

Week 1: Rethink Your Purchases



March is Nutrition Month and the theme is Unlock the Potential of Food – Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow. This year we want to focus on how we can get the most out of our food while considering our environmental impact. Central Zone dietitians are encouraging Albertans to think about ways to maximize their food and minimize the waste!

Plan Your Meals

Planning meals ahead allows you to buy exactly what you need, reducing the potential for food waste. It also helps you to make healthier choices, save time, money, and trips to the grocery store.

- Plan a menu for a few days or for the week using this [Weekly Menu Planner](#) - start by planning your supper meals.
- Check your fridge and pantry for ingredients that you already have to use in recipes.
- Use up leftovers from one meal into another meal or snack. Lunches are a great way to use up food from the night before.
- Plan a meatless meal at least once per week since plant-based proteins have a lower environmental impact than animal-based proteins.
- Use your menu to make a [Healthy Grocery List](#). Add any items that you do not already have in your fridge and pantry.

Shop Smart

Try these tips from [Grocery Shopping the Healthy Way](#) to decrease waste and save money:

- Eat before you shop so that you are not tempted to buy more food than what you need.
- Stick to your list to make sure you have a plan for the items that you buy.
- Check out www.flashfood.com for deals on foods that are about to expire but are still good.
- Check the best before dates to make sure that your food will last as long as possible.
- Choose foods with less packaging such as loose vegetables and fruit rather than pre-packaged foods.
- Pick vegetables and fruit that are in season to decrease travel time and the environmental impact of shipping food.

Nutrition Month Calendar Challenges

Print out the attached March Calendar with nutrition tips and check them off as you go.

Nutrition Classes

Check out these free nutrition classes offered by local registered dietitians [here](#)

Healthy Recipes

Try a recipe in the [Nutrition Month Recipe e-book](#) from Dietitians of Canada!



More Information:

- [Tips to Spend Less Money on Food](#)
- [Label Reading the Healthy Way](#)
- [Eat More Vegetables and Fruit](#)

Week 2: Reduce Food Waste



March is Nutrition Month and the theme is Unlock the Potential of Food – Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow. About 20% of food is wasted in Canada each year. Throwing out spoiled/expired food, vegetable peels, and old leftovers are all forms of food waste. Here are some tips to reduce food waste at home.

Smart Storage

Follow these tips to store food properly to [Reduce Food Waste](#) so that it stays fresh as long as possible and is safe to eat:

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 2 hours of preparing or cooking.
- Leftovers stored in the fridge can be safely eaten within 3 days after cooking or frozen for up to 3 months.
- Label leftovers with the date and use up the oldest ones first.
- Freeze fresh bread, buns, or bagels and take them out the night before to eat the next day.
- Freeze milk, cream, yogurt, or tofu and use it in your cooking later.

Use It Up

Get the most out of your food by following these tips:

- When planning your meals for the week, check your fridge and pantry for items that you already have.
- Add extra veggies into your pasta sauce, omelet or as pizza toppings such as mushrooms, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and spinach.
- Throw your ripe or frozen fruit, such as berries, bananas, and pears, into yogurt, smoothies, muffins, or pancakes.
- Turn older pitas or tortillas into chips by throwing them in an oven heated to 400°F for 8-10 minutes until crispy. Enjoy with hummus or salsa.
- Use leftover cooked pasta, rice or barley in casserole, salad, or soup.
- Grate cheese and freeze it to use later on pizza or pasta.
- Add beans, boiled eggs, chickpeas, fish, poultry, ground meat, lentils, nuts, or seeds to a salad.

Nutrition Month Calendar Challenges

Storing Food

Check out these helpful [food safety tips](#) for storing food to make it last.

Fridge Organization

Use this [handy guide](#) to make your food last as long as possible.

Do Not Give Up on Wilted Veggies!

Try these [tips](#) to revive your wilted veggies.



More Information:

- [Food Safety Tips for Leftovers](#)
- [Eat More Vegetables and Fruit](#)
- [What's For Lunch](#)

Week 3: Reuse and Repurpose



March is Nutrition Month and the theme is Unlock the Potential of Food – Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow. This week we want to focus on using reusable containers instead of disposables and repurposing food scraps to decrease waste in the landfill.

Choose Reusable Containers

Try these tips to reduce the amount of waste you are sending to the landfill:

- Store your leftovers and lunches in glass, stainless steel, or plastic reusable containers and try reusable cloth or silicone bags instead of plastic bags.
- Use beeswax or silicone stretch lids to cover foods instead of plastic wrap.
- Save jars from foods like pasta sauce, salsa, and jam to reuse as containers to store prepared foods such as fresh carrot sticks, jarred salads, overnight oats, or homemade soups.
- Bring reusable shopping bags with you to the grocery store. Do not forget to wash these bags regularly to keep your food safe.
- Purchase a reusable water bottle that you can refill from the tap instead of purchasing single use plastic water bottles.

Repurpose Food Scraps

Instead of throwing out scraps from some common foods, give these a try:

- Vegetable peels such as carrot, potato and beets can be cooked in the oven to make chips.
- Squash seeds can be baked just like pumpkin seeds and make a delicious healthy snack or salad topping.
- Water used to boil pasta or vegetables can be used as part of sauces.
- Egg peels can be boiled and ground up into a powder for a source of calcium, which can then be added to smoothies and soups.

Other non-food uses for scraps to steer clear of the landfills:

- Coffee grounds can be used to exfoliate the skin.
- Avocado seeds or cuts of sweet potato can be placed in water to form roots and then planted in soil to grow as house plants.
- Use apple peels to degrease your pots and pans.

Nutrition Month Calendar Challenges

Reusable Containers

Switch to a reusable water bottle for convenience and reduced environmental impact.

Repurposing Food Scraps

Try making veggie chips from your vegetable peels. Just add olive oil, your favorite seasonings, and bake in the oven until crispy!



More Information:

- [Reduce Food Waste.](#)

Week 4: Regrow Your Food



March is Nutrition Month and the theme is Unlock the Potential of Food – Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow. Many vegetable and fruit scraps can be regrown to produce more. Re-growing food scraps can help reduce the amount of food waste in your home, while allowing you to enjoy these foods again and again. With some water, soil, and patience, you can turn your scraps into a mini windowsill garden, or get a jump start on your summer sprouts!

Just Add Water

Some vegetable scraps only require water to regrow. This makes green onions one of the easiest vegetables to revive. Simply cut off the root end of green onions and place in an open container with water. Beet and carrot tops can also regrow in water. Once the top is cut off the root, place it cut side down in a dish with an inch of water. Place the dish in a sunny area in your home and keep adding water as needed. Beet greens and carrot greens can be used in salads or as garnish.

Just Add Soil

Old, sprouted potatoes can be regrown to produce new, fresh potatoes! Small potatoes can be planted directly in moist soil. For larger potatoes, cut the potato in half, making sure each piece has at least two sprouts. Dry the potatoes until they feel dry to touch, then plant them in moist soil, 2-3 inches deep. You do not need to water the potatoes until they have started to sprout above the soil.

A Little Bit of Both

Other scraps do best with both water and soil. Lettuce, celery, leeks, and herbs can be regrown by placing the stem in a cup or bowl filled with 1-3 cm of water. Once the stems have started to grow roots or new leaves, they can be transferred to soil. Lettuce and celery will need to be watered daily, while leeks and herbs can be watered once to twice a week.

Nutrition Month Calendar Challenges

Regrow Your Food

Check out this [resource](#) for more information about re-growing your food scraps including garlic, ginger, and more!

Caught the Pandemic Sourdough Bread Bug?

Check out this [recipe](#) for sourdough starter discard crackers.



More Information:

Interested in growing herbs but never quite sure how to use them? Check out these ideas for paring flavors:

[Cooking Without Salt](#)

Week 5: Reconnect with the Land



March is Nutrition Month and the theme is Unlock the Potential of Food – Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow. When it comes to sustainable food systems, it is important to look at the process from seed to home. One way to decrease the environmental impact caused by transporting food and reduce food waste is by starting a garden at home.

Planting Your Own Garden

Did you know? You can start your garden in your home during winter and then transplant them when the weather is warmer. Vegetables that are best for this include broccoli, pumpkins, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. Other seeds are best planted straight into the garden such as beets, carrots, peas, and beans. Check out a full list [here](#).

If you don't have the space for a garden, find a Community Garden by contacting your local community centers, schools, or churches to find a garden close to you. To start a Community Garden in your area, check out this [resource](#).

Harvesting the Garden

The timeframe for harvesting your garden can vary depending on what you have planted and what the weather is going to be. There are [resources](#) that can help you figure out when to harvest in Alberta.

What can you do with your harvest? Here are a few ideas:

- Store your fresh vegetables and fruit in a cool dark area.
- Home can or bottle to increase the time your food can be stored. Check out the following site for [home canning safety information](#).
- Dehydrate using warm, dry, circulating air.
- Blanch first and then freeze fresh vegetables for future use.
- Share with friends and family.

Connecting with Local Farmers

Another way to help reduce your environmental impact is by supporting your local farmers. Some ways to connect with local farmers are by visiting Farmers Markets and looking for local produce at your grocery store.

Nutrition Month Calendar Challenges

Container Gardening

Wanting to start a garden but have little space to do so? Check out this [resource](#) to start your container garden.

Connecting to Local Farmers

Plan a trip to your local farmer's market. Click [here](#) for a list of farmers markets near you.



More Information:

- [Community Gardens Handbook - How to Start and Maintain a Garden](#)
- [Alberta Approved Farmers Markets](#)