PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

PCFMA.ORG

ROOTS TO STEMS: STOP FOOD WASTE

Food waste is unfortunately prevalent in the US. Almost 40% of edible food products are thrown away every day. Wasted food is the single largest category of material placed in municipal landfills and represents food that could have helped feed families in need. Almost $165 billion in food is thrown out each year!

Each of us can help avoid such waste by trying to use every bit of our fruits and vegetables, from root to stem. By "practicing food sustainability and reducing waste, we can help businesses and consumers save money, provide a bridge in our communities for those who do not have enough to eat, and conserve resources for future generations." *

It's not just using every part of the produce we buy that helps, it's also properly storing it once you get it home. A lot of produce is thrown away because it has "gone bad" before it's even eaten. Financially, you are tossing your hard-earned money down the drain. Find tips on buying and storing fresh produce at pcfma.org/eat, under individual products.

General Tips for Buying and Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Don't buy more than you think you'll use. If you do, make jam, preserve pickled vegetables, freeze, or add to a casserole to freeze and enjoy later

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- Buy produce a couple of times a week – fresh tastes better and your farmers' market is the best place to find the freshest produce, straight from the farm.
- Organize your refrigerator so you eat the most perishable produce first.
- Store fruit and vegetables in separate bins. Certain fruits that give off high levels of ethylene can prematurely ripen and spoil surrounding vegetables.

From a culinary perspective, many produce parts are great for adding flavor and texture to a dish and can be delicious on their own. You're also getting more for your money when you use the whole product – and additional nutrition.

Have bits and pieces of produce left over?

- Don't throw out the greens! Sauté tops and leaves of beets, turnips, and carrots. Cook both stems and leaves of broccoli, kale, chard, fennel fronds, and fresh herbs.
- Make a delicious vegetable broth using leftover vegetables.
- Give plain water a boost with citrus rinds, strawberries (and stems!) to flavor you water.
- Citrus rinds are not just for zesting. Rinds can also be candied or preserved.
- Chop up celery leaves with the celery itself for added texture and fiber.
- Don't toss eggshells! They're good for your garden's soil by adding calcium carbonate – plants love it.
- Rescue wilting fresh herbs by adding vinegar or oil to them to make sauces, marinades, and dressings. Or chop and freeze them in ice cube trays to use later.
- Use over-ripe tomatoes for marinara, gazpacho, or salsa.
- Save asparagus ends and shavings to make a delicious soup. Many vegetable odds and ends can make wonderful soups.
- Don't discard potato skins. Eat them with the potato. They're full of fiber and flavor.
- Used everything you can? Compost what's left.

The best tip is to purchase your produce from the farmers' market where you know you're getting fresh-picked produce every week. You're saving money in the long run and also helping farmers by purchasing their products.

*EPA: Reducing Food Waste at Home, epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-home.