

# BEST IF USED

healthy local food • eco·experience 2018

**Q:** What is the most expensive food?

- caviar?
- prime rib?
- morel mushrooms?

**A:** The food you throw away.

And the garbage pail isn't the only place in the food system where food is wasted. For example: food goes unharvested in the fields, and foods are discarded because they are deemed unsuitable to sell for aesthetic reasons. These and other issues are examined in this exhibit along with ways we can all do better at saving money and making use of the fresh food we buy.

This exhibit was made possible by Renewing the Countryside and our generous partners: HealthPartners, Peace Coffee, Organic Valley, Coop Partners Warehouse, and Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department.



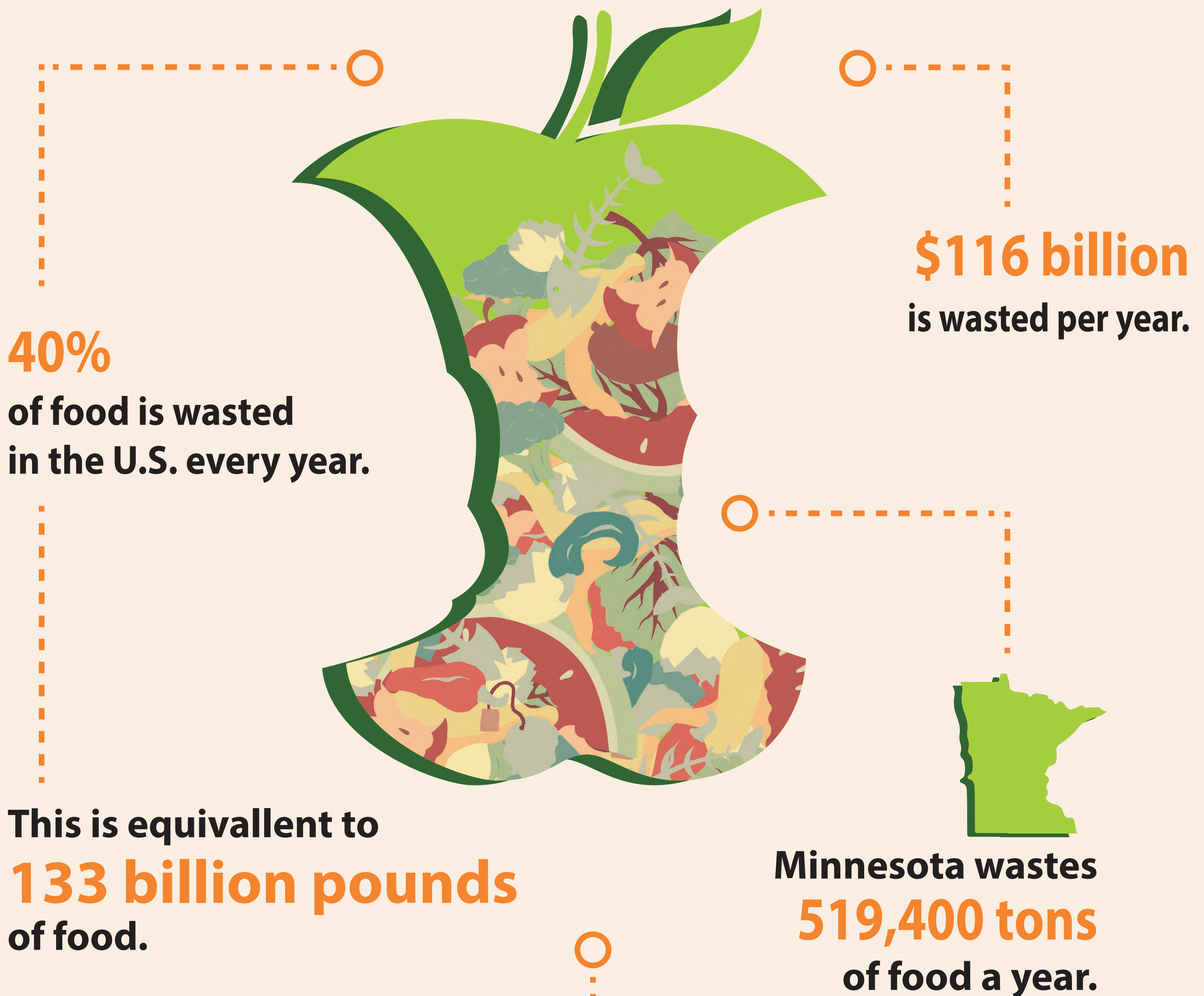
A special thanks to the students at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design for their research and design for the posters in this exhibit.

Invaluable information was gathered from the fine folks at NRDC. You can find many more tips and information at their website: [www.savethefood.org](http://www.savethefood.org)



# What is Food Waste?

Food waste is the loss of edible and inedible parts of food that takes place at all stages of food production and consumption.



**9.7% of MN homes suffer from *food insecurity*:** the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.

# Composting

**Composting** - sometimes called “Organics for Composting” is a natural process. Microbes, oxygen, and water all work together to turn “organic material” (anything that was once alive) into nutrient rich soil...compost!

**Zero-waste & composting** requires that we make efforts to eat the food we buy, compost as close to the source as possible, and see that the end result of our efforts has the highest benefit for the environment and the community.

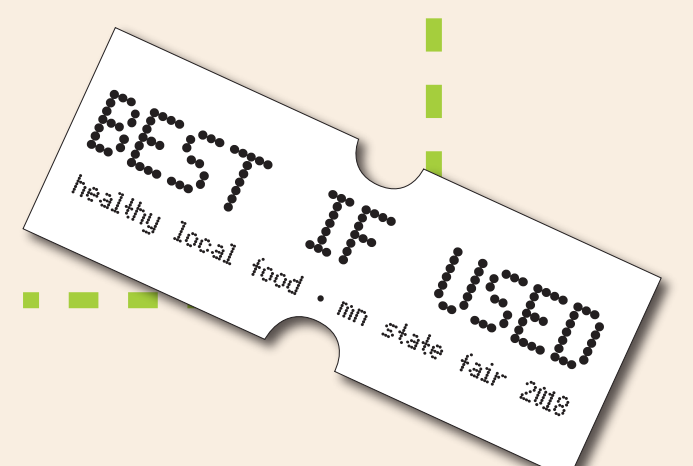
## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Landfills are the **third largest source** of methane gas emissions in the US.

The impact of methane is **25 times more harmful** than carbon dioxide in terms of its contribution to global warming.

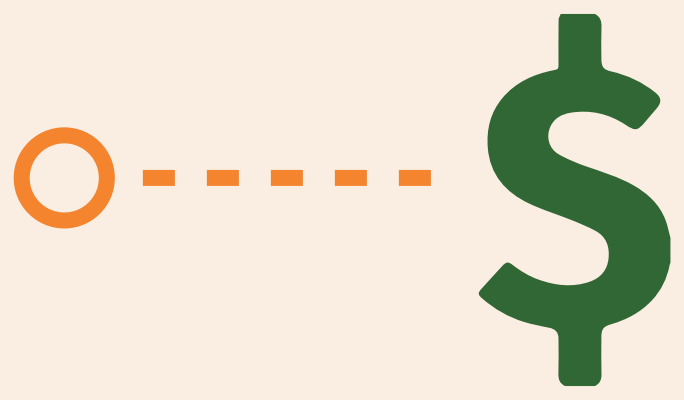
**Industrial scale organics recycling** can be used to compost plant based materials that cannot otherwise be recycled.

An aerobic composting process produces **minimal to no methane.**





# Household Waste

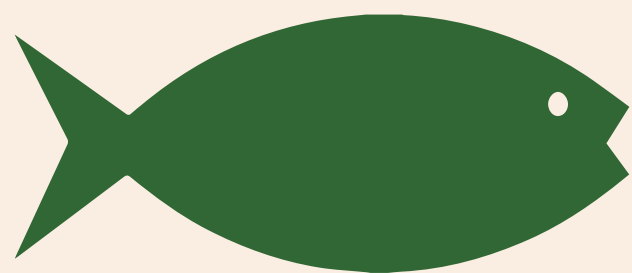


The average American household throws out **\$1,500** worth of food a year.

We throw out **50 tons** of household food waste every second.



Every **2 hours**, we throw away enough food to fill the world's largest container ship.



## Food wasted by percent:

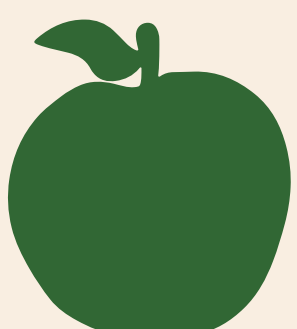
**Seafood** **50%**

**Veggies** **48%**

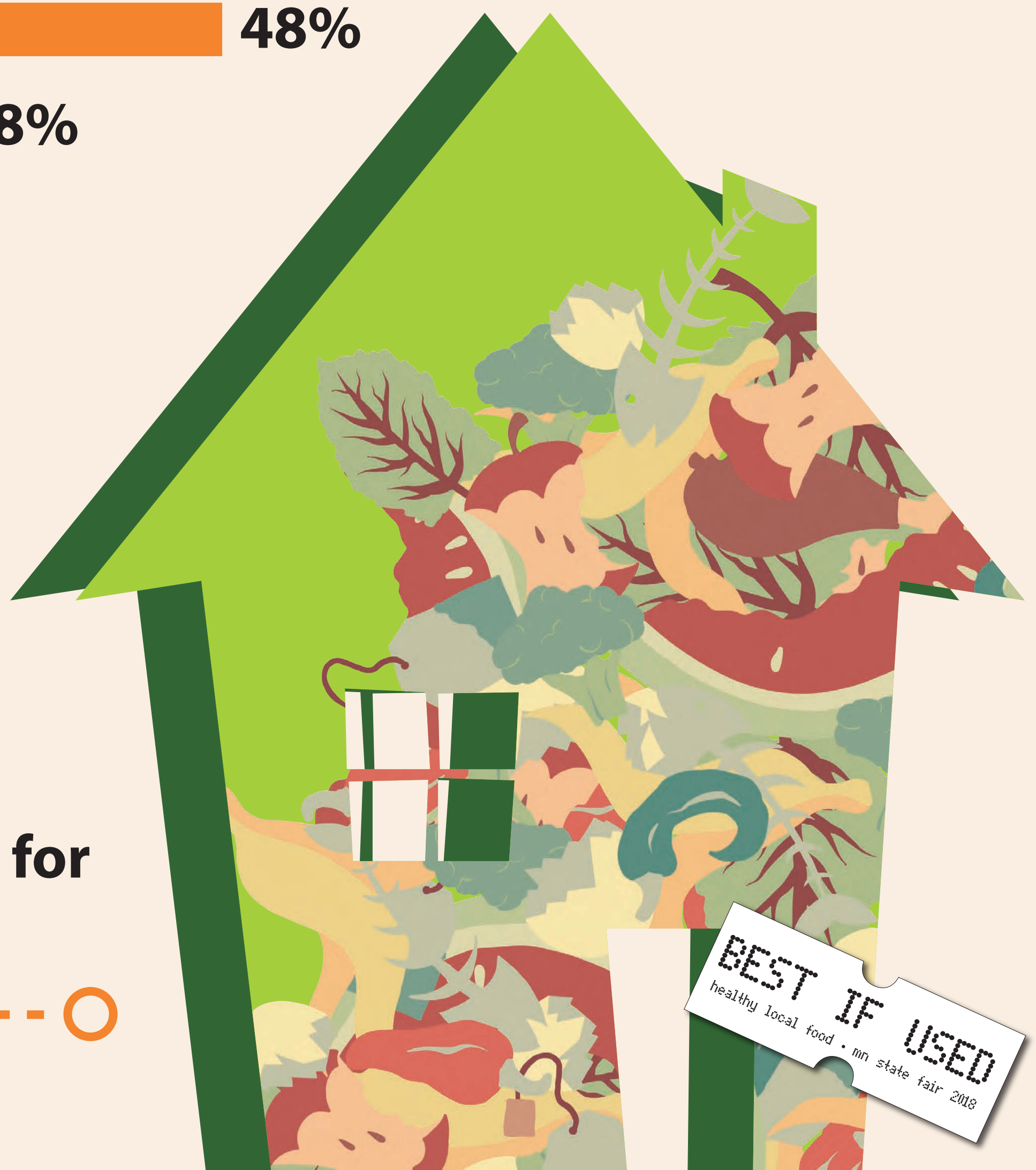
**Grains** **38%**

**Meat** **22%**

**Milk** **20%**



**TIP:** Devote a bin or shelf in your fridge to “use first” ingredients. This makes them handy for a quick snack or meal.





# Commercial Waste

Annually, restaurants alone waste an estimated **571,000 tons** of food.

**4-10%** of food purchased by restaurants is wasted in the kitchen before getting to the table.

**17%** of meals are left uneaten and **55%** of those uneaten meals are not taken home as leftovers.

Retail stores waste **10%** of America's food.  
That is **43 billion** pounds of food.

## Why do grocery stores waste so much food?

The food industry assumes

- customers are more likely to buy from fully stocked displays.

- "Sell by" dates make stores pull good food off their shelves sometimes several days before the date approaches.

- Ugly foods and unpopular items are often thrown away.





# Ugly Food

## What are “ugly foods?”

Ugly food is produce that does not pass cosmetic standards to be on the market shelf. This could mean the foods are too large, too small, wrong color, have scarring or bruises, or, have grown in funny shapes.



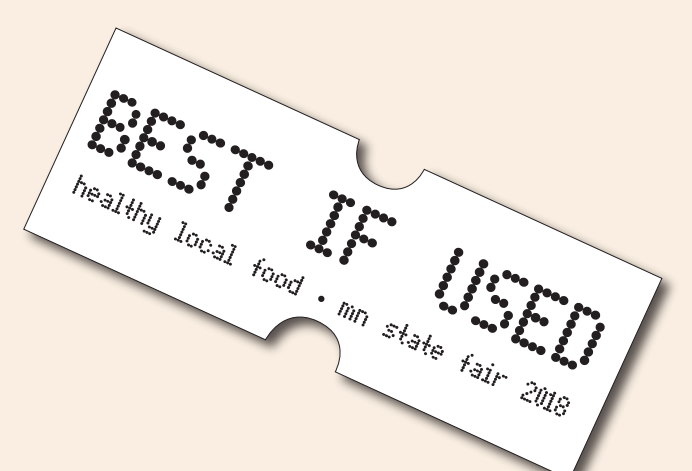
**1/5** of fresh fruit and vegetables are discarded for not fitting cosmetic standards.

Over **196 billion tons** of water is wasted on the growing foods tossed out for being “ugly.”

This is **38 times**  
the amount of  
water used by  
all households in the  
United States combined!

**Culling** is the disposal of products based on quality or appearance criteria including weight, size, color, and blemishes.

Ugly food is just as nutritious and safe to eat. It also tastes just as good and maybe more fun to eat!



# Take Action

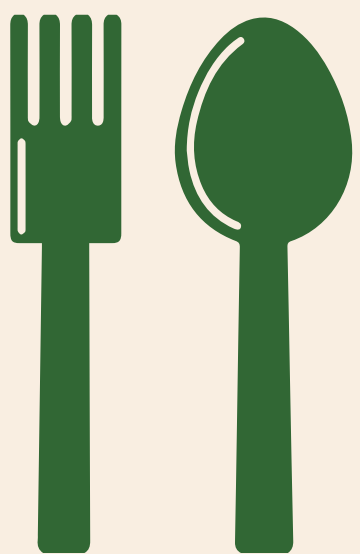


## How can **YOU** prevent food waste?



**Plan your meals & stick to your shopping list.**

**Make perishables last longer by storing them correctly.**



**Prepare recipes that use all parts of the food.**

**Remember that “Sell by,” “Use by,” & “Best by” dates indicate the peak of freshness - not necessarily food safety. Use them as guides!**



**Save money & prevent food waste by asking for “ugly foods” or “seconds” at your local grocery or farmers markets.**







Families made signs to remind them which food in their refrigerators needed to be eaten first.  
Photo courtesy: Macalester Groveland Community Council  
Gleaning carrots at Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix  
Photo courtesy: The Food Group

# Food too good to waste

## Macalester-Groveland Community Council

The Mac-Grove Community Council recently challenged fourteen families in their St. Paul neighborhood to participate in a **six-week-long challenge** to reduce food waste at home.

Barb Billington, her husband Mark, and their two teenagers thought they could be doing more to prevent waste and decided to sign up.

"We found we were cooking more food than we were eating and not getting back to those leftovers," said Barb. "There were also certain items that we would buy, intend to use, but they would go bad before we got to them, like fruit or avocados."

The Community Council provided each family with a scale and an online form to **track all wasted food** by weight, plus lots of tips and suggestions to reduce waste.

At the end of the challenge, the families had collectively reduced their food waste by 16%, the equivalent of more than **\$250 in savings** for a family of four! Find out more at [macgrove.org](http://macgrove.org)

**"I liked that we were measuring, on a daily basis, the food that we didn't eat. We all became more aware of what was in the refrigerator."**



# Gleaning at Big River Farms

## The Food Group

The Food Group serves over 200 food shelf partners across the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota, collecting food donations and providing hunger relief. Their Gleaning Program is also an innovative way they prevent food waste. Gleaning is the act of collecting extra produce from farms that would otherwise go to waste, due to time constraints, storage capacity limits, cosmetic defects, or other reasons. Their partner farmers contact The Food Group when they have extra produce and The Food Group mobilizes its network of staff and volunteers to **harvest as much as they can**.

At Big River Farms (Marine on St Croix, MN), they rely on The Food Group to glean squash left in the field after the season's first frost. The squash are still good and tasty, but will not store as long as others destined to be sold at groceries. Last year,

gleaners **rescued over 5 tons** of produce! A portion of the harvest is delivered directly to food shelf partners and the rest is processed into soups, purees, and chopped frozen veggies. The Food Group makes these items available for purchase through "Fare for All," a low-cost grocery sales program. You can **sign up to volunteer** at [thefoodgroupmn.org](http://thefoodgroupmn.org).

**"I think it really helps – how I feel some farmers have so much produce that they just waste it, they don't know what else to do."**  
**- May Lee, Big River Farms**

Gleaning carrots at Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix  
Photo courtesy: The Food Group





# Food Rescue

## Second Harvest Heartland

Second Harvest Heartland is a hunger-relief organization that works to distribute **donated food** to soup kitchens, food pantries, meal programs and afterschool programs in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

The organization helps communities reduce the **food they waste** by working with manufacturing, agricultural, retail and food service partners to rescue safe, edible food to people who need it. In 2017, Second Harvest Heartland's Food Rescue program partnered with more than 400 grocers to collect **36 million pounds of food** that was then redistributed to more than 350 partner food shelves and nonprofits.

This year, Second Harvest Heartland began collecting and delivering prepared food from food-service partners like **restaurants and caterers**. "What I like about this program is that we found a higher purpose for using our extra food, to contribute to



**"What I like about this program is that we found a higher purpose for using our extra food, to contribute to the community in a meaningful way."**  
**- Heidi Andermack, Chowgirls Killer Catering**



the community in a meaningful way," explained Heidi Andermack from Chowgirls Killer Catering.

Learn more about Second Harvest and their Food Rescue Program at: [www.2harvest.org](http://www.2harvest.org)

Above, volunteers processing donations at the food group,  
Photo credit: Tom Dunn Photography

Below: Marlayna Thomas, Chowgirls Pastry Chef, preparing food for donation.  
Photo courtesy: Second Harvest Heartland





Photo courtesy Co-op Partners Warehouse

# Cooperating to Save Food

## The Wedge Co-op

The Wedge Co-op operates two grocery stores, a café, a catering company, and a regional organic certified wholesale distributor called Co-op Partners Warehouse.

Recently The Wedge Table, their café and commissary kitchen, teamed up with Co-op Partners to **reduce waste at the warehouse** by rescuing unsellable produce for use in the deli, juice bar, and café. The kitchen crew visits the warehouse weekly to sort through the “ugly produce” that store customers typically pass up: bruised apples, or oddly shaped potatoes, carrots, and celery, and tags them to be **delivered back to the kitchen**, where they’ll be turned into soups, salads, wraps, and juices. Produce that can’t be used will be

either donated to local food pantries or composted. This partnership saves The Wedge more than \$10,000 a year in food costs and literally prevents tons of food waste.

**“It just helps us be a more complete food system and make sure that we are using everything that we possibly can. We’re minimizing waste and saving dollars.”**  
**- Angela Ritchie, Store Manager, Wedge Table**



# Hennepin County Organics Recycling

## Hennepin County + Minneapolis Public Schools

Hennepin County awards **grants for schools** to explore new opportunities to reduce, reuse, recycle, or compost waste. Since 2002, 134 recycling projects have been funded in public and private K–12 schools, totaling \$1.8 million.

This year, Minneapolis Public Schools received \$50,000 from Hennepin County to begin or expand organics recycling in over a dozen schools. Funds are being used for upgrades like **sorting stations** and displays in the lunchroom to help ensure students are composting and recycling as much as possible. School kids also **bring**

**their knowledge home** to share with their families, which helps Hennepin County reach its goal of increased participation in organics recycling for all residents.

Organics recycling helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improves soil and water quality, AND supports the local economy. Minnesota's composting industry sustains about 700 jobs and produces \$148 million in gross economic activity each year. That's **four to eight times more jobs** on a per-ton basis than landfilling operations.

Students using a waste and recycling sorting table  
Photo courtesy: Hennepin County





# foodWISE

## Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

Eagle Bluff offers educational, outdoor adventures on their 100+ acre property of scenic bluffs near Lanesboro, MN. They host a wide variety of youth and adult camps, retreats, and gatherings, and their staff are passionate about preventing food waste. Project “foodWISE” teaches visitors about the impact of wasted food along with **strategies for prevention**.

Visitors of all ages are encouraged to participate in the program, which uses the motto, “Take what you can eat and eat what you take.” They encourage people to ask for **half portions** (of a chicken breast or hamburger, for example) or to take a little of something and **try it first** before committing to a bigger scoop. It also helps that most food at the Center is served by staff (only a small portion is buffet-style), which prevents visitors from taking more than they can eat.



**“Weighing food really does help you think about your choices and working towards a collective goal is fun and helpful for many people.” - Colleen Foehrenbacher, Eagle Bluff Learning Center**

At each meal, groups are given their own food waste cart to collect the food they don't eat and their waste is measured against a goal. If a group stays under their goal, they may earn a spot on the “Golden Clean Plate Award” chart. Any leftover **food waste is composted** in either their Vermicomposter (indoor worm composter) or in their greenhouse tumbler composters.

Learn more at: [www.eagle-bluff.org](http://www.eagle-bluff.org)



Above: Youth sorting food waste to be weighed  
Below: A student records the amount of food waste against an overall goal  
Photo courtesy Eagle Bluff Learning Center