

Average Irish household throws out €700 worth of food every year

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Tips on how to reduce waste

Food is rising in price but the average Irish household, nevertheless, throws out 150kg of food, worth €700, every year.

On one organic farm, meanwhile, up to 13½ tonnes of vegetables go to waste every year because a buyer cannot be found.

Up to five tonnes of potatoes, half a tonne of parsnips, three tonnes of Brussels sprouts and up to five tonnes of kale goes to waste on Beechlawn Organic Farm at Brackernagh, Co Galway, says farmer Padraig Fahy (inset).

Some of the parsnips are too small, or are forked, or have canker, a fungal disease; the kale leaves can be yellowed, or sprouts can have blemishes because of slug damage, but often they are perfectly edible.

"Some customers will be okay with some blemishes like insect damage, but you can't sell them if customers want a perfect sprout. Some of the crop I'd have to just leave it there because it wouldn't pass the supermarket specification," says Fahy.



Surplus vegetables from Beechlawn Organic that make it to the sheds go to Food Cloud, Lions Clubs, the Capuchin Day Centre for Homeless People in Dublin, but the rejects left behind in the field do not yet have a home. ???

This year, however, the farm hopes to reduce its waste by taking part in a project led by FoodCloud, a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to connect growers who have surplus produce with community groups nationwide.

Farmers' costs to get the vegetables out of the ground will be met by the Department of Agri-

One in four people admit to throwing out bread frequently; 39 per cent us of waste both fruit and vegetables, a third admit to throwing out unused salad, according to the EPA's 2020 national food waste attitudes survey.

Only buy the food needed

If only one person at the table eats sprouts, then buy enough for that person, not a full net of the vegetables.

Cook just enough

Let everyone serve themselves from serving dishes, since we are more likely to save leftovers from a serving dish.

Eat or freeze leftovers

Slice leftover turkey and ham, and freeze them in suitable portion sizes. Bread, cream, vegetables can be given extra life. Even whipped cream can be frozen.

Store food properly

Keep fruits apart, since some can cause others to ripen more quickly. Serve and eat perishable food first.

Store food properly in glass containers - not in plastic - NB

"Plastic is the worst, it causes the food to sweat and mould grows on it," says Elaine Butler, a Dublin mother-of-two who writes the Living Lightly in Ireland blog.

Limerick?

culture, while researchers from Munster Technological University in Kerry will monitor the farms involved and will also investigate the potential of the pilot to reduce waste at farm level.

In 2019, Ireland wasted 1.1 million tonnes of food, or 55kg per head. And Ireland is far from being the worst: the Italians waste 67kg per head, the UK 77kg and the French manage to waste 85kg per head. The global average is 74kg per head. Why.

The United Nations environment programme last year urged countries to do more to cut food waste: "If food loss and waste were a country, it would be the third-biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions," said executive director Inger Andersen.

Since 2014, FoodCloud has distributed more than 140 million meals that would otherwise have gone to waste across Ireland and the UK, with the charity's Chris Hill warning that any unexpected changes in the public's behaviour can lead to waste. At Christmas 2020, fewer Advent calendars and chocolate selection boxes were bought, while huge volumes of Easter eggs ended up as waste that year just as the first lockdown came into force: "Last year, we had none," he says.

Last Christmas Eve, 115 charities and causes collected surplus product from Tesco stores, including volunteers in Dublin who redistributed the food for

free on the Olio app, which connects neighbours together.

Nabiihah Jandoo (28), an Olio volunteer living in Dublin, was approved by HSE environmental health inspectors last year to collect and temporarily store the food in her home until it is collected by other Olio users living nearby.

On Mondays and Fridays at 8pm, she collects the yellow label - or reduced price - foods from Tesco's branches on Thomas Street and in Temple Bar. By 11pm, they are collected by Olio users who have connected with Nabiihah.

"Last night I got four meats, a lasagne and pork pies and a chicken pie. And a lot of pastries and bread. Sometimes the people who take them freeze them and use them over the next week," she says. Explaining her motivation to be involved, Nabiihah says she wants to give something back to the community because Ireland has "been good to her" since she moved here from Mauritius when she was 12.

Rosemary Garth, communications director of Tesco Ireland, says its Olio partnership has led to nearly 50 per cent more edible surplus food ending up on people's tables, but the food that cannot be saved goes to Green Generation in Kildare. Using anaerobic digestion, it turns the food into gas, which is bought by Tesco. "From our surplus to date, we've created enough renewable gas to power six of our stores in Ireland," adds Garth.

Rosemary Garth of Tesco

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Kildare - Green Generation

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