

## Appendix E – Prioritizing Food Waste

These are the most sustainable ways to prioritize and utilize food waste from human consumption all the way to composting. The top-two levels provide the best options with greatest benefits to the environment, human and animal health, and our economy. This information is based on the EPA’s The Food Recovery Hierarchy.



Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Food Recovery Hierarchy", Sustainable Management of Food, 2020

### ***Zero Food Waste***

Utilize some of the tools provided on this book to avoid food waste—shopping wisely (not overbuying perishable and short shelf-life foods), properly storing your food to maximize its usable- or shelf-life, meal planning, implementing C.O.R.N (Clean Out the Refrigerator Night) at home, upcycling food that is traditionally thrown away to create delicious and nourishing dishes. Avoiding food waste is one of the easiest ways to shrink our carbon footprint.

### ***Food is a Gift***

While millions of tons of food go are wasted in the United States, USDA estimates that about 13.7 million families, over 10% of American households, are not able to provide enough food for all the members due to lack of resources<sup>1</sup>. When we give the gift of unspoiled food, whether shared or donated, we’re sharing the love—supporting our neighbors, feeding people in need,

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<sup>1</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Rabbitt, C. Gregory, A. Singh "Household Food Security in the United States in 2019" USDA’s Economic Research Report Number 275, 2020.

supporting our communities, honoring the resources needed to grow food, and helping the environment by not sending food to landfills.

### ***Feed Pets or Animals***

With proper care and handling, food scraps may be safely given to our pets or donated to farm animals in our vicinities. As a dog owner and lover, I constantly check the resources provided by the American Kennel Club on “Human Foods Dogs Can and Can’t Eat” and enjoy giving my dog carrots, sweet potatoes, peas, and ripe bananas, among others. In order to donate food scraps to animals in our community, we should contact our local solid waste, county agricultural extension office, or public health agency for information<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Wasted Food → Biofuel***

Although this action applies more to food producers and the food service industry (restaurants, catering companies, etc.), it’s good to know that food waste may be used to create biofuel and other bio-products. Not only food scraps don’t end up in a landfill but alternative and cleaner sources of energy are created. Win-win!

### ***Composting***

After making all possible efforts to avoid and repurpose food waste, the last action that we can take to properly handle it is to turn food scraps into compost to enrich the soils in our edible gardens or for our potted plants. If limited space prevents us from composting at home, there are many ways to donate food scraps to local organizations and small farms (trust me, they needed and would love to take your ‘trash’). You may need to do a little bit of research to find the best place to drop it off or reach out to your local food composting curbside collection programs.

For more information about composting at home: <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Reduce Wasted Food by Feeding Animals”, Sustainable Management of Food, 2021.