

## SAVE MONEY BY REDUCING FOOD WASTE

Ever opened the fridge and found a container that looks more like a science experiment than something edible? Have some cans in your pantry been there so long that the dust on top could be measured in millimeters? With food prices steadily rising, now is a good time to look at how we can reduce food waste.

**Plan your meals before you shop.** Check out the [Healthy Families BC website](#) for terrific ideas on how to get organized and plan ahead. For example, go through your fridge and cupboards to see what you already have on hand. Post the handy [HealthyFamilies BC Meal Planner](#) sheet to tell your family what meals are planned.

Use recipes to ensure you buy just the right amount of an ingredient on your grocery list. Use the bulk section to get the correct amount of an ingredient. If the item is packaged in an amount which is more than needed, make more of that recipe and freeze what is left or use the ingredient in another recipe.

**Store food properly.** Use the [Store It! guide](#). A little extra effort to store vegetables and fruit properly goes a long way to reduce spoilage and save money. Today some fruit and vegetables cost the same per pound as some fresh meat or fish. I recently saw red peppers for \$4.98/lb while beef inside round was \$4.84/lb.

Different foods have different storage requirements. That dusty can of food does have a shelf life of 2-5 years, depending on whether it contains a high or low acid food. Storage information on is available on HealthLink BC 's website [Food Safety: Storing](#).

Large amounts of bread or meat can be frozen in smaller quantities. Use special freezer containers or bags that reduce the air in the container to help prevent freezer burn. If you have a large freezer, deplete the contents of the freezer at least once a year. That way, you can start freezing fresh items again.

**Organize your cupboards.** Canned goods or packages can get pushed back into deep cupboards and forgotten about. Place these items on a tray or bin so that they can be pulled out more easily and you can see what is on hand to use.

**Make use of leftovers.** Portion leftovers in individual containers for lunches. If you have a lot of leftovers, freeze them in a clear container labelled with the date and name of the leftover. As a reminder, jot down the left over name on your menu plan for the next week. Leftovers can be incorporated into casseroles, stir fry, frittata, soups and smoothies.

**Get creative.** A friend once told me how her father used to make "Leftover Night" more interesting. He would list the leftovers on a board and take orders. They would set the table with nice placemats, napkins, and serve the food on fancier plates. Instead of dreading leftovers, the family looked forward to this special meal.

With a little planning you can help reduce waste, save money and maybe even start a new family tradition.