

feast

The frugal foodie

We throw away 79 kg of food per year, but we don't have to **Laura Brehaut**

Food waste is a serious matter, but in *Cook More, Waste Less* (Appetite by Random House, 2021), food stylist and recipe developer Christine Tizzard sets out to make tackling it fun. Whatever your current waste-cutting habits are, there's no shame; only opportunities for improvement.

Tizzard starts where household food waste begins — at the grocery store, farmers' market or produce stand. Smarter shopping means less waste, and when paired with how to store food once you get it home for maximum fridge life, this education can go a long way.

The Caledonia, Ont.-based author opens *Cook More, Waste Less* with shopping strategies, including where to shop and what to buy, followed by a comprehensive food storage primer and more than 120 recipes drawing on zero-waste techniques.

Shopping is a common food-waste pitfall, Tizzard says. Recently having passed on a basket of fresh Ontario peaches because it was more than her family could eat in five days (and she didn't have time to bake a pie), she's used to weighing the waste factor of purchases. As much as it haunted her to leave those peaches by the roadside, watching them go bad would have felt worse.

Growing up in Newfoundland, Tizzard was brought up being mindful of food waste and embarking on a culinary career only served to reinforce those values. At her childhood home, there was a freezer in the basement, filled with fish and local berries her family had picked themselves.

"My parents were very frugal," says Tizzard. "It was instinctually in me. My dad was a little bit obsessive about us throwing anything away, too."

When she went to chef's school, the importance of making the most of her ingredients was instilled even further: "One of the

I ... THINK OF IT AS ... TAKING MY LEFTOVER CHICKEN ON VACATION.

main things you're taught is: Food is money." Mindful of food costs, she learned how to break down and store ingredients properly in order to get the absolute most out of them. "It's ingrained in almost every cook," she adds, "because it's your bottom line."

As a food stylist, Tizzard approached reducing waste from yet another angle. Foods didn't just have to last as long as possible; they needed to look their best as well. Reading books and attending talks on climate change and food waste helped her realize that she had amassed valuable knowledge; the tools she used regularly in her career could help people lighten their footprints.

The oft-repeated statistics are stark: Nearly one-third of the world's food is wasted or lost along the supply chain, yet as many as 811 million people live with food insecurity. The average Canadian wastes 79 kilograms of food each year, a March 2021 UN Environment Programme report revealed, amounting to a total of 2.94 million metric tonnes of household food waste.

Far from an isolated issue, food waste contributes to climate change; according to Our World in Data, food production is responsible for roughly one-quarter — 26 per cent — of global greenhouse gas emissions; and food waste accounts for six per cent.

"The only thing I felt I could do that actually made me feel better about myself and my situation was making the change at home," says Tizzard. "The more people talk about it and educate, the more awareness. And hopefully that awareness will actually make some change."

Given the statistics, addressing food waste can feel like a monumental task. But as Tizzard found as she researched and wrote *Cook More, Waste Less* over the past several years, individual acts can make a difference. "One of my goals with this book is to unwrap and show people that there's so much more out there that we could be doing, but people just don't know about it," she adds.

When Tizzard started looking for information about food waste, there was very little available. There were plenty of books about leftovers, but none that included breakdowns of how long various foods could be kept on the counter, in the fridge or freezer. As part of her zero-waste kitchen basics section, she includes a seven-page food storage glossary detailing this information, along with tips to extend longevity.

People often ask her about leftovers: how to store them, options for making them more interesting and how to get their kids to eat them. In *Cook More, Waste Less*, Tizzard moves away from a "reheat and eat" philosophy and offers ideas for reinvention. The first step, she says, is to reframe them: they're not leftovers but cooked components waiting in the fridge to be transformed.

"I like to think of it as ... taking my leftover chicken on vacation. I want to take it to some far-off land where no one's going to be able to recognize it. It's almost like putting it into a witness protection program of sorts," says Tizzard, laughing. "Because if I make something really interesting, like avocado boats with leftover grilled shrimp and vegetables (with turmeric aioli; the recipe is in the book), it's not going to look like leftovers from the weekend."

Recipes include optional add-ins and substitutes, and she maps out the many meals that can come from just one cooking session. You can extend two roast chickens, for example, to a freestyle paella or noodles with spicy peanut sauce. Marinated tofu steaks can become a pot of chili, fresh spring rolls or packed peppers.

"How I try to purchase my food and reduce food waste at home is that typically, once a week, I make a big meal. So if I'm roasting a chicken, I'll roast two. This is the one time where I want leftovers. But I know that I'm going to be using those leftovers strategically for the next few days," says Tizzard.

The book "was a bit of a beast" to write, she adds. Because of the subject matter, plenty of substitutions were a must and the recipes needed to be flexible enough to accommodate people's varied eating habits.

But the biggest challenge was approaching food waste in an inviting way: "How do I write a cookbook about food waste without sounding harsh, and without speaking down to people? And try to make a book about inspiring people to really celebrate food and think of food in a different way, and change their eating habits."

Weekend Post

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NAN'S FISH CAKES

Uses up: cooked fish, cooked potatoes, celery tops

Total time: 30 minutes

Keeps for: up to 3 days in the fridge (cooked), or up to 3 days in the fridge or 3 months in the freezer (uncooked). Thaw in the fridge overnight before cooking.

Can substitute: Cooked fish with well-soaked salt cod, cooked 5 minutes in boiling water and drained well; potatoes with ½ cup dry breadcrumbs or crushed crackers; dill with savory, thyme, sage, chives, oregano or curry powder; celery tops with bell pepper.

■ 2 cups (about ¾ lb/340 g) cooked mashed potatoes (see substitutions)

■ ¼ cup finely chopped onions

■ ¼ cup finely chopped celery tops (see substitutions)

■ 2 tbsp chopped, fresh parsley and/or parsley stems

■ 2 tbsp chopped, fresh dill (see substitutions)

■ 1 tsp smoked paprika

■ 1/8 tsp ground or freshly grated nutmeg

■ 1 egg, beaten

■ 2 good pinches of salt Pinch pepper

■ 1 lb (455 g) cooked boneless skinless salmon, cod, trout (any white fish really), flaked (see substitutions)

■ ¼ cup oil or butter

Optional add-ins:

■ 2 tsp ground sumac

■ Chili powder

■ Citrus zest

■ Favourite hot sauce

For serving (Optional)

■ Chow chow

■ Tartar sauce

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the mashed potatoes with the onions, celery tops, parsley, dill, paprika, nutmeg and any optional add-ins.

2. Mix in the egg, salt and pepper.

3. Using your hands, portion out about ¼ cup of the mixture. Form it into a fish cake about 2 to 3 inches in diameter and 1 inch thick and place on the baking sheet. Repeat with the rest of the mixture. If you have the time, place in the fridge for 20 minutes to allow them to firm up and hold their shape better during frying.

4. Preheat a large cast-iron pan or sauté pan over medium heat. Add the oil and fry the cakes until well browned on both sides, 7 to 9 minutes total.

5. Make your meal a real East Coast one and serve the fish cakes with some chow chow and tartar sauce. *Makes: Twelve 2 ½-inch cakes*

PACKED PEPPERS

Uses up: peppers, cooked protein, cooked grains, cheese, tomato sauce

Total time: 30 minutes

Keeps for: up to 3 days in the fridge

Can substitute: Bell peppers with field or poblano peppers cut in half lengthwise; amount of filling may change depending on the size of the peppers

■ 4 bell peppers (see substitutions)

■ ½ lb (227 g) cooked protein

■ 1 cup cooked grains

■ 1–2 cups sauce such as a homemade tomato (recipe for marinara follows) or cream

■ Salt and pepper

■ ½ cup (or more) grated cheese or a few tbsp of nutritional yeast (+ extra to garnish), divided

Optional add-ins:

■ 2–3 green onions, chopped

■ Fresh herbs, chopped, or a few tsp dried herbs

■ Hot sauce, to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F and grease a baking dish big enough to hold the peppers with oil or butter.

2. Cut the tops of the bell peppers off, as you would a jack-o'-lantern. Discard the seeds and membranes.

Remove the stems from the tops and discard, reserving the tops for the filling. Dice the tops.

3. Place the peppers cut side up in the prepared dish. If the peppers won't stand up, you can slice some of their bottoms off to even them out.

4. In a bowl, mix the protein, grain, sauce and any optional add-ins with the diced pepper tops and season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix in the cheese, reserving a little to use as a garnish. Spoon the stuffing into the peppers and sprinkle cheese over top.

5. Pour just enough water in the baking dish to cover the bottom. Cover the peppers loosely with compostable parchment, a silicone baking mat, or the top of a pot or pan.

6. Bake for 20 minutes, then uncover and bake for an additional 5 to 10 minutes to brown the tops. The filling should be heated through and the peppers softened.

Serves: 4

Food 911: I have also made this recipe with jalapeños stuffed with a little leftover stew or chili and grated cheese, perfect served as a spicy appetizer for parties.

THIS BREAD IS BANANAS

Uses up: bananas

Total time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

Keeps for: up to 3 days at room temperature, 1 week in the fridge, or 6 months in the freezer

■ 2 overripe bruised bananas, peels and all

■ ½ cup butter, at room temperature

■ ¾ cup sugar

■ 1 ½ cups flour

■ 1 tsp baking soda

■ 1 tsp baking powder

■ Pinch salt

■ 2 eggs

■ ½ cup buttermilk

■ 1 tsp Pure Vanilla Extract

Optional add-ins:

■ ½–1 cup chocolate or dark chocolate chips

■ ½ cup chopped nuts and/or seeds

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and line or grease a loaf pan. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.

2. Peel the bananas and roughly chop the peels. Simmer the peels in boiling water for 5 minutes and then drain, rinse under cold water and set aside.

3. Using a hand mixer or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the butter and sugar together until incorporated, light and fluffy.

4. In a medium-size bowl, mix the flour with the baking soda, baking powder and salt.

5. Using a blender or food processor, blend the bananas, peels, eggs, buttermilk and vanilla.

6. Slowly beat the banana mixture into the butter mixture until incorporated. Beat in the flour mixture until combined. Stir in any optional add-ins and evenly spread with the crumble if using.

7. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake for about 1 hour or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Makes: 1 loaf

Food 911: Apple slices can keep your baked goods and breads moist, just cosy up a few slices in a sealed container with any extra baked goods you have to prevent them from going stale too quickly.

