

# Waste Not, Want Not

Have you heard that expression? My mom would admonish us if we left food on our plates. “You should be grateful that you have enough to eat! There are starving children in China!”, she would exclaim. She hated wasting food. She was brought up during the depression. It was a difficult time for many and food was not taken for granted.

A few months back, I read a very interesting article about a young girl named Riley who made her family aware of the amount of food wasted every day in their home. It seems they took it for granted that there would always be more food available to them. But Riley knew better. At her elementary school in Ohio, she learned that there were people who didn't have enough to eat. She also learned about the impact that food waste has had on our planet. Did you know that when food rots in a landfill it creates methane gas? And that methane gas is more lethal than carbon dioxide?

Where Riley lives in Columbus, Ohio, almost a million pounds of food is thrown away every day, making it the single largest item collected in the landfill. This, unfortunately, is true nationwide. 39 percent of food waste in the United States is attributable to households like yours and mine. In our culture it is easy to not think about or forget about the unused spinach in the back of the refrigerator or the overripe bananas in the bowl on the counter. We needlessly throw away much of our uneaten food, not because it is a deliberate action, but because we live in a society of overabundance.

So how can we lessen our wastefulness? Here are some ideas:

- Create meal plans
- Freeze leftovers
- Make a list before going to the grocery store and stick to it.
- Use reusable bags when shopping
- Encourage others to be less wasteful.

In Riley's school cafeteria there are bins set up to collect trash, labeled, “Landfill, Compost, and Recycle. Once the students are finished with their meal they are directed to the bins where they learn what to deposit in each bin (ie bread-compost, empty juice box-recycle, yogurt lid-landfill). They, like Riley, are taking the lessons they have learned back to their home and family. It just takes one child to start a movement. Like Riley.