



CLIMATE
CULTURE



Top Actions I Can Take for a Healthy Planet:

REDUCE FOOD WASTE AT HOME

Food plays such an integral and vital role in our lives. We depend on it for survival, we gather around it, and we invest time and money into cooking, preparing, and consuming food—and a lot of it!

Occasionally, we might not finish a meal or the food in our refrigerators, or food at a grocery store, or a restaurant may go bad before it's consumed. It may seem innocuous, but did you know that nearly 1/3 of all food produced is thrown away or wasted? When we waste food, we also waste the water, energy, labor, and resources that go into growing, storing, and transporting our food.

Americans grossly underestimate how much food they waste. Although it may not seem like a big deal, the leftover food and kitchen scraps thrown away contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

A study by the Natural Resources Defense Council found that 76% of people believe that they throw away less food than the average American.¹

Most of our food waste ends up in landfills, where it generates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that is up to 36 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.²

However, national and local municipalities have begun increasing services, such as composting, across the country to make reducing food waste and diverting food from landfills easier. According to a report by the U.S. PIRG, in the last 5 years alone, the number of communities offering composting programs has grown by 65%.³ At the national level, the 2018 Farm Bill included \$25 million for the USDA to develop and test municipal composting programs in 10 states, through 2023.



For over 40 years and in 60+ countries, Rare has led over 450 behavior change campaigns to inspire and empower millions of people to adopt new behaviors and better protect the natural resources that sustain us. As part of our "Climate Culture" campaign, we identified 7 key behaviors that offer the most potential for climate impact if adopted by individual Americans. The goal of Rare's Climate Culture campaign is to encourage 10% of Americans to adopt at least 1 of these 7 actions. **If we all do our part, we can reduce the greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change.**

KEY BENEFITS



Set an Example

Properly preparing meals and consuming only what you need reduces food waste and **sets a wonderful example for children**. The average American consumer is already aware that wasting food is bad and is taking the steps necessary to reduce food waste. Now is an opportunity to set a wonderful example for future generations.



Financial Savings

Reducing food waste also saves money! The less food you waste, the less frequently you need to buy groceries. Among American adults, **80% report that “saving money” is an important motivation** for reducing food waste.⁴



Positive Environmental Impact

Food wasted in the U.S. is estimated to be around 400 pounds per person, per year! The U.S. PIRG has shown that **composting could help reduce the amount of trash sent to landfills and incinerators in the US by at least 30%**.⁵ Reducing the amount of food wasted and furthering composting programs can have a positive impact on our greenhouse gas emissions.

TIPS & IDEAS

Reduce plate size

Reports show that we typically don't even notice when portions are significantly smaller. Start by reducing the size of your plate, and you'll not only reduce your food intake, but also the amount of leftovers destined for the trash bin!

Advance meal planning and prepping

Planning ahead and shopping only for the ingredients you need for family meals can significantly help reduce the amount of food waste and save you money. Food prep and meal planning shouldn't feel intimidating either. Start small, and aim for just three days each week or two meals every day.

Compost

Food scraps, which contribute up to 28% of what we throw away, should be composted instead.⁶ Whether you live in a small apartment or a house with a large yard, composting can be done anywhere and is easier than it may seem. Contact your local municipality to see if composting is available in your city or town. If not, you can learn how to start your own composting bin by visiting the [EPA's guide](#) to composting at home.

Understand food labels

While 91% of Americans pay attention to food expiration date labels, over half are unaware that date labels are not federally regulated, leading to inflated levels of trust placed in label guidance.⁷ Food products are typically safe to consume past the date on the label. Evaluate the quality of the food prior to consuming or discarding. Sites like [StillTasty](#) offer helpful advice on food shelf life.

Climate Culture CHALLENGE

Join the clean plate club! Eat every carrot and pea on your plate, then take a picture of your clean plate for an entire week.

Share the results of your challenges with us on social media:

  @Rare_org | #CleanPlateClub

Visit rare.org/reduce-food-waste-at-home for more information.

- <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-matters-ib.pdf> (accessed November 6, 2020)
- International Panel on Climate Change, Fifth Assessment Report (2013,) Table 8.7. Methane packs 36 times the heat-trapping punch of carbon dioxide, pound-for-pound, over the course of a century after it is released. However, over a shorter period of 20 years, non-fossil methane is 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.
- Streeter, V. and Platt, B. 2017. Residential Food Waste Collection Access in The U.S. BioCycle, 58 (11).
- Neff, R. A., Spiker, M. L., and Truant, P. L. 2015. Wasted Food: U.S. Consumers' Reported Awareness, Attitudes, and Behaviors. PloS one, 10(6), e0127881.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2015 Fact Sheet, July 2018.
- <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home> (accessed November 6, 2020)
- Neff, R. A., Spiker, M. L., and Truant, P. L. 2015. Wasted Food: U.S. Consumers' Reported Awareness, Attitudes, and Behaviors. PloS one, 10(6), e0127881.