just some fast and simple examples. A fruit option would be to stew the fruit or make smoothies. Those were just some great examples but as I said before there are many more.

Kaibosh is a large-scale food waste operation that saves a lot of food from going to the landfill. Over the past 12 years the people from Kaibosh have saved over 1,800,000 kilograms of food, equivalent to more than 5 million meals, and have reduced carbon emission by over 600 tonnes. Kaibosh is a great example because the people who run it started by storing leftover food in their fridge and eating them the next day and now they are saving the environment. Kaibosh is just one example of the many food waste organisations that have done a lot for New Zealand and the environment.



Rubbish collection day in NZ.

Food waste is a much bigger problem than most people think. So many more people could eat a good meal and not go hungry. Supermarkets and restaurants are some of the biggest contributors but households are also a big cause. So much food gets thrown away and a lot of it could be eaten. Remember to eat your leftovers the next day, make pizza, pies, or paninis with leftover meat, and stew fruit or make them into smoothies. If everyone did these things food waste would be no more.

Bibliography

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