

Food

For everyone or for the trash?

Where does avoidable food waste occur?

Up to 40% of the produced food is lost worldwide¹². Between 250 € and 800 € are wasted per household in Austria each year, depending on the estimate³. This corresponds to food expenses for a month or more. At the same time, in 2022 and 2023, the number of people who cannot afford regular shopping and are dependent on social markets increased⁴.

Up to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from discarded food⁵. Almost half (45%) of these emissions come from discarded meat, fish, and other animal products⁶.

121.80

Agriculture

Food industry

89.500 Tons /year

(Wholesale) trade

Planning the shopping

The purchased quantity could be limited to the necessary amount with some planning and "shopping list adherence." The same applies to the sometimes painful decision to forgo volume discounts – especially for perishable products. A temporary solution could be freezing, provided there is enough space. But be careful: old freezers are energy hogs.⁹ Supermarkets also need to be held accountable for offering fewer such deals.¹⁰

Take-out or dining out

Enjoying food

The great challenge of our time is the increasing out-of-home consumption of food, deliveries, and take-away.⁷ This is resource-intensive: packaging, transport, and the required amounts of food that must be produced industrially. A counter-trend is shown by the Slow Food movement. The focus is again on enjoying good, fair, affordable, and ecological food.⁸

175.000 Tons / year

Eating together instead of alone

At a "Potluck," everyone brings something for a shared buffet. In "kitchen for all," you can eat good meals on a donation basis. The motives are to process rescued food, create a social meeting point, or discover good foods or dishes that you might not be able to prepare yourself.¹⁵ A well-known format against food waste is "Disco Soup." In food sharing, rescued food is often eaten together.¹⁶

What can we do to throw away less?

While in the Global South it is mainly due to a lack of infrastructure, such as no continuous cold chains¹³, in the Global North we have an overconsumption problem. Since most food waste occurs in households, we can do a lot for the climate at home and save money in the process. There are several tips for this.¹⁴

Pic. 1

The canteen, a food saver

In out-of-home catering, which generates the second most food waste¹⁷, a few simple tips can be implemented that also save disposal costs:¹⁸

- better small plates and a second helping instead of oversized portions;¹⁹
- fewer options, but more convincing in taste;
- leftover dishes as specialties;
- preorder bonuses to estimate quantities;
- Participation in food sharing;
- Buffets based on the "Pay-As-You-Throw" principle – those who take too much pay for the disposal.

The big lever of the municipality: Public procurement

Not only private catering is a lever with its demand, but also public procurement.²⁰ It can set the right tender criteria regarding ingredients, such as a higher proportion of plant-based and organic products in meals. Additionally, information and campaigns can help increase the demand for climate-friendly options, such as a climate plate.

Utilize leftovers

Another way to reduce food waste is by fully utilizing everything that can be used: making soup stock from onion skins and carrot greens, preserving vegetables and fruits, or creatively using leftovers for dinner. The possibilities are nearly endless: the internet or numerous books are full of tips, creative ideas, and recipes.

Check the expiration date

Before we decide to throw something away, we can check if the product is really no longer edible. The expiration date (MHD) is not a use-by date, but a quality guarantee from the manufacturer.¹¹ By appearance, smell, and taste, we can also determine ourselves whether a food product is still edible. Surprisingly, packaged foods are often still edible weeks after the expiration date. However, opened products should be consumed quickly.¹²

521.000

Household

¹ vgl. IPCC, 2019b, S. 440
² vgl. WWF-UK, 2021, S. 6
³ vgl. Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 8
⁴ Beispiel: ORF, 2022 und 2023a
⁵ vgl. IPCC, 2019b, S. 439

⁶ vgl. WWF-UK, 2021, S. 10
⁷ vgl. WWF Österreich, 2021, S. 14
⁸ vgl. Slow Food, o. J.
⁹ vgl. Energie Steiermark, 2022b, S. 21
¹⁰ vgl. Penker et al., 2022, S. 9

¹¹ vgl. Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 13
¹² Eine eindeutige Auskunft, wie lange spezifische Lebensmittel genießbar sind, kann an dieser Stelle nicht gegeben werden. Im Zweifel ist das Lebensmittel zu entsorgen.
¹³ vgl. FAO 2019, S. 59, 61, 106
¹⁴ z. B. Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 9ff.
¹⁵ bspw. Nachhaltig in Graz, 2023
¹⁶ vgl. Food-Sharing, o. J.
¹⁷ vgl. Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 6
¹⁸ vgl. Fischer et al., 2022, S. 12, 22f.

¹⁹ Eigene Gedanken. Beispiele gibt es z. B. in Penker et al., 2022, S. 9 und Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 6
²⁰ vgl. Wernick & van Iersum, 2013, in Penker et al., 2023, S. 9
²¹ vgl. Fischer et al., 2022, S. 12, 22f.

Pic. 1: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Obersteiner & Luck, 2020, S. 6