



Social Context of Wasted Food

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Summit 2017

Wasting food is inevitable

It is not simply an 'individual' problem of excess and restraint



People are at the center of diverting and preventing wasted food



Understanding the underlying causes is important to creating interventions

SMART STRATEGY: Make a Shopping List with Meals in Mind

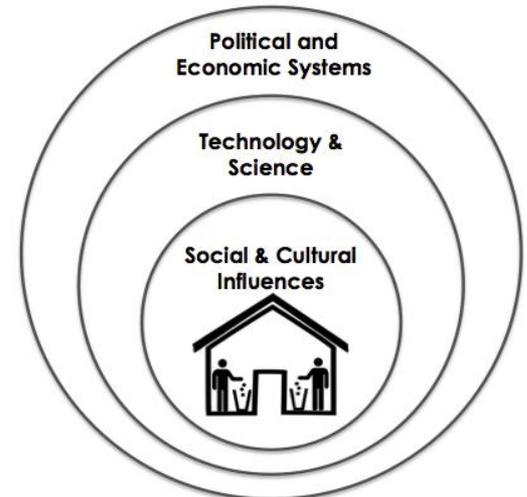
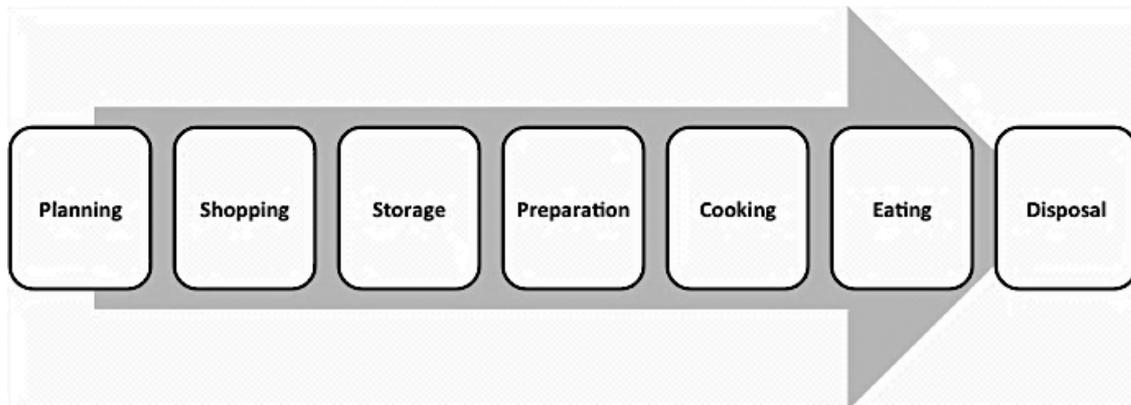


- Think about how many meals you'll eat at home this week and how long before your next shopping trip.
- Next to fresh items on the list, note the quantity you need or number of meals you're buying for.
- Shop your kitchen first and note items you already have.

FOOD ITEM	AMOUNT NEEDED	ALREADY HAVE
Salad greens	Lunch for a week	Enough for one lunch
2% milk	Gallon	None

Understanding why food is wasted is complex!

- Many precursor behaviors
- Cultural services provided by food
- Technologies and systems are important actors too!
- Diversity of perceptions and behaviors



'Good' vs. 'Bad' Food

Perfect Looking Food

- Symmetrical
- Radiant color
- Uniform & consistent



Source: Creative Commons – Food Thinkers CC BY 2.0

Natural Looking Food

- Asymmetrical
- Presence of dirt
- Some “blemishes”

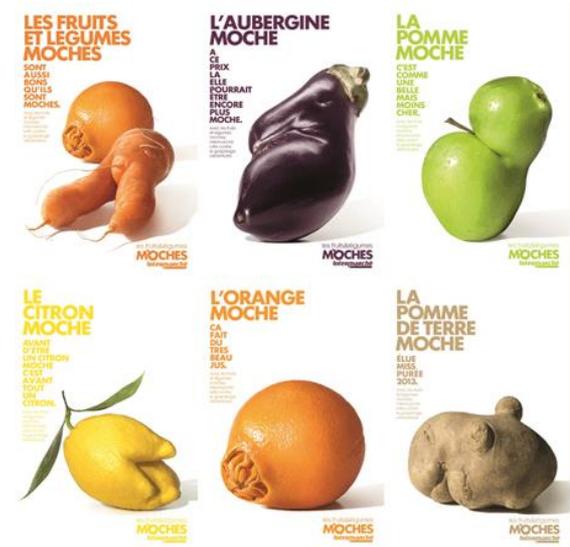


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'Good' vs. 'Bad' Food

- Aesthetics as proxy for:
 - Taste
 - Safety
 - Health



Important to consider when designing programs to promote aesthetically-challenged fruits and veggies

The Refrigerator!

**Mrs. Santa Claus
Gets the Best Gift of All!**

Yes, Santa gave his wife the best gift of all. With one grand gesture he gave her good health, more leisure and freedom from shopping. Of course, you've guessed it . . . Santa gave his wife an Amana Upright food freezer with a brand new membership in the Amana Plan. But Santa is a cagey fellow — by giving his wife all these things, he gave himself a break too. His food bills are much lower now, because with her new freezer Mrs. Claus saves money on buying foods, on preparation and on left-overs.

Guaranteed by Cool Manufacturing
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The Refrigerator!



“There’s almost some kind of value that I derive from being able to provide food for people whether it be a party or a dinner or whatever. But, if someone came over and suddenly they are hungry, I could say ‘Oh, look at me. I got all these different things and I got more than we need. Let me take care of you.’ And, this is kind of where stuff, snacks, they don’t get eaten.”

Aspirational Relationships with Food

- Health
- Planning
- Waste Aversion

“If it's not necessarily a part of my week meal plan, then it often gets forgotten about. I'll buy something that looks really tasty and wonderful, and you have a recipe in mind, but you don't have the other ingredients that need to go with it, so that requires another trip to the grocery store, and then that takes another week, by then maybe your produce that looked really good at the farmers market no longer looks good.”

“We kinda have designated one of the shelves as the, the place where leftovers go to die, and, it'll sit there until it spoils and then we'll clean it out.”



Composting!!

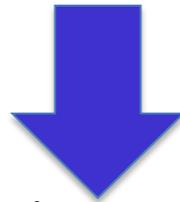
- Increase awareness or alleviate guilt?

“I had to buy three zucchini when I only actually needed one. But, the grocery store that sells zucchini is near me so I just get three zucchini. Plus, they are dirt cheap. The cost as much as one anywhere else. So, that is the issue for me. Because I had to buy three and I only needed one. And, I am probably not going to use the other ones. I am gonna wait until it goes flaccid. Then, I compost it because I can compost it. I don't feel bad about it.”

“The idea of composting and the whole way they talked about it and the way that it was introduced made it seem so soft and friendly. And even the green bags are soft and friendly. And I was like ‘I want that. I don't feel bad at all. I will throw the banana away.’

Key Takeaways

- Complexity and diversity of behaviors that are food waste “precursors”



- Important to consider role of nonhumans and complexity of behaviors in outreach, messaging, and interventions
- Not one “fix” – technological or otherwise
- Important to explore potential “unexpected” impacts of policy solutions to wasting food



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