Seattle Public Utilities

How to buy and waste less food by planning ahead

Meal Planning & Shopping Guide

The first and most important step to reducing food waste is to buy only what you need. This starts by making a plan and sticking to it.

1. See What You Already Have

- Check your refrigerator and cupboards to see what food needs to be used up.
- Create a list of meals you can make with those foods.
- List the ingredients you still need to buy to complete your meals.

2. Create your Meal Plan

- Look at the list of meals you came up with while shopping your kitchen. Add them to your meal plan.
- Include when you plan to eat out or have leftovers. Plan around what's normal for you, and be realistic about how much time and energy you'll have to cook during the week.
- Fill in the rest of your meal plan with other meals you want to prepare.

3. Make a Shopping List

- Make a shopping list based on your meal plan. Include how much of each item you need so you don't overbuy.

4. Stick to your Shopping List

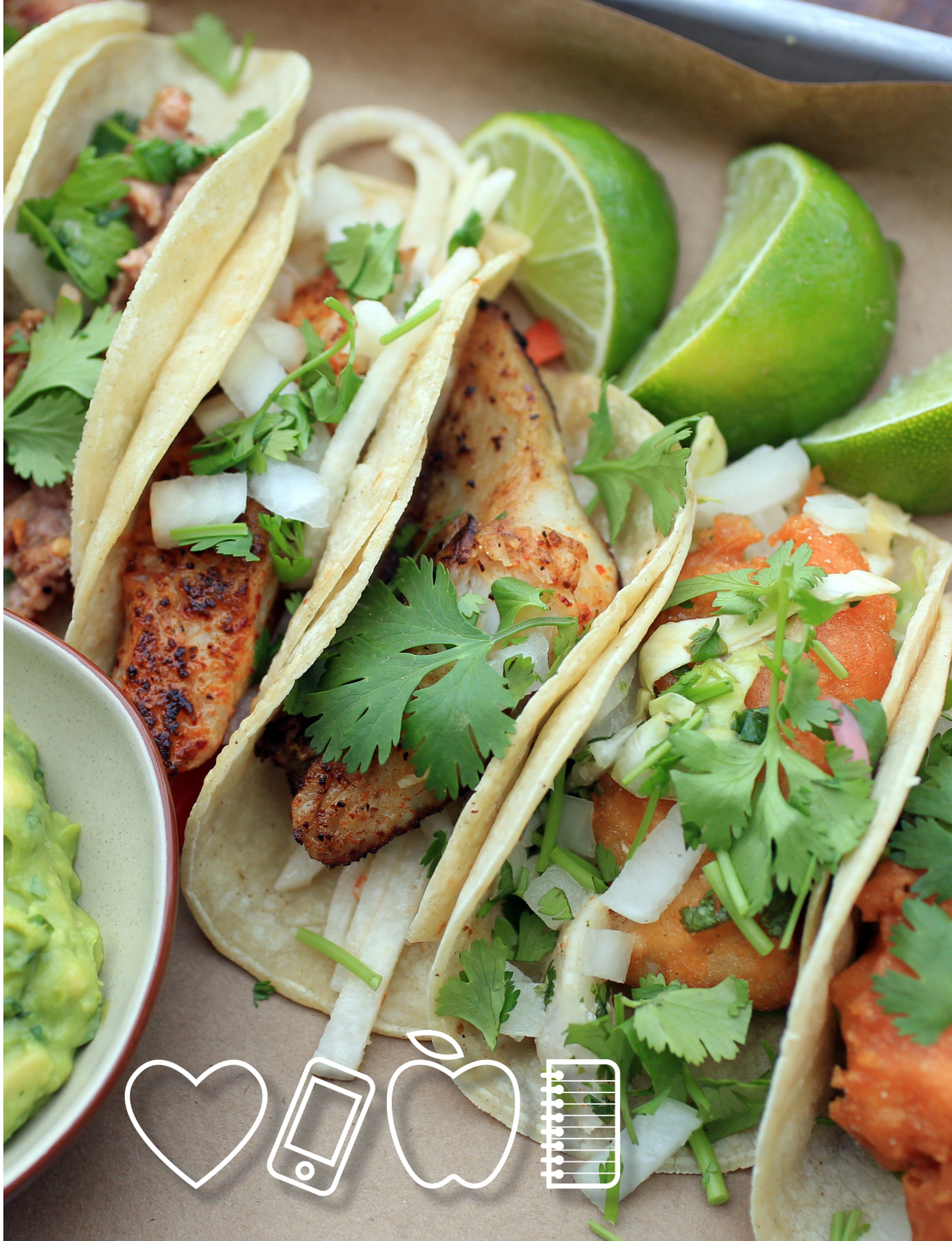
- Use a smaller shopping cart or a hand basket. Bigger carts make you want to fill them.
- Resist impulse buys and special deals that make you buy more than you need. It's not a deal if you end up wasting the food!
- Buy only the amounts you need. Shop from the bulk bins for dry goods. Choose loose fruits and vegetables if pre-packaged amounts are too big.

5. Stick to your Meal Plan

- Use up foods that go bad quickly earlier in the week. Save non-perishable and frozen foods for later.
- Prepare food ahead of time—such as cutting up celery sticks—for easy snacking during the week.
- Use batch cooking to save time and money and keep you on track with your meal plan. Cook entire meals ahead of time to store in the refrigerator or freezer for later. Or make lots of one thing—like rice or vegetables—that can be used in several different meals you've planned for the week.

Tips

- Keep a running list of meals your household enjoys. That way, you can easily choose meals to prepare and will already have some ingredients on hand.
- Plan meals that use the same ingredients. For example, you can use chicken in salad and also in fried rice. Or you can have fish and vegetables one night, and fish tacos another night.
- Try out one of the many free mobile apps that will help you plan meals and make shopping lists.



Save money
Save time
Waste less food

LOVE FOOD STOP WASTE

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For resources to help you waste less food, visit

seattle.gov/util/reducereuse