

Going Green in Londonderry

Are You Going To Eat That?

40 percent of food in the United States today goes uneaten. This amounts to \$165 billion of wasted food annually, an average of approximately \$1,500 per family of 4. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the average American throws away over 200 pounds of food each year.

Not only is that a waste of a nutritious and valuable resource—there's also the cost to haul and dispose of it as the single largest component of U.S. municipal solid waste, and resulting methane emissions from our landfills. There are so many things we can do to reduce food waste and even save money while doing it. Some food for thought:

- **Think before you buy** – Plan your weekly meals; create a shopping list and avoid buying more than you can use before it starts to spoil. Why buy something that you're just going to end up throwing away?
- **Understand expiration dates** – “Sell by” and “use by” dates are not federally regulated and do not indicate safety, except for some baby foods. Rather, they are manufacturer suggestions for peak quality. Most foods can be safely consumed after these dates.
- **Be creative** – Be an “Iron Chef” in the kitchen! Look through the refrigerator to determine what needs to be used up and whip up a tasty stir-fry or soup. It can be an adventure to look up recipes for one ingredient and build a meal around it.
- **Use your freezer** – If you've had enough leftovers, stick them in the freezer (in a secure freezer Bag to avoid freezer burn) and pull them out later when you need to grab a quick lunch for work. Blanch and freeze fresh produce if you won't have the chance to eat it before it goes bad.
- **Smaller portions** – Serve smaller portions at home; you can always go back for more. Approximately half of Americans take leftovers home from restaurants: let's get those numbers up! And once you get the leftovers home, place in an airtight container to keep fresh, or freeze them.
- **Donate** – Nonperishable items and unspoiled perishable items are greatly appreciated at food banks, pantries and soup kitchens. Take a look through your canned goods and if there are items that are still good, but you just never seem to use, donate them. Maybe you had a large

party or wedding and there was more food left over than you can consume; call your local food pantry or soup kitchen and offer it.

- **Compost** – Ok, so that neglected pepper in the back corner of the pantry is beyond use. Now what do you do with it? Add it to your compost bin. Composting is a great way to get rid of unwanted organics (but avoid composting meat or dairy). Composting is easy and can be fun. When your compost bin is managed properly, the food waste breaks down to a nutrient rich soil additive that helps flower and vegetable gardens and even house plants thrive.

One final thought: it takes 75 days to grow a carrot and only 2 seconds to throw it away. Take responsibility for the waste you generate.

*~ For more information, contact Londonderry's Solid Waste and Environment Committee
or the NH Department of Environmental Services ~*