

REDUCE FOOD WASTE AND SAVE MONEY

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Reducing food waste and saving money has always been an important concept for those in the world of food service. However, over the last year, when food prices have risen and budgets have fallen, this concept has become critical to making ends meet. By putting policies in place, and adhering to them during all phases of the menu planning process from purchasing to storage, food spoilage can be reduced, decreasing wastage and saving money.

1. Always buy from a trusted and approved vendor.
2. Use clear purchase specifications to ensure your ordered products meet your expectations. This is especially true for fresh produce – for example, clearly state the color or ripeness expected.
3. Track your inventory closely and purchase only what is needed.
4. Immediately unpack and store items when they are received.
5. Clearly mark the date on each product so it can easily be seen in storage – this will help with inventory rotation.
6. Use the first in first out (FIFO) method for stock rotation to ensure the oldest products are used first.
7. Store products at the appropriate temperatures:
 - a. Dry goods like rice and pasta should be stored in a cool dry place.
 - b. Frozen food should be delivered and stored at zero degrees Fahrenheit or below.
 - c. Refrigerated items should be delivered and stored at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below.
 - d. According to the FDA, meat, eggs, and cheese can be refrigerated for a maximum of 7 days.
8. Check freezer and fridge temperatures regularly to avoid spoilage.
9. Maintain hot foods at or above 140 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid bacterial growth.
10. Meat, eggs or cheese products must be discarded if held for longer than 4 hours.
11. Cool hot items quickly before refrigeration to reduce the risk of bacterial growth. Use ice baths, chill blasters and smaller batches to make this process easier.

References:

The American Dietetic Association 'food safety know how'. Retrieved March 11, 2009 www.homesafety.org.

The National Restaurant Association 'How to Reduce Food Spoilage'. Retrieved March 11, 2009 www.restaurant.org/foodsafety/how_to_spoilage.cfm