## 10 ways to avoid food waste this Christmas

***Guest blogger Zoe Morrison gives her 10 top tips for food waste reduction at Christmas.***

We all look forward to eating special foods over the festive season and it is lovely to have fun and enjoy yourself. However, when you buy more food than you need and can’t eat it all, it is a waste of resources and money. Plus, if the food is thrown in the bin, it contributes to climate change. So, I’ve written these 10 top tips to help you keep your food waste low this festive season:

****1. Plan to use up food before you go away****

If you are going away, make a plan to run down or freeze the fresh contents of your fridge, fruit bowl and cupboards before you go.

****2. Draw up a meal plan****

If you aren’t going anywhere, buy food in the quantities that are right for you. Before you go shopping, do a meal plan. The meal plan can include snacks as well as main meals. I think it is a good idea to include snacks because it is really easy to get carried away buying festive treats and end up with too many. Factor in if you think people will give you some as gifts too.

****3. Write a shopping list and stick to it****

Writing a shopping list doesn’t seem like such a big deal. But if you write a shopping list and stick to it, you can avoid food waste. Plus, it will save you money. Check your cupboards before you go and make sure you know what you need. It will stop you buying things you already have and getting side-tracked and buying things you weren’t planning on getting.

****4. Don’t be tempted to shop early****

Festive food is available from October, but buying it too early might mean it goes off before the big day. Or more likely you will end up eating it before you intended to and then end up buying more.

****5. Before buying, make food back-up plans****

If your plans change, what will you do with the food that you are going to buy? Can you freeze it? Would you be happy to give it away? You can give excess food to people you know, perhaps to your local food bank (check with them first, they usually only want long-life food) or via the food sharing app [Olio](https://olioex.com/" \t "https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethical-christmas/_blank). Will it last long enough to be used on another day?

****6. Don’t forget about food left out to cool****

One of the most upsetting ways to waste food is to leave it out too long. If you cook in advance, batch cook or have leftovers, you need to leave the food to cool before putting it in the fridge or freezer. My tip is to set a timer to remind yourself to put it away.

****7. Freeze leftover turkey****

You don’t need to eat turkey every night for a week after Christmas, put it in the freezer and it will keep for ages.

****8. Make a use-it-up plan****

After the big day, write a list of all the food that needs using up and come up with a plan for how you’ll incorporate it into your meal plan.

****9. Ask for help with any food you aren’t sure what to do with****

You could ask a friend or family member. Another option is to join my 'reduce food waste' [Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/reduceyourfoodwaste" \t "https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethical-christmas/_blank) dedicated to helping people reduce their food waste.

****10. Compost anything that can't be eaten or given away****

Where possible, put any food that can’t be used up in a food waste collection bin or compost it. Food gives off methane in landfill which is a powerful greenhouse gas. When it is composted it can be used to grow plants.

As you can see there are loads of ways to reduce food waste this festive season and hopefully, save yourself a bit of money along the way too. One final bonus tip: if you want to take things further, challenge yourself to a zero-food waste festive season and see how low your food waste can go.