

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO REDUCING HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE

Michaela Schöni and Jeanine Ammann, 2025



SAVE IT, DON'T CHUCK IT

Together against food waste

FOOD WASTE IN SWITZERLAND

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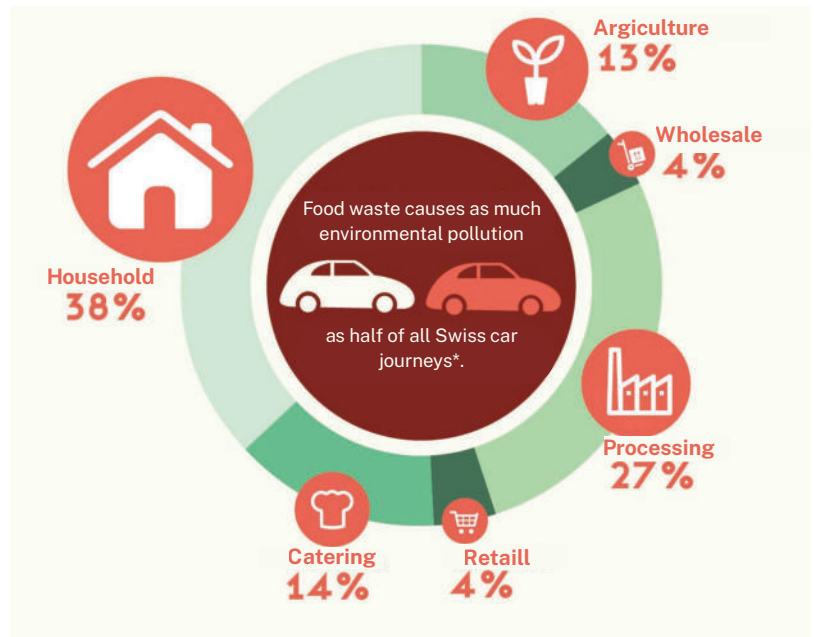
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FOOD WASTE IN SWITZERLAND

Save it, don't chuck it

Food waste from field to plate

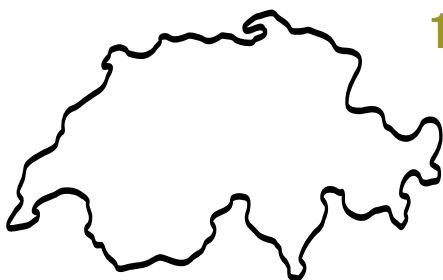
Food Waste refers to **foodstuffs** that are intended for **human consumption** but are lost or **thrown away** on the way from field to plate. This may be the result, for example, of **strict standards**, **restaurant leftovers** or **unused household stocks**. The **later** foods are **discarded** on the path from field to plate, the **greater** their **environmental impact**. Around **half** of **environmental pollution** from food waste occurs in **households** and **catering establishments**, while the other half occurs between field and supermarket shelf.



*Half of all car journeys (motorised individual transport) in Switzerland corresponds to 40 billion kilometres per year (almost 1 million circumnavigations of the globe) and gives rise to around 10 billion EPPs (Environmental Pollution Points). EPPs are a measure of total environmental pollution. They take into account 26 types of emissions (e.g. CO₂, plant protection products) the consumption of 8 resources (e.g. land, water) and the accrual of hazardous waste.

Source: Foodwaste.ch

Food waste in Swiss households



1.7 kg / week

Around **90 kg of edible foodstuffs** are thrown away per person per year in Swiss households. This corresponds to about **CHF 620-** worth of food.

source: Foodwaste.ch



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Meal planning

Simple menu planning makes daily life easier, saves time, and helps us utilise food purposefully and completely. Those who **plan in advance** eat a more varied diet, are more aware in their purchasing choices and **throw less away**.



Menu planning tips:

- **Make a plan for the week:** Plan main meals for several days and shop accordingly
- **Plan on 1–2 'leftovers' days:** Deliberately plan dishes made from leftover food, if any accumulates.
- **Use digital aids:** AI-supported tools or apps can provide ideas for recipes suitable for your household leftovers.

Shopping

What's still there, what needs to be used up soon? **Check** your **refrigerator** and **larder** before you go shopping.

Jot down a **shopping list** with the foods you need. If you shop together with others, an **app** may be worthwhile to help **avoid duplicate purchases**.



50%

Only take advantage of **special offers** if you **really need** the product in question.

Don't shop when you're hungry, or you're likely to buy more than you need.

A weekly shop, or several smaller ones? Both strategies can make sense: the important thing is being able to use your food purchases on time.



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Portion sizes

It's **easy** to **gauge portion sizes** for meals, even **without scales**. Your **own hand** can serve as a practical **guide** here. It matches your body size and makes it simple to judge amounts. In this way you'll develop a **better feel** for appropriate **portion sizes**, without precise weighing.

For example, a **piece of cheese** the **size of your index and middle finger** approximately corresponds to a **single serving of dairy product**.

Below, you'll find sample **photos** illustrating how to gauge portions.



Drinks

1 serving = 1 glass



Vegetables

1 serving = as much as you can hold in one hand



Meat, fish, eggs, and tofu

1 serving = as big as the palm of your hand and as thick as your little finger



Cereal products, potatoes, and legumes

1 serving = as much as you can hold in one hand

Further **images** of **portion sizes** can be found (in German only) at:

<https://www.ag.ch/media/kanton-aargau/dgs/gesundheitsfoerderung/portionenflyer/portionenangaben-deutsch.pdf>



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Food waste diary – a guide

It's been shown that even just **measuring our own food waste** has an **impact** on our **behaviour** and/or **our awareness** of the topic. Keeping a **food waste diary for seven days** is therefore **highly recommended** for understanding one's own food waste behaviour.

Method

Choose a week (7 consecutive days) in which you'd like to measure your food waste. It's important that you measure for at least a week and on consecutive days, so that you can record any variations (e.g. between weekdays and the weekend). If you're motivated and have time, you can also extend the measuring period as wished. The longer you measure for, the more data you then have that you can interpret. Important: Try to behave as normally as possible, in order to get a realistic picture of your behaviour. For this, measure all food waste accumulating during these 7 days, and document it using the template on the following page. For each food, it's important to note the type of food, the amount thrown away and the reason you've thrown it away. This will be helpful later when you are interpreting the data.

Evaluation

Spotted any patterns yet?

Try using the diary to analyse when you have repeatedly thrown food away.

- Does it tend to happen at the weekend? When you have guests?
- Or perhaps it happens when you eat out?
- What foods do you throw out frequently and/or in large amounts?
- Are there obvious patterns in the reasons for throwing the food out?
- Do you throw away a lot because you've bought too much?
- Does it wind up in the rubbish because it's past its use-by date?

Taking action

Based on these findings, you can take concrete steps to prevent waste. If, for example, you frequently throw bread away because it's gone stale, you can either adjust your buying behaviour (by shopping for bread more often and in smaller quantities) or add some great recipes for stale bread to your repertoire.

If you often throw food away after having guests, you can make a point of preparing recipes whose leftovers lend themselves to reheating, or prepare smaller quantities. You'll find a template for the food waste diary on the following page.

TEMPLATE FOR A FOOD WASTE DIARY

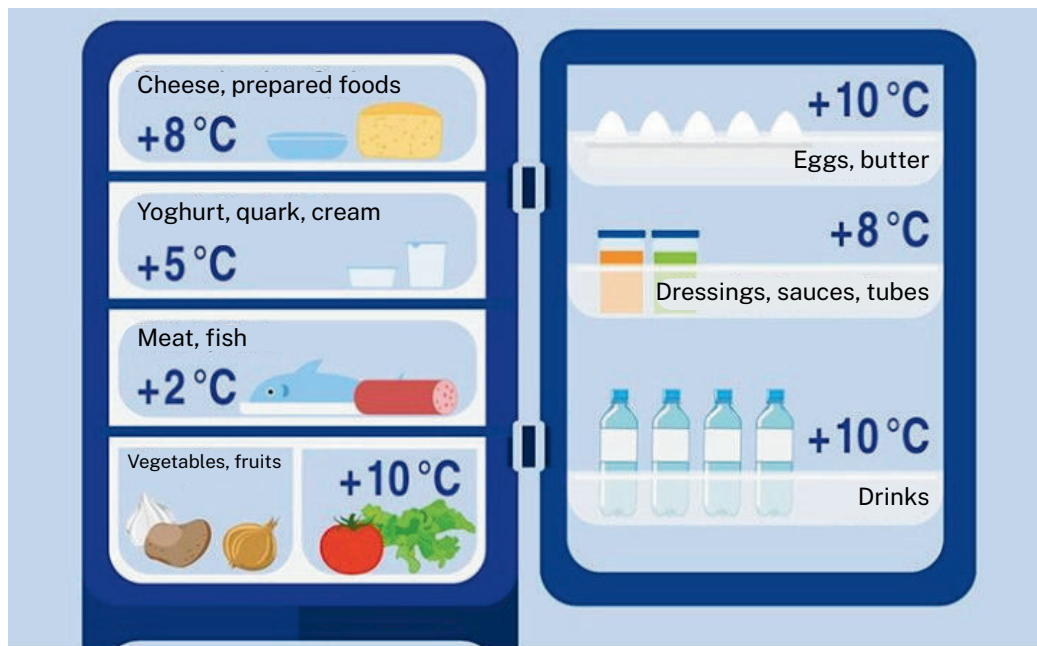
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[illegible]

STORAGE

Save it, don't chuck it

Storage in refrigerator



Source: Coop, Correct storage

Set your fridge to a maximum **5 °C**. **Higher temperatures** encourage the growth of bacteria, causing your **food to spoil faster**.

- 📌 What belongs where? Storing food in the right zone extends its shelf life.
- **Refrigerator door:** Beverages, opened milk, sauces, eggs, butter and tubes
 - **Vegetable drawer:** Vegetables and fruits that like it cool
 - **Bottom section (coldest zone):** Meat, fish, sausage products
 - **Middle section:** Milk, yoghurt, cream, plant dairy alternatives, tofu
 - **Top section (warmest zone):** Jams, preserves and pickles, cheese, leftovers and food that should be consumed soon

Assign a **fixed place** in the fridge for foods that **are to be consumed first**. That way you'll be able to keep track of things.

Source: Coop, Correct storage



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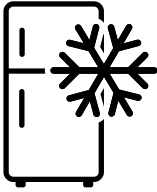
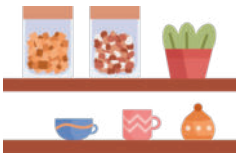
STORAGE

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Fruits and vegetables

It's often unclear which fruits and vegetables belong in the fridge.

Rule of thumb: **Domestic** produce likes it **cool** while **exotic and tropical** produce prefers **room temperature**. There are exceptions to this rule, though.

	Apples, apricots, pears, berries, leaf salad, cauliflower, green beans, broccoli, figs, cherries, kiwifruit, nectarines, plums, peaches, mushrooms, radishes, Brussels sprouts, beetroot, carrots, celeriac, celery, asparagus, grapes, white cabbage, prune plums
	Pineapple, bananas, mangoes, melons, papayas, citrus fruits, aubergines, cucumbers, potatoes, pumpkin, bell peppers, tomatoes, courgettes, onions

Certain fruits and vegetables give off ethylene – a **ripening gas** which causes ethylene-sensitive varieties to **spoil more quickly**. The following fruits and vegetables should therefore be **stored separately**, whenever possible:

Varieties that give off ethylene:	Apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, pears, nectarines, peaches, plums, tomatoes
Ethylene-sensitive varieties:	Kiwifruit, honeydew melon, mangoes, white cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, cucumbers, potatoes, leek, bell peppers, Brussels sprouts, spinach



Source: Coop, (2015) frisch



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EXPIRY DATE

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'Best-before date' not the same as 'Lethal after'

	Best-before date	Use-by date
Meaning	Refers to product quality (taste, consistency, colour)	Refers to food safety
Typical Products	Non-perishable products: Pasta, rice, chocolate	Perishable products: Fresh meat, fish
Sensory check	Smell, look, taste	Non-perceptible bacteria a possibility
After expiry date	Food may be consumed if it has been stored properly and passes the sensory check	Should no longer be consumed due to potential health risk
Tip	Often stays fresh for longer	Freeze before expiry date: +90 days of shelf life

Often stays fresh for longer

When **stored properly**, many **foods** can be **consumed well beyond their best-before date**, in some cases even **significantly** longer, as ZHAW studies on behalf of the Federal Food Safety Office show.

Even **meat, fish, grated cheese or ready meals out of their original packaging** can be consumed up to **90 days** after the 'use-by' date on the packaging if frozen **before this date**.



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Best-Before Date + (BBD +)

This overview from the ZHAW study shows **how long** specific foods **can be consumed beyond their best-before date** if stored correctly:

- +360 days:** Pasta, rice, tea, coffee, etc.
- +120 days:** Fats, oils, muesli, etc.
- +90 days:** Frozen products
- +30 days:** UHT milk, hard cheeses, snack food, etc.
- +6 days:** Raw eggs, cake and biscuits

And the best thing is that all this advice is actually conservative from a food safety perspective, i.e. erring on the side of caution!

Trust your senses – look, smell and taste.

Further information

foodWaste.ch

What is food waste? Shelf life Projects

Consume for longer without risk

On this page you'll find everything you need to know about using foods beyond their best-before date (BBD) and use-by date (UBD).

Can I still eat it?

Search according to food category



Still unsure? Check out

foodwaste.ch/haltbarkeit-lebensmittel to search for

specific foods and read up on how to tell whether they can still be consumed. (Only available in French and German)



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WHAT'S EDIBLE?

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Leaf to root

Eating '**leaf to root**' means consuming **all edible parts** of the plant – even those that otherwise often wind up in the bin. The peel, stalks and leaves of fruits and vegetables are full of valuable **vitamins, minerals and fibre**. Many of these often underestimated parts are not only edible, but also **healthy** and **delicious**. By using them, we avoid food waste and discover exciting new recipes.

Pesticides?

Fruit and vegetable peelings may contain **pesticide residues**. To **reduce** these, the vegetables should be **cleaned thoroughly** with **water** and if necessary **scrubbed with a vegetable brush** before preparation.



Leaf to root

- **Vegetable peelings for stock:** Carrot peelings (if carrots are not eaten unpeeled) and scraps left over from preparing celery, celeriac, onions and leeks can be collected and simmered into a flavourful vegetable stock.
- **Broccoli or cauliflower stalks:** Peel, slice thinly and pan-fry and serve with a squirt of lemon juice, or add to curries and stir-fries. Or simply chop into small cubes and cook together with the rest of the vegetable.
- **Radish leaves or carrot tops:** Wash, chop and use as a zingy addition to pesto, soups or salads.
- **Roasting pumpkin seeds:** Wash and dry Hokkaido or butternut squash seeds and roast in the oven with a little oil and spices for a crispy snack.



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Edible 'waste' from preparation

It's fine to consume potatoes and carrots unpeeled. Alternatively, toss the peelings in a little oil and bake in the oven to make crisps. Because potatoes and carrots grow underground they are not sprayed directly with pesticides.

The leaves of vegetables usually contain even more nutrients than the vegetable root or stalk itself:

- Make a pesto from radish leaves.
- Kohlrabi leaves can be used like herbs or spinach.
- The cauliflower leaves lying close to the head can be oven-roasted into crisps with a little oil and seasonings.



Leftovers

Plan on having a 'leftovers' meal once or twice a week.

Store scraps and leftovers in a see-through storage container so that even in the fridge they're always visible and you don't forget about them. Don't forget to jot down the date! Large amounts of leftovers can be frozen in portions.

Weigh the amounts needed when cooking, so that you don't have leftovers.



Vegetables

Vegetable scraps are ideal for transforming into the following dishes:

- Cream of vegetable soup
- Vegetable casserole
- Tossed with dressing and served cold as a salad
- Vegetable tart or quiche

Limp lettuce and salad leaves can be revived by placing them in lukewarm water for 5-10 minutes to restore their crunch.

Refrigerate soft, wizened carrots or radishes in cold water for a few hours to refresh them.



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Set dairy products



If you find **natural yoghurt** too sour to eat, you can use it e.g. in a salad dressing or serve it alongside a spicy dish. **Fruit yoghurts** can be frozen in ice lolly moulds or ice-cube trays to make little treats, thereby increasing their shelf life. Any graininess in the final texture is entirely harmless.

Butter can be frozen without any problems. If it's looking a bit tired but doesn't smell rancid, it's still fine to cook or bake with. When stored correctly, unopened packets of butter can be consumed up to 30 days beyond their best-before date.

Portions of **hard cheese** that are slightly mouldy in spots can be rescued by cutting out the mouldy bits before consuming the unaffected part. Leftover bits of cheese can be grated and melted over dishes or used in a fondue. Cheese scraps are also fine for freezing. When stored correctly, unopened packets of hard cheese can be consumed up to 30 days beyond their best-before date.

Fresh cheeses and quark can also be frozen. Although the consistency changes with thawing, they are absolutely fine to cook with. Fresh cheeses and quark can take casseroles and desserts up a notch. They can also be used in salad dressings. When stored correctly and unopened, fresh cheese products and quark can be consumed up to 14 days beyond the best-by date.

Fruit

- Blend overripe fruit into a smoothie.
- Make a fruit compote.
- Old, overripe bananas are ideal for making banana bread or a banana shake.

Small bruises can be cut out of the fruit.

Fruit with mould or large rotten patches should not be consumed.



Bread and rolls

Stale bread can be brushed with water or milk, then baked at 150 C fan for 5–15 minutes (depending on size) until its crust crisps up and its crumb softens again.

Stale bread can be transformed into the following foods:

- Croutons
- Bread chips
- French toast (eggy bread)
- Breadcrumbs



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Liquid plant-based dairy substitutes

Plant-based drinks and cooking creams are ideal for cooking, baking or smoothies. Any leftover product at the end of its shelf life can be frozen. The contents may separate after defrosting; simply shake well before using.

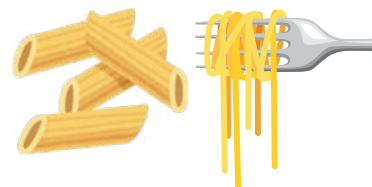
When correctly stored, unopened plant-based drinks and cooking creams can be consumed up to 7 days beyond their best-by date.



Sausage products

Sausage products that have not yet reached their best-by date can be frozen and then consumed up to 90 days after their expiry date.

Once past their best-by date, sausage products should no longer be consumed.



Pasta and noodles

Leftover cooked pasta can be repurposed as a salad or turned into a casserole by mixing with vegetables and cheese and baking.

When correctly stored, uncooked, unopened pasta products can be used up to 360 days beyond their best-by date.



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Sauces, oils and vinegars

Butter can be replaced by oil in many recipes.

Oil can be frozen for up to 6 months to extend its shelf life.

When stored properly (i.e. in a cool, dark place), unopened oil can be used up to 120 days beyond its best-before date.

Due to its acidity, vinegar has a particularly long shelf life.

When unopened and properly stored, vinegar may be consumed up to 360 days beyond its best-before date.

Leftover sauces are great in casseroles and stews. They can also be frozen in portions.



Alcoholic beverages

Use leftover open wine in cooking (e.g. in sauces).



Liquid dairy products

If frozen by its 'use by' date, pasteurised milk can be stored frozen for another 90 days before consuming.

If stored correctly and unopened, UHT milk can be consumed up to 30 days beyond its best-by date.

Correctly stored, unopened cream can be used up to 30 days beyond its best-before date.

Freeze leftovers at the end of their shelf life, or use in cooking.



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Eggs

Raw egg yolks or whites leftover from baking can be frozen. Important: defrost in the fridge rather than at a room temperature.

It's also possible to use the whole egg in most recipes. When stored correctly, eggs can be used up to 6 days beyond their best-before date.

To test whether the egg is still good, place it in a glass filled with water. If the egg remains at the bottom of the glass it can still be used. If it floats to the surface, it should no longer be used.

Eggs that are past their best-before date should only be used in cooked dishes.



Ready meals

Plan on a 'leftovers' meal once or twice a week.

Store scraps and leftovers in a see-through storage container so that even in the fridge they're always visible and you don't forget about them.

Be sure to make a note of the date, so you know how old the leftovers are. Large amounts of leftovers can be frozen in portions.



Potatoes and potato products

Leftover mashed potatoes can be made into duchess potatoes or soup.

Leftover chips can be reheated in the oven the following day to restore their crunch.

Leftover jacket potatoes can easily be made into a salad, gratin, rösti or hashbrowns.



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Grains

Leftover rice can be stir-fried with vegetables and tofu or chicken, or repurposed as a rice salad.

When correctly stored, unopened, uncooked rice can be used up to 360 days beyond its best-before date.

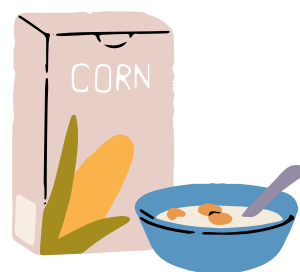


Muesli, Cornflakes

Muesli flakes or cornflakes that have lost their crunch can be used as follows:

- Make chocolate cornflake crackles from cornflakes and melted chocolate
- Use cornflakes for breading
- Mix muesli flakes with a little sugar and nuts and bake into granola

When correctly stored and unopened, muesli, cornflakes and other cereal flakes can be consumed up to 120 days beyond the best-before date.



Fish and fish products



Leftover fish can easily be used as a filling for a wrap.

The products can be frozen by their 'use-by' date and can then be stored for a further 90 days.

Fish can be frozen for 3 to 5 months depending on its fat content. Be sure to consume within 24 hours after defrosting.

Pulses

Leftover cooked pulses can easily be made into a salad. You can also make vegeburgers by adding an egg and a bit of flour, forming into patties and shallow-frying.

Chickpea water from the tin (aquafaba) can be whipped into a vegan meringue or otherwise used as a substitute for egg whites.

When correctly stored and unopened, pulses can be consumed up to 360 days beyond the best-before date.



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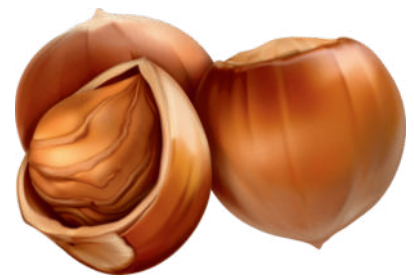
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Nuts and seeds

Ground nuts can replace some of the flour in baking. Alternatively, they can be toasted till crunchy for a great salad topper.

Whole nuts and seeds, raw or toasted, elevate salads, soups, muesli and other dishes.

When stored correctly and unopened, nuts and seeds can be consumed up to 30 days beyond the best-before date.



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FURTHER INFORMATION

Save it, don't chuck it

Want to learn more?

Further useful information can be found at

foodwaste.ch

foodwaste.ch offers practical tips and information for avoiding food waste in everyday life. The platform will help you handle food more mindfully.

Get involved: Foodsave events - [foodwaste.ch](https://www.foodwaste.ch)

Ässbar

Äss-Bar (Pronounced 'Ess-bar') saves surplus baked goods from the previous day by selling them in chain outlets at a discount.

www.aess-bar.ch

Secend

secend.ch is a Swiss online store offering surplus or just-expired foods at reduced prices in order to reduce food waste.

www.secend.ch/en

GoNina

GoNina gives you access to fresh surplus food and delicious grab-bags from restaurants, bakeries and supermarkets.

www.gonina.com

Madame Frigo

Madame Frigo runs public fridges in Switzerland in which excess food can be shared. The initiative promotes community sharing and reduces food waste. To find fridges near you, go to:

www.madamefrigo.ch/de/

Foodoo

Foodoo rescues surplus or imperfect vegetables from Swiss farmers and makes them into delicious products such as vegetable stock and sauces.

www.foodoo.world

Too good to go

This app connects you with local bakeries, restaurants and supermarkets where you can buy grab-bags with still-edible surplus food at reduced prices.

www.toogoodtogo.com/de-ch



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OUR SINCERE THANKS!

A big 'thank-you' to everyone involved!



To the project participants: Thank you for the valuable insights, your active participation and your contribution to this guide.



SAGW: Thank you for your financial support of the project.



Burgrain Agricultural Museum: Thank you for your amazing cooperation and for enabling and shaping the dialogue.



Sources for the tips in the handout and for further tips:
foodwaste.ch / Wirf mich nicht weg ['Don't Throw Me Away'] smarticular Verlag (Publ.). (2020). / Coop / Information on portions: Canton of Aargau

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