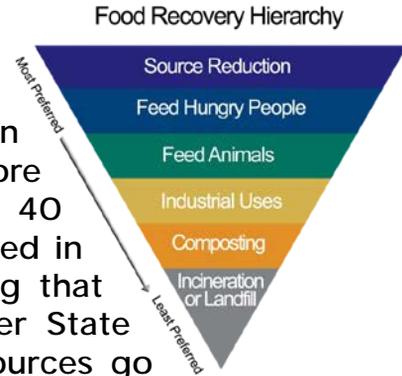


Reducing Food Waste in Wisconsin

Easy as 1-2-3

It is estimated that more food goes into our landfills than any other material. In 2014, Americans threw away more than 38 MILLION tons of food. In other words up to 40 percent of food that is grown, processed and transported in the United States will never be consumed. Considering that Wisconsin is a major agricultural producer, the Badger State could do better by its food producers and make resources go further.



Reducing food waste begins in the kitchen. A preliminary inventory of cupboards and refrigerators will help us to purchase less food. Then, at the grocery store, a willingness to buy "ugly" carrots or tomatoes will help. Ungainly fruits and vegetables have the same great taste and nutritional value, but grocers throw out produce that doesn't look "picture perfect" nevertheless.

The next step is to feed hungry people. Many local grocery stores offer day-old bakery and perishable items to local food pantries. This is generous, but could be expanded to include left-over prepared food from delis, restaurants, hospitals, schools and special events. Efforts are being made to donate prepared foods to local soup kitchens to feed the homeless, but many businesses are reluctant to contribute. Fortunately they are protected by "Good Samaritan" laws that shield them from liability when donating to charities.

Other steps included feeding animals, anaerobic bio-digestion, composting and lastly landfilling. Some Wisconsin farms accept suitable wasted food to feed livestock. UW-Oshkosh operates an anaerobic bio-digester that accepts food waste from local restaurants, cafeterias, grocery stores and Brown County's food collection program.

Finally, composting with a conventional backyard compost pile or vermi composting (with worms) is an excellent method for reducing wasted food.

It's important to understand there are alternatives to waste and that we can all make a difference.