

The United States of America: Reducing Spoilage and Waste

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Families in the United States (U.S.) usually eat at restaurants and/or at fast food establishments. Most of the restaurants in the U.S. offer fruits and vegetables in small servings, but food with more fat, salt, sugar, and other unhealthy additives are served in greater quantities (Davis & Carpenter, 2009). According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, there are 90 percent of the American population who do not consume enough healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. People in the United States usually consume food that is unhealthy for the body, but at the same time there are people who try to eat three healthy meals each day that include fruits and vegetables on their plates. Whether people have healthy or unhealthy diets in a country where food is plentiful, there is an underlined problem where nearly 40 million tons of food is wasted and spoiled in the U.S. each year (Food Waste in America, 2021).

Research indicates that a lot of food is spoiled and wasted throughout the world (Food Waste in America, 2021). Whether this issue can be resolved permanently is yet to be determined; however, the reduction of food spoilage and waste may be possible. The discovery of how spoilage and wastes occur is an important factor toward finding ways to reduce the problem since food spoilage and waste appear in many different ways. Some countries do not seem to be concerned that food is spoiled or wasted each year. Tons of food is thrown away or left to rot in countries like the United States and Belgium (Footprint Organization, 2021). People are known to throw away perfectly good food because of the excessive amount of food purchased. These types of food handling are common and usually occur at restaurants. There are many restaurants that discard food that could be consumed by people who are homeless. This practice of handling food is common at restaurants in the United States (Food Waste in America, 2021).

Even though people in the U.S. waste approximately 40 percent of perfectly good food, the issue of spoilage and wastes is a problem in other country as well (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021). The Footprint Organization (2021) claimed that there are many reasons why spoilage and wastes occur in the U.S. Three common reasons are (1) people may be unaware of spoilage and waste; (2) people will buy food but forget about it and leave perfect good food to spoil; (3) people are usually not concerned or aware of how much food they waste or how much food they overbuy. There are many other reasons why food is wasted in restaurants and grocery stores as well. Understanding the reasons for food spoilage and waste are important factors in determining how to reduce the problem, especially in the U.S.

In order to resolve the spoilage and waste of food in the United States, trials and errors may occur as the process unfolds. This paper examines spoilage and waste in U.S. restaurants and grocery stores. Approximately 40 percent of food wastes come from restaurants in the U.S (Food Waste in America, 2021). The restaurant industry spends about \$162 billion to purchase a variety of food each year, which contributes to food being wasted (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). Another reason for the massive wastes in the restaurant is the extensive food choices on the menu to be prepared for customers. Some restaurants want to have many options so that the customers can a variety items in which they can choose, which may lead to excessive amount of ingredients leftover at the end of the day. Also, the oversize portions from the menu not only cost a lot but also result to a lot of food leftover and wasted. Research shows there are countries that managed to reduce the amount of food spoiled and wasted (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). It is obvious that these countries have done more to reduce their food spoilage and waste than the U.S. This paper addresses how the U.S. could replicate the models from the European countries that have been successful in the reduction of food spoilage and waste.

For example, France required all restaurants to donate the safe and edible food to charities rather than food discarded (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). Like France, Sweden has made an attempt to stop wasting food in restaurants. Sweden approach is quite different from French and very creative. The Swedish government decided to create fuel from the food waste to power the public bus transit in the country. Denmark was also creative in their effort to halt the food waste from the restaurants. They did something totally different than France and Sweden. Denmark developed an app that helped people find any restaurant or bakery before their closing time and allowed people to buy the leftover food at reduced prices. The Danish customers who used the app found that it was beneficial (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). For instance, people who used the app could buy food for a lower price when preparing meals were inconvenience or people just did not feel like cooking. These three countries discovered different ways to resolve the problem of food waste in their countries. They donate, recycle, and reduced meal prices, which can be accomplished in the U.S. If the U.S. adopted these three approaches from the European countries, the restaurants would have less food wasted and spoilage reduced.

In the United States, the grocery stores waste 30 percent of edible food each year causing vast amount of food spoilage (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). Many people will overbuy and waste perfectly good food. Research showed that a typical American household will cause food waste in the amount of about \$16,000 each year (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). Grocery stores have lots of food that expires and will often discard it a month before the expiration date (Food Waste Resource Guide, 2020). The Food Waste Resource Guide reported that CVS Pharmacy also have a lot of leftovers like the grocery stores. Some CVS pharmacies will throw away perfectly good food, candy, or beverages a month before the expiration date.

The grocery stores and CVS Pharmacy would benefit from the Food Recovery Hierarchy. The Food Recovery Hierarchy created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency shows organization how to prioritize actions to help prevent food waste.

The Food Recovery Hierarchy presents six ways to reduce the waste and spoilage of food. The top tier of the hierarchy is the source reduction. The source reduction level is where individuals or businesses prevent wasted food through source reduction by asking people to take only what they need rather than the thing they want and then later on having them go to waste. The second way is to feed the homeless, donate the food to a homeless shelter or a food bank instead of throwing food away. The third way is where individuals feed the animals, donate food to an animal shelter because many animal shelters struggle to feed all the dogs and other animals because animal food can be costly. The fourth way is called industrial uses, which suggests the use of power from energy, for instance, how Sweden used food waste to power their bus transit. The fifth way is composting where the use of food leftover is used to grow in individuals' greenhouses or used on farms. Composting is a way to make the future crops better. Lastly, the sixth way is called landfill/incineration, which should be last resort for individuals or organizations. This level of hierarchy is where disposal takes place by burning food or sending it to the landfill, which is definitely the last resort. The research for this paper suggests one of the best ways to reduce the amount of food wasted is to consider what other countries have done to reduce food waste and spoilage.

There are several proposals presented in the paper to suggest how American can reduce food waste and spoilage in their country. The first recommendations is that the American government can mandate that restaurants reduce waste by donating safe and edible food to the homeless shelters rather than leaving perfectly good food to rot. Homeless shelters struggle to

buy food for everyone they need to feed. If restaurants donate their leftover before throwing it away, this would cause a tremendous reduction in food wasted. Additionally, the animal shelter in U.S. struggles to feed animals. The food wasted in buffets can be donated to animals in shelters, especially if the food is not allowed to be donated to feed people because the regulations of the Food and Drug Administration forbid it because the food could be unsafe for human consumption. These same guides can be adopted for organizations like the grocery stores and pharmacies in the U.S.

Another recommendation is to create an organization that works with restaurants and grocery stores to determine how and where to donate food that is leftover rather than throwing edible food away. For instance, the restaurants report at the end of the day what edible food is available that be donated. The point is to have restaurant and grocery stores donate their leftover food daily. Another example, the restaurants will notify an organization or develop an app like France has done, and report how much food is leftover and safe for human to eat. Volunteers can coordinate where to pick up the food that has been leftover and organized where the food should be donated. The same concept will work for the grocery stores and pharmacies. Basically, the main purpose of organizations is to take the food from restaurants and grocery stores and donate it to homeless and animals shelters rather than edible food thrown away wasted. A responsible organization will be in charge of where the food will be distributed so that every homeless shelter will be able to receive food as needed. Also, animal shelters will receive food as needed.

In conclusion, the ideas presented above seemed to be proposals for nonprofit businesses. Perhaps, nonprofit organizations can work together to discovery, create, and implement ways that work to reduce food waste while feeding hungry people and animals. Research on the topic

of food waste and spoilage suggests many ways to reduce the problems in which I found to be very clever and creative. I was especially intrigued by how other countries are very creative with ideas that could reduce the food waste and spoilage in the U.S. I believe the U.S. could benefit from the models of the European countries and make a huge difference in reducing the tons of food left to spoil in the U.S.

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