

Waste not, want not

With just a little thought, we can make full use of all the food we buy and do our bit to keep the family and the environment healthy, writes **Zoe Skewes**

THERE'S an air of military precision about Jane Kennedy's kitchen. Though it looks normal enough

with stacks of school newsletters on the bench and a pile of toys in the corner, Jane has something extraordinary going on behind the scenes.

Each week, when the cookbook author and mother of five returns from her fruit and veg market, she launches Operation No Food Waste.

Fresh herbs and vegies are stored in the fridge before Jane records each on her kitchen blackboard with the date of purchase.

Fruit is arranged in bowls within easy reach of her young brood and carrots, cucumbers and celery are cut into bite-sized strips and placed in airtight containers in the fridge.

The final step in Jane's mission is divvying up perishable products, such as barbecue chickens, into dishes to ensure each part is used.

This no-nonsense approach to food is borne from Jane's preference to encourage her family to choose healthy food options, a need to keep her family food budget in check and also from her personal resolution to waste as little as possible. "My mantra is 'hidden food is wasted food'," Jane says.

"If you've got something lurking in the back of your crisper and you can't see it, you'll never see it and you just won't remember it's there."

Some of Jane's favourite quick family meals come from a barbecue chicken, which she turns into such dishes as soup, Vietnamese chicken salad, casseroles and stock, which she

then freezes. Jane's system is nothing more than commonsense, but it's nowhere near common enough.

New figures have lifted the lid on modern waste habits to reveal every NSW household bins more than \$1000 of food each year.

This alarming statistic, released by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change in its Love Food, Hate Waste campaign, refers to edible food.

That means, despite our virtuous intentions to turn last night's beef stew into tomorrow night's shepherd's pie, the reality is we won't.

We'll throw it out on bin night with that half-used bunch of parsley and the opened packet of grated mozzarella that was never allowed to realise its full pizza potential.

While updated figures for other Australian states and territories still are being quantified, the Australian Institute conservatively estimates that as a nation we waste more than \$5 billion worth of edible food each year, equating to more than three million tonnes and a staggering 136kg per person.

As someone who secretly hopes for leftover lamb roast in anticipation of souvlaki for dinner the following night, such recklessness is hard to comprehend.

Don't people use Tupperware? Don't they realise curry actually tastes better the next day?

Food Wise founder, Jon Dee, says not. The current NSW Australian of the Year thanks to his campaigning against food waste, says a combination of shopping without a prepared list, bad food storage and lack of initiative to use leftovers are all to blame for our collective food wastage.

The most common

TIPS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

- ★ Write a shopping list that takes into account what you already have in your fridge, freezer and pantry, so you avoid buying something that you already have.
- ★ Keep in mind perishable food on special may have a reduced shelf life.
- ★ As soon as you get home from the supermarket, read the storage instructions on packaged foods. Then, if necessary, refrigerate them to avoid reducing storage life.
- ★ Avoid overbuying. Remember, refrigerated foods are perishable and only have a limited shelf life.
- ★ Keep an eye on your fruit bowl, as off fruit will accelerate the deterioration of the other fruit in the bowl. Separate fruit that is very ripe from the rest.
- ★ Before you go on holiday, don't throw out your vegies and perishable foods. Turn them into pasta sauces, curries, bakes and other meals that you can freeze.
- ★ You can make croutons from stale bread. Just cut into pieces and place in the oven to dry roast.

Source: Food Wise

food waste victim, he says, is bread. "Bread is the perfect example of food that is thrown away simply because it's bought when it isn't needed," Jon says.

What disturbs Jon even more than the amount of edible food wasted across the country, is what happens to it once it leaves the fridge or pantry.

Food Wise says when food waste rots in landfill it produces methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than the carbon pollution that comes from a car's exhaust.

"When we throw away food, we also waste all of the resources, fuel and energy that were used to get that food from the paddock to our plate," Jon says.

"For example, it takes 50,000 litres of water to produce 1kg of beef. So if you throw out some beef, you're literally throwing out tens of thousands of litres of water at the same time. If you buy oranges out of season, chances are they've come from California. If you throw one of those out, you're also throwing



Cookbook author and mother-of-five Jane Kennedy. Picture: Ben Swinnerton

out a lot of food miles."

Though the situation seems dire, Jon says all is not lost. The first step in rectifying the problem is increasing awareness, the second is finding workable solutions.

As with Jane, *Notebook* magazine's food editor, Sarah Hobbs, is a freezer fan. Sarah uses it to store leftover bread, stock, grated cheese, soups and casseroles.

"I also keep nuts in small

ziplock bags in the freezer," Sarah says. "They have a lot of oil and go rancid quickly so keeping them in the freezer helps extend their life."

And, if all else fails, make a frittata. "A bit of leftover cheese and eggs is all you need to make a frittata," Jane says.

"And while you're at it, add some of that asparagus or zucchini in your crispier."

"Frittata is your leftover friend."

FACTS ABOUT FOOD WASTE

- ★ Australian households throw out more than \$5 billion of food each year. This is more than Australians spend on digital equipment and more than it costs to run the Australian Army.
- ★ Most Australians don't consider food waste to be a problem in their household.
- ★ The most commonly thrown out food is fruit and vegetables, followed by uneaten takeaway food, meat and fish.
- ★ About half of all municipal waste is comprised of organic material, most of which is household waste.
- ★ The decomposition of organic waste is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions from landfill.

Source: The Australia Institute

Great balls of leftovers

EVERY Italian worth their salt knows one of the best things about risotto is the leftovers.

That's because simply by adding some cheese, rolling small balls of the risotto in breadcrumbs and frying, an entirely new dish is created.

Arancini, which literally means fried risotto balls, is just as impressive for dinner as what the risotto was the night before. But smaller versions of the same dish also work perfectly as an appetiser, which is how chefs Matt Hunter and Kris Bailey serve them at their just-opened Pizza Religion in Hawthorn.

"We reckon they are the greatest little things," Matt says.

"They are incredibly simple to make but when they are done right they are fabulous."

"We obviously make the risotto specifically for the arancini, but for home cooks they are the perfect way to make use of the leftover risotto from last night's dinner."

Matt and Kris flavour their risotto for the arancini with pumpkin, sage and goat's cheese, but say the dish works just as well with any flavour of risotto.

"If you haven't made risotto before it can seem complicated, but it's really nothing more than five minutes of chopping and about half an hour of stirring," Matt says.

"And one of the great things about risotto is it tastes great with a whole range of flavour combinations, including whatever vegetables you have left over in your fridge."

So, next time you feel like risotto for dinner, plan to serve Matt and Kris's arancini the following night. Here's their recipe:

- Zoe Skewes



Arancini experts: Matt Hunter and Kris Bailey. Picture: Ben Swinnerton

PIZZA RELIGION'S PUMPKIN, SAGE AND GOAT'S CHEESE ARANCINI

- RISOTTO**
- 2.5l vegetable stock
 - 25ml olive oil
 - 1 onion, diced
 - 1kg arborio rice
 - 250ml white wine
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 1/2 bunch sage, chopped
 - 300g cherve (fresh goat's cheese)
 - 200g parmesan, grated
 - 1.2kg butternut pumpkin, diced and roasted
 - Crumbing mix
 - 500g flour
 - 3 eggs, lightly beaten
 - 300ml milk
 - 1 packet Panko Breadcrumbs (can get from local Asian grocer)

cooking for a further minute (until dry). Then add bay leaves and slowly ladle a third of the vegetable stock while continually stirring. Once mixture is dry add another third and repeat until the rice is al dente (firm to bite). Add sage, cherve, parmesan and pumpkin. Season to taste. Let the mixture rest overnight (or until cold). Roll mixture into approximately 50g balls.

For the crumb, get three separate bowls. First bowl should contain the flour, second bowl contains the egg and milk mixture, and the third bowl the breadcrumbs. Take each 50g ball and first coat in flour, dip in egg and milk mixture and coat with breadcrumbs. Repeat until all arancini are coated.

For cooking ideally use a deep fryer - cook for approximately five minutes (until golden brown). Alternatively shallow fry in hot oil until golden brown and finish off in moderate heat oven for 10 minutes.



Heat vegetable stock until simmering. Separately, in a medium hot pot with olive oil, saute onions until clear. Then add rice. Stir rice through onions then de-glaze with the white wine -



"Writing a shopping list is one of the best things that a person can do and it's guaranteed to save you money, because when you write it you're looking at your pantry and into your fridge and assessing what food you've already got. Then you can visit a website that lets you search for recipes by ingredients and you can plan some meals around the food you already have."

- Food Wise founder Jon Dee

RSPCA APPROVED PORK, SAUSAGES, HAM AND BACON

OTWAY PORK. BRED FREE RANGE.

Pure Pork. Pure Taste.

- ✓ Naturally tender and tasty
- ✓ No additives or preservatives
- ✓ No added growth hormones
- ✓ RSPCA Approved Farming
- ✓ Heart Tick Approved on Selected Cuts

FREECALL 1800 664 166
www.otwaypork.com.au

Available at selected supermarkets, gourmet delis and accredited butchers. Check the website for details and ask for Otway Pork by name.