

UNDER\$PENT

10 top tips to save \$3,250 (\$60 a week) and cut your food waste

The average Australian, American and British household throws 1 in 5 shopping bags full of food into the bin. That's 20% of what we buy being chucked away. My friend Melissa says she spends \$250 each week on food and throws out too much food - She says she doesn't plan meals, buys too much and is short of time. Globally, 1.3 billion tonnes of edible food is wasted per year. FutureFood2050 estimates up to 50% of food produced for human consumption in the world is never eaten. I did the math. The average Aussie family spends \$279 - \$314 a week on food (about \$16,000 a year). If the average home throws out 20% of their groceries that means \$3,250 of food goes in the bin. That's a staggering \$60 a week (or 30 quid for the Brits).

The rising cost of living and job insecurity is a worry for all of us. I'm no expert on economics but I am passionate about being underspent not overspent. So here are my 10 top tips to save money and cut food waste.

1. **Set-up and stick to a budget** - 41% of us borrow from friends, family and loans every month to survive until pay day. Everyone's financial obligations are different but I've found that setting up a monthly food budget helped me save cash.
2. **Plan meals for week** - Every week my sister plans her meals for the following week. They work out their evening meals, their lunches, the ingredients and buy only what they need. No wasted food and no wasted money.
3. **Buy only what you need** - Yep the supermarket trolleys are super sized so that we buy more than we need. I take a shopping list and a shopping basket (not a trolley). It means I buy what I need, not what the supermarket thinks I need.
4. **Say yes to doggie bags** - The restaurant doggie bag is a contentious issue. Many of my friends disapprove. I always ask for my leftovers in restaurants and eat them the next day for lunch. Reducing food waste and saving money!
5. **Pack your lunch** - I fail at the home-made packed lunch most days - ask my colleagues! But a great way to use up last night's dinner leftovers is to take them to work the next day. These days most offices have a microwave to reheat last night's "odds and ends". Which means you use up your food and get lunch without spending any extra money.
6. **Stew** - Any leftover vegetables, cooked or uncooked, end up in my slow cooker and get made into soups or stews. I save money by creating 'new' meals from 'waste' and my repurposing means fewer trips to the supermarket and less buying.
7. **Compote** - I cook old and overripe fruit into a stew/compote and add to yoghurt or to bulk up fruit smoothies.
8. **Freeze** - I freeze anything and everything from leftover soup to undrunk red wine. My freezer is a jumble of food but there is always something to defrost and reheat! And always meals at the end of the month when money is tight.
9. **Pot luck meals** - When I have random things in my fridge I create a 'pot luck dinner' - a mix matched random feast. It creates a dinner, uses up what I already have and eliminates spending money on 'new' food.
10. **Buy my book** - I saved 38% of my take home salary in 2014 without dramatically changing my life. If you want to help your family or friends save money in 2016 please buy a copy of my book Underspent. It's the perfect Christmas gift.

Do you waste more than you think?

If you enjoyed these tips and want more, I'm available for conferences, presentations, workshops & school assemblies

Buy my book. Underspent is 85 pages of help, advice and information in e-book & Kindle formats. Price \$2.99 or £1.92

I've intentionally made it inexpensive, so that even the people with the smallest budgets can afford to buy it. Buy

from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, iTunes or <http://www.cyclingrachelsmith.com/buy-books-services-speaking/>

RACHEL SMITH

