

Love Food, Not Waste.



Reduce food waste and help feed those in need.

Electronic Toolkit

Encourage food donation and anti-food waste practices on social media and in faith community communications.

baltimorecountymd.gov/foodpantry



Recommended Calendar

Use whatever timing works best for your organization. This calendar simply provides a recommended schedule for communications.

baltimorecountymd.gov/foodpantry

ITEM AND MONTH	TOPIC
Social Media Posts (<i>January</i>)	5 Ways to Reduce Food Waste
Social Media Posts (<i>February</i>)	Recipes with photos that emphasize ways to reduce food waste and use leftovers
Refrigerator Card and Magnet. (<i>March</i>)	Reminders on how to reduce food waste and provide information and prompts on how to donate to local food banks
Bulletin Ad (<i>April</i>)	Baltimore County Farmers Markets where and when they open in 2025
Newsletter Copy (<i>May</i>)	Growing food to waste less
Social Media Posts (<i>June</i>)	Best ways to take advantage of Maryland Seasonal summer produce
Newsletter Copy (<i>July</i>)	Innovative food panty projects with Baltimore County
Social Media Posts (<i>August</i>)	How to Create a Simple Compost Pile
Shopping List (<i>September</i>)	Reduce food waste tool (Shopping List and Weekly Menu template with top tips)
Bulletin Ad (<i>October</i>)	Donation Do's and Don'ts. Most in demand food pantry items (photos and limited copy)
Newsletter Copy (<i>November</i>)	Short story about how to reduce food waste over the holiday season
Social Media Posts (<i>December</i>)	Find food pantries in Baltimore County
Newsletter Copy (<i>Any Month</i>)	Understanding Food Labels to Reduce Waste

5 Ways to Reduce Food Waste

- Available as a vertical video for Facebook and Instagram accounts or as a series of still images that will form a narrative on Facebook or Instagram
- Add your own audio to the reel before posting

Series of still images:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXiOep38/FU1s45kpynuk6Mgbntmfrw/view?utm_content=DAGeXiOep38&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Download Reel:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXoCw-R8/xvhTh0QcXzxsDsWm2Fz7Ng/view?utm_content=DAGeXoCw-R8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Act like a chef

Even fancy restaurants have leftovers, and even the most upscale are loath to waste. Have leftover chicken in the fridge? Transform it into salad, soup or stock. Leftovers are suddenly newcomers.

Love Food.
Not Waste.
Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.

Five ways

To Stop Food Waste



Give back

Even canned goods have expiration dates. Instead of letting them languish, donate them to a food bank. You may not have loved those canned soups, but someone else in need will.



Act like a chef

Even fancy restaurants have leftovers, and even the most upscale are loath to waste. Have leftover chicken in the fridge? Transform it into salad, soup or stock. Leftovers are suddenly newcomers.



Bigger Isn't Always Better

Who doesn't love a free sample? But do you really need 70 frozen burritos? Shopping more frequently and locally (can you say farmers market?) will inevitably give you more variety, flexibility – and grace when you suddenly lose interest in burritos.



Your Freezer, Your Friend

Yes, thawing out can be a hassle, but rotten meat is an even bigger one. Find out which foods can get comfortably numb and how to prevent freeze-burn. Soon you'll be in the habit of making the move from freezer to fridge the day before your meal.



Take stock

Going shopping without a plan can be dangerous. Pints of ice cream somehow land in the cart along with food you already have at home. Sticking to a list will prevent doubling up and throwing out.



Recipes that give leftovers new life

- Two recipe graphics (Vegetable Pesto and Savory Bread Pudding) that can be posted on social media

Canva File:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXsOW0aY/eqogif6uO_CJxe1CCAiTcIA/vi?utm_content=DAGeXsOW0aY&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview



VEGETABLE PESTO

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups cooked leftover green vegetables
- 4 tbsp. oil
- 1 oz. nuts or seeds
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- Salt and Pepper to taste

HOW TO:

1. Add everything but the oil to a food processor and blend
2. Slowly stream in the oil and mix



**Love Food,
Not Waste.**

Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.



Recipes that give leftovers new life

- Two recipe graphics (Vegetable Pesto and Savory Bread Pudding) that can be posted on social media

Canva File:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXsQW0aY/eqoggi6uO_CJxe1CCAjTcIA/view?utm_content=DAGeXsQW0aY&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

GIVE YOUR LEFTOVERS SOME LOVE

DON'T TRASH, TRANSFORM

SAVORY BREAD PUDDING

INGREDIENTS

- 10 cups leftover bread
- 8 ounces bacon diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 bunch Swiss chard chopped
- 6 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 cups chicken stock
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- Pinch ground cloves
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups grated cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan
- Unsalted butter, for greasing the pan

HOW TO

1. In a skillet, cook the bacon over medium-high heat about 7 minutes. Remove it from the pan and let drain on paper towels. Leave just a skim of grease on the pan.
2. In the same pan, sauté the onion and chard stems over medium-high heat until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the chard leaves, cooking until they wilt, 1-2 minutes. Turn off heat and set aside.
3. In a bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, chicken stock, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, and salt. Fold in the bread and stir until the cubes are moist. Let stand at least 1 hour, or cover tightly and refrigerate overnight.
4. Preheat the oven to 350°F and grease a baking dish with butter.
5. Fold the chard, bacon, and cheeses into the bread. Transfer it to the baking dish, cover with foil, and bake for 20 minutes.
6. Uncover and bake for 20 more minutes, until browned.



**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 
Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.

Food Waste Card and Refrigerator Magnet

- To hand out as reminders on how to reduce food waste and provide information and prompts on how to donate to local food banks.



The image shows a vertical poster with a green and blue background. At the top, it says "Love Food, Not Waste." with a green icon of a food container with a heart. Below this, it says "Reduce food waste and help feed those in need." in green. The poster is divided into several sections with icons and text. The first section is "The Impact of Food Waste" with a globe icon and bullet points about food waste in the U.S. The second section is "Give Back to Your Community" with a green apple icon and bullet points about donating food. The third section is "Be Part of the Solution" with an icon of two people and a text prompt. The bottom section is "Simple Steps to Reduce Waste" with a yellow background and a list of four steps: Plan meals, Shop wisely, Store smart, and Love your leftovers. It also includes a QR code and a reminder to donate non-perishable items. The poster is decorated with various food icons like a pizza, burger, apple, and grapes. At the bottom left, there is a circular seal for the Baltimore County Department of Public Works, Maryland.

Love Food, Not Waste. 

Reduce food waste and help feed those in need.

 **The Impact of Food Waste**

- 30-40% of all food is wasted in the U.S.
- That's 108 billion pounds of food annually in the U.S. alone!
- Wasted food = wasted resources (grocery budget, water, energy, labor).

 **Give Back to Your Community**

- Donate unused, non-expired food to local food banks.
- Partner with programs like Feeding America or your local food pantry.
- Support businesses that donate their surplus food.

 **Be Part of the Solution**

Together, we can feed families and reduce food waste!

Simple Steps to Reduce Waste

- 1. Plan meals:** Make a list of meals you'll eat and the ingredients you need.
- 2. Shop wisely:** Buy only what you need. Don't forget to check your fridge, freezer and pantry to avoid buying duplicates.
- 3. Store smart:** Create an "eat first" bin in your fridge for food that needs to be used up soon.
Fruits & Veggies:
 - Store leafy greens, carrots, and broccoli in the fridge's high-humidity drawer.
 - Keep mushrooms, peppers, and most fruits in the low-humidity drawer.
 - Wash berries, cherries, and grapes just before eating to prevent mold.
- 4. Love your leftovers!**
 - Get creative by reinventing leftovers into new dishes.
 - Plan a weekly "Leftover Night" to prevent waste.
 - Shop for ingredients that work in multiple meals.
 - Use leftovers in smoothies, stews, salads, or wraps.
 - Store leftovers in your freezer in labeled containers to keep fresh.

Remember to donate non-perishable items to your local food bank. 



A guide to Baltimore County Farmers Markets

- An overview on where to find Farmers Markets across Baltimore County.

Canva File:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXuKjr0U/yCZOcah8Sbsb-TE85g1ueQ/view?utm_content=DAGeXuKjr0U&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 
Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.

BALTIMORE COUNTY FARMERS MARKETS

STARTING IN APRIL

3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays until November
800 Kenilworth Ave. | Towson

9 a.m. to noon Wednesday until December
5820 Edmondson Ave. | Catonsville

STARTING IN MAY

2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays until November
1700 Reisterstown Road | Pikesville

STARTING IN JUNE

3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesdays until October
4770 Owings Mills Blvd. | Owings Mills

10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Thursdays until November
Allegheny and Washington avenues | Towson

7 a.m. to noon Saturdays until October
Dunmanway and Shipping Place | Dundalk



Find more
local
markets
online



Growing food to waste less.

- Newsletter copy on why growing your own food can lead to less food waste



When it comes to food waste, not all of the excess will wind up at the bottom of your trash can.

Experts urge you to think about all the resources – from transport to packaging to the energy consumed during storage – that went into getting you that now over-ripe avocado from Mexico.

This is the main reason anti-food waste experts advocate locally sourced food whenever possible and what's more local than your backyard?

Jon Traufeld, director of the Home and Garden Information Center at the University of Maryland Extension, says that Marylanders interested in growing their own food have a lot of options. And it's a lot easier than one might think. "Maryland's mild climate lends itself to a wide range of crops including green beans, tomatoes, cucumbers and squash, and leafy greens such as spinach lettuce, kale and collards," Traufeld said.

"Honestly, we're very fortunate that the most common vegetable crops will grow well in Maryland," Traufeld said.

He said most popular homegrown crops should be planted just after Mother's Day and can be harvested (depending on conditions) until early fall. Traufeld encourages first-timers to jump into vegetable gardening, but he says there are some pitfalls.

"First-year mistakes are starting too big. Even if you have a fair bit of yard ... it's always best to start small and learn as you go," he said.

Traufeld says homegrown food has a significant advantage of over supermarket fare when it comes to food waste. It lasts longer.

Traufeld notes that the turnaround time from your garden to your kitchen is minutes, not weeks. "That's one of the real light bulb moments that new gardeners have," he said.

But what if you're a little too successful as a home grower?

Well, another advantage that grown produce has over purchased vegetables is that many food banks will accept your harvest despite it being perishable, Traufeld said.

"It just may take a few phone calls to find out," he said.

But making good use of your crop may be as simple as going next door.

"You know, in your neighborhood, there are lots of people who aren't growing food. Share it with your neighbors," he said. "One of the things that makes me happy about people growing food is they're constantly sharing it."

Learn more about vegetable gardening in Maryland at:

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/vegetable-planting-calendar/>

Take Advantage of Seasonal Maryland Summer Produce

- Series of Social Media Posts

- Canva link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGcGFTXBvM/Nol42qc8N6AlxASc3L3Yeg/view?utm_content=DAGcGFTXBvM&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Post 1: Store It Right



Storage matters! Keep your seasonal Maryland produce fresh longer by storing it properly.
Tomatoes: Store at room temp, away from sunlight.
Peaches: Ripen on the counter, then refrigerate.
Leafy greens: Wrap in a damp paper towel in a sealed bag.
Reduce food waste by making the most of every bite! 🍅🥒

Post 2: Quick Pickling



Pickle it! Quick pickling is an easy way to preserve your extra veggies before they spoil. From cucumbers to carrots, Maryland summer produce can shine all year.
Simple recipe: Vinegar, water, sugar, and salt—boil, pour, and seal!
Tag a friend who loves pickles! 🥒🥒

Post 3: Get Creative with Leftovers



Don't toss those scraps! Leftover summer produce can transform into delicious meals:
🥒 Corn cobs: Make veggie broth.
🍅 Overripe tomatoes: Blend into sauces or soups.
🥒 Zucchini: Spiralize for a quick pasta swap.
Small steps = big impact. #FoodWasteSolutions 🌍

Post 4: Community Love



💚 Bought too much Maryland produce? Share the love! Donate extra fruits and veggies to a local food pantry or community fridge. It's a simple way to reduce waste and help neighbors in need. 🍅🥒
#ReduceFoodWaste #LocalLove

A New Kind of Food Bank

- Newsletter copy on the Y's Fresh Market in Parkville — one of many charities trying to modernize the food banks



With its pools and exercise equipment, the Y in Central Maryland has always been a healthy place. Since the onset of the pandemic, it's even healthier with a wide range of nutritious donated food.

The Y's Fresh Markets are part of a broader effort by food banks to make access to healthy foods easier for those in need by breaking down barriers and stigmas associated with people receiving donated food.

"We focus on fresh food," said Margo Nicolson, the Food Pantry director for the Y in Central Maryland. "While we also have canned goods, we make an effort to have meat, dairy and produce available to our neighbors."

Nicolson said the Fresh Markets seek whole grain foods and items low in sodium.

Two days a week, the community can make use of the Fresh Market. The service is set up like a retail store and people can select up to a week's worth of groceries from the shelves. Anyone can use the Fresh Market; no proof of address or income is needed.

The retail set-up is part of another big trend in food distribution called the "open-choice model." Nicolson said this model cuts down on food waste because community members only take what they really want.

In Parkville, the Y provides a wider range of fresh foods through a unique partnership with one of its neighbors—a Safeway location a few storefronts down.

Safeway regularly provides a range of donated foods from recent unsold items from its deli and bakery to nonperishable products like breakfast cereal with outdated packing.

"We're talking bags of oranges if one of those oranges has a blemish," she said.

Nicolson said that since 2023, the program has saved nearly 40,000 pounds of food from landfills.

For more information:

<https://ymaryland.org/mission/aboutus/accesshealthyfood>

How to Create a Simple Compost Pile

1 | FIND A SPOT

Pick a dry, shady area within reach of your garden hose



2 | BUILD YOUR PILE

Stick to a four to one ratio. Four parts browns (dry leaves, shredded cardboard) to one part greens (food scraps)



3 | MIXED AND MOIST

Mixing the pile encourages decomposition. Try to mix with a rake or shovel at least once every two weeks. Keep the pile damp with your garden hose.

4 | KEEP IT COVERED

Use a tarp or lid to cover the mixture to allow it to retain heat. The cover will also protect the pile from the rain, which can wash away nutrients



HOW TO CREATE A SIMPLE COMPOST PILE

Put your yard and food waste to good use

- Five-slide narrative can be posted on Instagram and Facebook. A four-step guide to a backyard compost pile.

Canva File:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXncI60M/2ozllgbX6v99TcTHDR4xMg/view?utm_content=DAGeXncI60M&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

COMPOST



**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 
Reduce food waste and help feed those in need.

Printable Shopping Lists - Only Buy What You Need to Reduce Food Waste

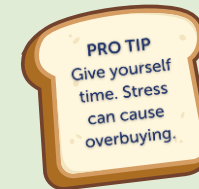
- Can be posted on social media, faith community websites or published in faith community bulletins to print or cut out at home

Canva File:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXsCxRNE/6x8jDvpHkzqDH5m4YROXrQ/view?utm_content=DAGeXsCxRNE&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 
Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.

SHOPPING LIST

MEAT



DAIRY

BAKERY



PRODUCE

PANTRY

FROZEN



Find local
food pantries
online



Donation Dos and Don'ts

- The infographic can be posted on Facebook or Instagram. It can also be published in faith community bulletins and newsletters.

Canva File:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGeXufagkw/Hw3z8sWqoml10yfGuFE5Dg/view?utm_content=DAGeXufagkw&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

DO: Give unused hygiene items; food banks distribute them too



DO: Give canned items that are easy to open like pop-tops



DO: Give popular items like canned fruits and rice



**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 
Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.

Find
Baltimore County
food pantries
online



DONATION DOS AND DON'TS

DON'T:
Give
homemade
items like
cookies and
cakes



DON'T: Forget to check items
for defects and expiration dates



DON'T: Give
anything
that needs
to be
refrigerated



Avoiding food waste during the holidays

- Newsletter copy on how to reduce waste during the holidays - the most wasteful time of the year



The holidays are a season of giving thanks and giving gifts. Unfortunately, they are also a season of waste.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that food waste increases in the U.S. by about 20 percent during November and December. That's on top of about 40 percent of food wasted year-round.

Dr. Roni Neff, a professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, says the road to food waste is paved with good intentions.

"We have this idea that the best way to show love is by having an overabundance of food," says Neff, a food waste researcher. "But it doesn't necessarily show love when you're throwing out a whole lot of food."

Neff says planning is key to reducing waste during the holiday season. Think about what you served last year and adjust accordingly. Also, she says, there are a variety of websites with online proportion calculators that can help you get your servings right.

Neff stresses that proper food storage can help reduce waste. Freezing unused items and ensuring holiday meal entrees don't sit at room temperature too long will help avoid overflowing trash bins.

"If you've got a lot of leftovers of one thing, you may not really be so excited about eating it all right now, but if you put it in the freezer and pull it out in a month, then you might be excited about it again," Neff says.

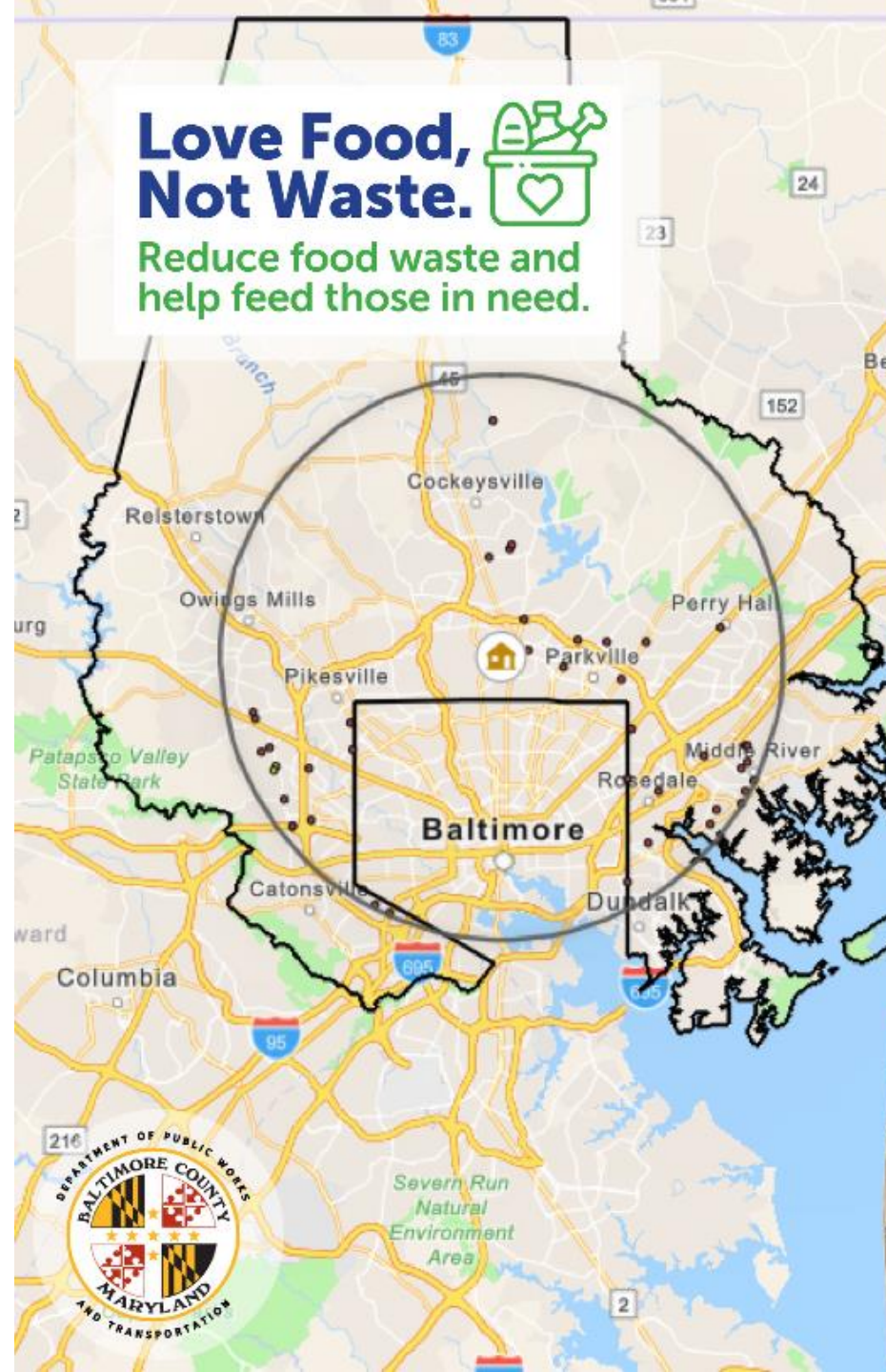
Neff encourages home cooks to have reserved items. Have an extra side dish or dessert waiting in the wings, say in the freezer, if you have a hungry crowd. Neff also recommends choosing more shelf-stable backup items.

"I don't think anybody wants to run out, but most of us so far overdo it in the other direction that there's a lot of wiggle room in there," she says.

Promote the County's Food Bank Finder

- QR Code leads users to Baltimore County's own food bank finder database; Three versions; each with a different map view

Canva File:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAGbLKMW2jQ/B0EYtgs03XDQWZiVv3A7RQ/view?utm_content=DAGbLKMW2jQ&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview



Just scan with your phone

**FIND YOUR
LOCAL FOOD BANK
IN THE COUNTY**



Understanding Food Labels to Reduce Waste

- Newsletter copy on how to reduce waste

Understanding Food Labels to Reduce Waste

Each year, millions of tons of food are wasted in the U.S., much of it because people don't fully understand food labeling. According to ReFED, about 3 million tons of food could be saved annually with better knowledge of date labels alone. Let's unpack what these labels really mean—and how we can reduce waste in our own kitchens.

What Do Food Labels Actually Mean?

Food labeling is voluntary for most products and primarily reflects **quality, not safety** (with the exception of infant formula). Here's a breakdown of the most common terms:

- **Best if Used By/Before:** Indicates when a product will taste or look its best. It's not a safety date.
- **Sell-By:** A guide for stores on how long to display the product. It's not a safety date.
- **Use-By:** The manufacturer's recommendation for peak quality, not safety (except for infant formula).
- **Freeze-By:** Suggests when to freeze a product to maintain its quality. Again, not a safety date.

Steps to Reduce Food Waste at Home

While understanding labels is important, thoughtful planning and organization can make a big difference in reducing waste:

1. **Take Inventory:** Check your fridge, freezer, and pantry before shopping to avoid buying duplicates.
2. **Plan Meals:** Plan weekly meals around what

you already have and shop with a list.

3. **Portion Wisely:** Prepare realistic portion sizes to reduce leftovers.
4. **Practice FIFO (First In, First Out):** Place newer items at the back of your fridge and pantry so older items are used first.
5. **Label Your Food:** Add dates to leftovers or opened products to track freshness.
6. **Get Creative:** Repurpose leftovers in soups, stews, salads, or smoothies.

A Call to Stewardship

When we waste food, we also waste the resources—water, energy, and labor—that went into producing it. By reducing food waste, we not only care for the Earth but also share its abundance with those in need. Consider donating surplus food to local pantries or community fridges to support food-insecure neighbors.

Together, we can make a difference—one meal at a time.

**Love Food,
Not Waste.** 

**Reduce food waste and
help feed those in need.**

Thank you for exploring this toolkit!

We appreciate your commitment to reducing food waste and encouraging food donation. Use these resources to inspire action and share impactful messages through social media and faith community communications. Together, we can make a difference — one meal at a time.

baltimorecountymd.gov/foodpantry

