

Repurpose Edible Food Scraps

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Reducing food waste starts with meal planning. This process helps align purchases with household needs. Additionally, we can be more creative with how we use food scraps. Remember, it's perfectly edible food, it just needs a little TLC.

Food preparation often ends with food scraps or waste. This is different than food loss, which is a result of spoilage. Food waste refers to edible portions that are thrown out rather than consumed.

While it may not seem significant to toss little bits of food here and there, it adds up fast. The Food and Drug Administration estimates that within the U.S. we toss out 30 – 40% of our food supply, or 133 BILLION pounds of food a year – now that's a big number!

STEMS: non-woody such as greens, herbs and mushrooms

Stems, seeds, leaves and peels are common portions of produce that we've become trained to discard. And if you think about it, they make up a significant portion of the plant. Here are a few creative ways to repurpose food scraps, save money and eat well.

- Thinly slice and sauté dark leafy green stems (kale or chard), toss with potato salad* or use in place of celery for soups and sauces
- Cut into matchsticks for a stir-fry (broccoli and cauliflower)
- Dice the stems of parsley and cilantro, mix with dried chile, chopped roasted seeds and a splash of olive oil. Use as a topping for fish, chicken or meat. Add to mayo for a seasoned sauce on your sandwich.
- Finely dice mushroom stems, sauté to remove moisture, then add to ground meat for tacos or burgers. Use in pasta dishes such as lasagna, stuffed shells, spaghetti or spicy Mexican pasta.* Dehydrate* and powder if you can't use right away – use as a spice for any savory dish.

SEEDS: winter squash and melons

Saving up: Rinse and allow seeds to dry on a paper towel. Place in the freezer until you've saved enough to make use of them.

- Lightly coat seeds in oil, toss with salt and assorted spices such as chile, cumin, oregano, or lime zest. Roast at 350 degrees F for 10 – 15 minutes, stirring periodically. Smaller seeds will need less time.
- Try a sweet version. Roast seeds, same as above but with warming spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg or cardamom. Mix with mini-chocolate chips and dried fruit peels for a sweet treat. Or, add to Oatmeal Applesauce Breakfast Cookies*.
- In a food processor, mix seeds into store bought or homemade hummus.*
- Toast seeds in a dry pan until lightly browned. Chop and use in place of pecans in No-bake Gingerbread Date Balls.*
- Add roasted seeds to salad for added crunch.

LEAVES: from root vegetables or celery

- Chop and add to a green salad – they add a ton of flavor!
- Chop and mix into a whole grain salad for a quick lunch. For example: cooked barley, lemon zest, olive oil, roasted seeds, chopped carrot top and celery greens, diced carrots, fresh tomato, olives, fennel fronds, and salt and pepper. Add Parmesan cheese or meat if you desire.
- Thinly slice and add to soup or beans, right before serving.
- Dehydrate*, grind or crush to a powder and add to a fruit smoothie*.

PEELS: cucumber, carrot, citrus, beets, apples, potato

Wash with water and remove any seeds from fruits.

- Dehydrate* and add to oil and vinegar for salad dressing*.
- Dice fruit peels and add 2 tablespoons per serving to a fruit cobbler,* or add to homemade quick breads.
- Flavor water with cucumber and lime peels.
- For root vegetable peels, try turning them into chips with an Air fryer or lightly coat with vegetable oil, salt and pepper, and bake at 425 degrees F for 9 – 15 minutes.

*Recipes can be found here: <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/>

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