

Preventing household dairy waste

This information sheet is designed to outline key WRAP research on household dairy waste¹ and the priorities for action to help signatories deliver the household food waste prevention target under the Courtauld Commitment.

Headlines

- Around 500,000 tonnes of dairy waste is disposed of in the UK annually all of which is avoidable, worth £800 million.
- 360,000 tonnes of this (£280 million) is milk, with the remainder split between yoghurt and cheese (80,000 tonnes and 38,000 tonnes respectively).
- Most yoghurt and cheese is thrown away because it is 'not used in time'. For cheese, packs are usually opened but not finished, but for yoghurt, pots are most often thrown away unopened.
- However, milk has a different profile to yoghurt and cheese, with nearly half thrown away because too much is served (Figure 2).

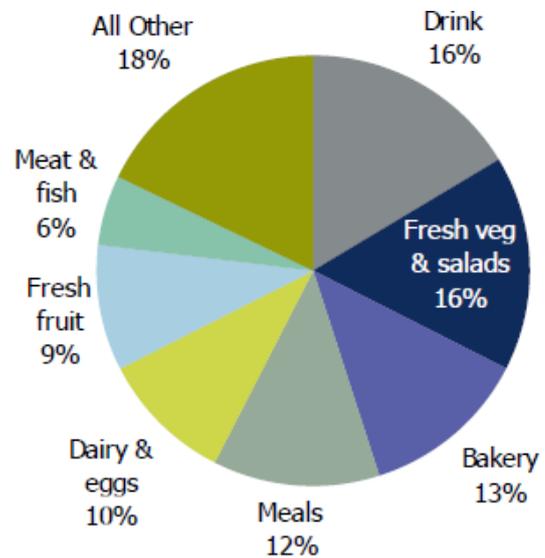


Figure 1 Weight of avoidable food and drink waste by category

	Waste generated (tonnes per year)			Value (£ million per year)
	Avoidable food waste	Not used in time	Cooked or served too much	Avoidable food waste
Milk	360,000	200,000	160,000	£280
Yoghurt / yoghurt drink	80,000	74,000	6,000	£210
Cheese	38,000	36,000	2,000	£240

Figure 2 Weight of avoidable dairy waste by type, split by reason for disposal

¹ In WRAP's Household Food and Drink Waste research, eggs and dairy waste are combined, however for this information sheet eggs are excluded. (There is 24,000 tonnes of avoidable egg waste).

Data and research

- WRAP's diary research indicates that dairy wasted because it is 'not used in time' is split approximately equally between disposal triggered by passing a date label and that prompted by physical changes (mouldy, tasting or smelling bad, etc.).
- Data² from 2009 (Retailer Survey, WRAP) revealed that all packs of milk have a 'use by' date. Around half also carry a 'display until' date. Around a quarter of cheddar cheese packs carry a 'use by' date, with the remaining 75% carrying a 'best before' date. About 4 in 10 also carry a 'display until' date. The situation is the reverse for yoghurts with a quarter carrying a 'best before' date and three quarters carrying a 'use by' date. About 3 in 10 also carry a 'display until' date³.
- The data also showed that yoghurts are amongst the most heavily promoted categories (47% of all products recorded were associated with some type of in-store offer). Thirty-six per cent were tied to multi-buy deals, offering consumers a discount if they purchased more than one pack.
- Yoghurts are also sold in a large number of different flavour combinations. Forty-four per cent of the yoghurt packs reviewed were sold in packs of four and 19% sold in packs of six. This research recorded 33 different combinations of flavours in multipacks with at least two pots per flavour, and a further 32 combinations where every pot was different.
- Seventeen per cent of consumers believe milk to be 'un-freezable' and only around 1 in 10 regularly buy milk to freeze at home. Only around a quarter (24%) of milk packs state that the product could be frozen (4% using the 'snowflake logo'). Cheese and yoghurt are also thought to be 'un-freezable' by 16% and 6% of consumers respectively. No packs of cheese or yoghurt specify that they can be frozen at home.
- Cheese has a relatively long shelf-life but once opened, guidance varies as to how long it will last. Some labels (on cheddar cheese) recommend use within three days of opening (23%), others extending this as far as five days (7%) or even seven days (26%). (The remainder gave no guidance). Guidance on milk packs was also inconsistent, with 68% advising consumers to use the product within three days, 19% within seven days (filtered milk products) and 9% within two days.
- The fridge is a very dry environment and a quarter of cheese packs now come in a re-closable pack (Figure 3) to help prevent the product drying out in opened packs. Around 3 in 10 consumers use the original packaging to store opened cheese, the remainder using some additional/alternative wrapping or an container.

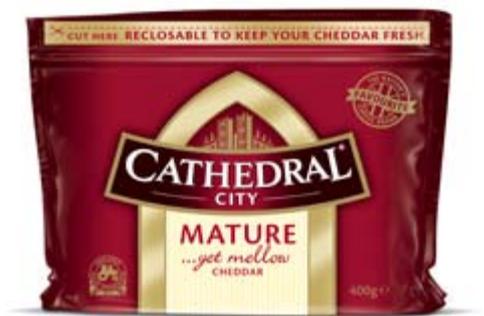


Figure 3 Re-closable cheese pack from Dairy Crest

² Only packs of standard semi-skimmed milk, mature cheddar cheese and 'standard' yoghurt (i.e. not fromage frais, Greek yoghurt, pro-biotics etc.) were reviewed.

³ It is recognised that for reasons of differences in product formulation, use of preservatives, differences in packaging materials and design and so on, products may well be given different shelf-life etc.

Taking action

- Give the longest possible amount of time to eat the product once opened.
- Communicate what the 'best before' and 'use by' dates mean.
- Review the choice of date label used (i.e. 'best before' or 'use by'), to achieve consistency (where possible) across a product category.
- Provide freezing and defrosting instructions for milk including any instructions about decanting the product to a different container (pre-freezing) where necessary.
- Provide freezing and defrosting instructions for cheese and yoghurt, for example, alongside recipes (e.g. grate before freezing and use to top a pasta bake).
- Extend the use of re-closable pack formats for cheese, or recommend 'seal tightly after opening'.

Examples of signatory action

- Re-closable cheese packs (Figure 3).
- Longer life (filtered) milk, including a longer life once opened (7 days as opposed to 2 or 3 days after opening, Figure 5).
- Smaller, snack size portion packs e.g. Muller mini rice (190g pots reduced to 95g pots) and Cathedral City cheese 80g packs.
- Range of recipes on Cathedral City website:
<http://www.cathedralcity.co.uk/recipes>.
- Muller campaign to 'lick the lid' (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Muller campaign



Figure 5 Cravendale lasts for seven days once the bottle is opened and 21 days while closed. This is what forms the basis of the brand's 'Fresher for Longer' positioning. Cravendale use white bottles because they protect the milk from prolonged visible light that, over the life of the product, could affect its shelf life.

Information sources and further contacts

- Household Food and Drink Waste, WRAP, November 2009. Comprehensive data on household food waste.
- Retailer Survey, WRAP, June 2010. A survey across UK retailers of factors believed to influence household food waste.
- Insights Around the Domestic Refrigerator, WRAP, Aug 2010. A study of consumer refrigerated food practices in the home and experimental measurements of refrigerated food temperatures during their transit from the retail store to the domestic fridge.
- Understanding Consumer Use of the Freezer, WRAP, August 2010. A quantitative study into consumer attitudes, understanding and behaviour with regards to freezing.
- *Coming soon:* Improving the Application and Understanding of Date Labels and Storage Guidance to Reduce Household Food Waste.
- *Coming soon:* Dairy UK Sector-Specific Guidance (to complement FSA/Defra 'Date Marking' Guidance; www.food.gov.uk/consultations).

All research available at: www.wrap.org.uk/retail/case_studies_research

For further information please contact Sophie.Easteal@wrap.org.uk, 01295 819 685.

WRAP Material change for a better environment

Every year in the UK we throw away £12 billion worth of good food, costing the average family £50 a month. The good news is that there are some quick and easy things we can all do to reduce the amount of food we throw away. Here are a few of our favourites to make the most of your dairy products.

Dairy

Top Tips
Store your dairy products in the fridge. Keeping your fridge at a cool 1-5 degrees will keep them fresher for longer.
Keep an eye on 'use-by' dates. Milk, yoghurt, cheese and butter can all be frozen for later.
Grate hard cheeses before freezing to use straight from the freezer on pizzas, omelettes and pasta bakes.
Don't throw away slightly sour milk, it will make great scones and pancakes.

Lovely leftovers
Leftover yoghurt tastes great on cereal and added to smoothies.
Add cream that needs using up to curries, and use up crème fraîche in pasta sauces.

Did you know?
Leftover cream can be frozen, just whip it first!

For handy tips and recipes to help reduce food waste, visit lovefoodhatewaste.com

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