

IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE CAKE, EAT IT



America wastes a lot of food every year – 133 billion pounds in 2010, to be exact, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It's a ridiculous amount, but between my own wasteful food habits and my years in the food service industry, I'm not surprised. If other Americans are even remotely like me, no wonder that waste pile is so high (sorry, Earth).

I'll admit it: I'm an awful cook. Whether it's Murphy's Law, bad luck, or – let's be honest – zero instincts in the kitchen, my experiments always go awry. These fiascos usually end up splattering the inside of my garbage can. Worse yet, I'm prone to sudden, wild health kicks and often overstock my refrigerator with vegetables and other things I hate. Inevitably, the impulse ebbs and I tip cans of soggy greens into my dumpster. The good news? I never toss Oreos. I am a responsible Oreo-eater.

Sure. Judge me. But I didn't waste 133 billion pounds of food on my own, people. In all fairness, however, neither did you. I've spent a decade working for The Man in restaurants (probably because of some atrocious sin I committed in a past life), and I know how many dumpsters of mistaken orders and day-old food are out there. I've filled some of them myself – as if wearing a hat wasn't bad enough.

More than 96% of wasted food ends up in landfills, where it breaks down to the greenhouse gas methane and contributes to climate change, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. And – just to make sure we feel thoroughly horrible about ourselves – here's a basic hunger statistic: One in seven Americans suffered from food insecurity in 2012, according to the USDA.

Not only is 133 billion pounds of food waste absurd in face of global warming and hunger, but the total value of wasted food is a whopping \$161.6 billion. That's a lot of greenbacks we could all use back in our checking accounts. Developing restaurant waste-reduction practices and personal responsible food-buying and cooking skills will not only keep food out of the landfills but keep us from throwing our cash away with our dinners. **\$**

“...THE TOTAL VALUE OF WASTED FOOD IS A WHOPPING **\$161.6 BILLION.**”



A lightning strike in 1996 caused an enormous trash slide in Rumpke Sanitary Landfill of Ohio, which exposed 15 acres of trash and took months to cover with new waste. *forbes.com*



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