

## SUCCESS STORY

# Reducing Edible Food Waste

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According to the Environmental Protection Agency, food accounts for about 21 percent of the American waste stream. In addition, 64 percent of that amount is preventable and 18 percent is possibly edible. The most common reason cited for food waste is the food was “not used in time.” Food disposed in the landfills accounts for about 18 percent of U.S. methane emissions coming from landfills and methane causes ozone depletion. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, food waste costs consumers about \$370 per person each year.

The Boone County Cooperative Extension Service offered a multi-pronged approach to raise awareness of the amounts of food wasted and challenge participants to decrease the amounts of edible foods discarded from their households.

Twenty-seven adults participated in a three-part “Cooking for One, Two of a Few” series to learn to decrease recipe yields, and prepare healthier foods that offered reasonable portion sizes. Less food is potentially wasted when amounts that are more reasonable are prepared. The University of Kentucky publication “Baking for One, Two or a Few” was used in this program.

Educational programs were held in six northern Kentucky counties using the Environmental Protection Agency and United States Department of Agriculture’s educational materials. More than 100 mostly female heads of household attended “Feed People, Not Landfills” and “Food, Too Good to Waste. The sessions focused on raising awareness of the amounts of edible food wasted and challenge participants to decrease the amounts wasted in their households.

Two “Cooking the Books” programs focused on non-fiction books about food and food waste in the United States. The books “Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash” by Elizabeth Royte, and “American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of Its Food (and What We Can Do About It)” by Jonathan Bloom were used. Thirty-nine adult females attended the sessions to discuss the books, cook foods with minimal waste and learn about reasonable portions, and separating waste into compostables, recyclables, and garbage. Thirty-nine, adult, female, primary grocery shoppers participated in the programs. A food waste challenge form was distributed to all participants except those attending the Cooking for One, Two or a Few program. Many participants completed a week-long challenge to track the edible food waste in their households. They indicated it raised their awareness of the amounts of food and money they were wasting.

A survey mailed to participants four or more months after the programs revealed 94 percent have worked to decrease the amount of edible food discarded; 67 percent now check what foods they have on hand before shopping for groceries; 58 percent properly freeze leftovers more often; 25 percent started composting; and 50 percent now purchase slightly damaged or “ugly” fruits and vegetables when they are available.

As a result of information learned in the program and changes in their food purchasing, preparation, and storage habits, 15 individuals reported saving an average of almost \$30.00 per week on food and groceries.



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