



## **Ontario Home Economics Association**

**For Immediate Release**

# **Waste Less ~ Enjoy More Fresh Produce**

By Teresa Makarewicz, P.H.Ec.

It's a fact! Canadians waste food – especially fresh produce. With careful planning, and proper storage, families can save money and time and always have nutritious produce on hand for quick and healthful meals.

### **Tips to Reduce Waste, Save Money and Enjoy More Produce**

- Think ahead. Plan meals, make a grocery list and stick to it;
- Buy only what you need, and use in reasonable time. A 20 lb bag of potatoes is no bargain if it spoils;
- Before storing, remove elastic bands or twist ties to avoid bruising of produce;
- Store produce unwashed. With the exception of leafy greens, fresh fruits and veggies have a natural protective coating and should not be washed before storing which speeds up spoilage.
- Separation of fruits and vegetables is vital. As fruits ripen, they produce a colourless, odorless, tasteless gas called ethylene that triggers ripening and causes vegetables to spoil;
- Pack produce loosely in perforated plastic bags. To perforate, snip several holes in the bag with scissors;
- Check refrigerated produce regularly. Remove spoiling items. It's true! 'One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.'

### **Some Fruits and Vegetables Need Special Attention**

- Apples ripen 10 times faster at room temperature. Store in a perforated bag in the crisper.
- Avoid bitter carrots by storing them away from apples.
- Leave corn husks on and refrigerate cobs in a perforated plastic bag. Husk when ready to use.
- Store onions and potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place but not side by side. Potatoes decrease the shelf life of onions, causing them to rot prematurely. Light causes potatoes to turn green and bitter.
- Sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated as the core will harden. For longer storage, keep cool around 55° to 60°F (13° to 16°C) or at room temperature for 1 week;
- Broccoli and cauliflower can be stored whole in a perforated plastic bag or cut into florets and stored (unwashed) in a plastic bag - ready for quick use.

- Store tomatoes at room temperature away from direct sunlight. Refrigeration changes their texture and flavor.
- Cover herbs with a damp cloth or paper towel and refrigerate in a plastic bag or container. Or trim ends, place in a jar with water; cover loosely and refrigerate. Remember to change the water every couple of days.
- Can, pickle or freeze produce at its peak of freshness;
- If you do need to throw out produce - compost it back to the soil or use a green bin.

Make a nutritious pot of soup to use-up veggies and to avoid waste.

### ***Vegetable Garden Soup***



This flavourful, nutrient-packed soup served with a thick slice of whole grain bread is sure to satisfy.

8 cups (2 L) 'low-sodium' chicken or vegetable broth  
 2 large baking or yellow-fleshed potatoes, peeled and diced (about 3 cups/750 mL)  
 2 leeks, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced  
 2 cups (500 mL) thinly sliced green cabbage  
 2 cups (500 mL) small cauliflower florets  
 3 carrots, sliced  
 2 stalks celery, sliced  
 1 bay leaf  
 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) white kidney beans, drained and rinsed  
 1/3 cup (75 mL) each, chopped fresh dill and fresh parsley  
 1/4 tsp (1 mL) freshly ground pepper  
 Salt to taste

In a large pot, combine broth, potatoes and leeks. Cover and bring to boil over high heat. Add cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, celery and bay leaf. Cover and return to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer gently for 20 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp. Add beans, dill, parsley, pepper and salt to taste. Simmer, uncovered for 10 minutes or until beans are heated through. Remove bay leaf and serve. To store, let cool for 30 minutes; refrigerate, uncovered, in a shallow container until cold. Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Reheat slowly. *Makes 8 - 10 servings.*

**Helpful Hints:** Substitute kidney beans with 2 cups (500 mL) frozen lima beans. Fresh herbs are a must in this recipe and can be increased to suit your taste. No leeks? No worries. Use 1 cup (250 mL) chopped shallots or cooking onion.

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**Teresa Makarewicz, P.H.Ec.** is an Ancaster-based Professional Home Economist and owner of Foodgroups Consulting. An expert in recipe development, testing, food styling and media presentations, Teresa has focused much of her food and nutrition career teaching consumers how to use local produce. She is a member of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

**The Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA)**, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they can assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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