
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

How much food do you waste?

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Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English– the show that brings you an interesting topic, authentic listening practice and six new items of vocabulary. I'm Dan...

Neil

And I'm Neil. In this episode we'll be discussing food waste, just as soon as....

Dan

Neil, did you just throw the rest of that apple away?

Neil

Yeah. It was quite a big one and I couldn't finish it.

Dan

Neil, you know you shouldn't **waste** food.

Neil

Waste meaning to throw away without consuming or using. Ah, it's only an apple. It's not the end of the world, Dan.

Dan

Well, that's where you could be wrong, my friend. Let me prove it to you, with this week's question. How much of the world's food is wasted each year?

- a) a half
- b) a third
- c) a quarter

Neil

I'm not sure. I know it's a lot so I'm going to say a) a half

Dan

We'll find out if you're right or not at the end of this show. So, the actual figure is 1.3 billion tons of food, which is enough to feed a billion hungry people. Where do you think all this food waste comes from?

Neil

Well, restaurants, I imagine. I mean, they can't give one customer's **leftovers** to another! That would be unhygienic!

Dan

Leftovers are the remains of food which has not been eaten. And while you are right, restaurants are not the main contributor to food waste.

Neil

Supermarkets! I bet they throw out loads of food once it goes past its sell-by-date, or the date which it can be legally sold by.

Dan

Think closer to home.

Neil

It's us, isn't it?

Dan

Yes. In Europe an incredible 53% of food waste comes from households, which results in 88 million tonnes of food waste a year. And I bet you can't guess what we do with it?

Neil

I want to say recycle, but I can see from your face, Dan, that it's not.

Dan

No. Unfortunately it goes into landfills and decays.

Neil

A **landfill** is a place where rubbish is buried. I see, so the food rots and this causes greenhouse gasses which lead to global warming and climate change.

Dan

Exactly, and the end of the world. But, remarkably the European country of Denmark has managed to reduce its food waste by a very significant 25%

Neil

That's impressive, how did that happen?

Dan

They attribute it to a woman called Selina Juul.

Neil

I've heard about her. She became a **household name** in Denmark overnight!

Dan

A household name is one which everybody knows, and that's right.

Neil

I thought she was Russian?

Dan

She is. But, I'll let her explain.

INSERT

Selina Juul

I come from a country where there were food shortages, back then in Moscow, communism collapsed, we had the collapse of **infrastructure**, we were not sure we could get food on the table. And coming to Denmark, seeing this **abundance**, seeing these supermarkets filled with food. But then I was really shocked to see a lot of food getting wasted.

Neil

So Selina grew up in Moscow at a time when there wasn't enough food because of the collapse of **infrastructure**, meaning the basic systems and services of a society – such as food transportation.

Dan

Then when she moved to Denmark, she found an **abundance**, or more than enough, food, but she saw it being wasted.

Neil

So she decided to do something about it?

Dan

Yes. She started a Facebook page in 2008 called 'stop wasting food' and 9 years later the Danish government credits her for their reduction in food waste.

Neil

How did she do it?

Dan

Well, lots of ideas really. She convinced some supermarkets to stop selling their items in

bulk so that people buy only what they need. She's produced a **leftovers** cookbook and she's working with three governments to set up an education programme in schools.

Neil

Wow, she's a busy woman. So how about you educate me with the answer to this week's question.

Dan

Sure! I asked you how much of the world's food is wasted each year?

a) a half

b) a third

c) a quarter

Neil

And I said a) a half

Dan

And I'm terribly sorry, mate, but you're wrong. The answer is b) a third.

Neil

Well, it's not as bad as I thought it was, at least.

Dan

Shall we look at the vocabulary then?

Neil

Yes, let's. First we had **waste**. If you **waste** something, you throw it away or lose it without using it or consuming it. Common things we **waste** are food, time, money and energy. We also have some expressions with **waste** too. Can you think of one, Dan?

Dan

A **waste of space** is an expression which means a thing is completely without value. For example, I'm a complete waste of space in the kitchen. I can't cook at all. Next we had **leftovers**. **Leftovers** are the remains of food or a meal, which have not been eaten. What do you tend to do with your **leftovers**, Neil?

Neil

Oh I love **leftovers**! Sometimes I think they taste even better than the original meal!

Dan

I agree! Pizza's a great example!

Neil

Then we had **landfill**. A **landfill** is a place where rubbish is dropped and buried. In colloquial English we might say, a **dump**. Do you ever take your rubbish to the **dump**, Dan?

Dan

Not if I can help it. I prefer to recycle as much as possible. I only go to the **dump** if I have to get rid of a large appliance, such as a fridge. Then we had **a household name**. To be **a household name** is to be well-known by ordinary people of a particular place or culture. Can you think of a person who is **a household name** at the moment, Neil?

Neil

Oh, that's very easy. Donald Trump springs to mind! Everyone must know who he is. Then we had **infrastructure**. **Infrastructure** is the basic systems and services of a society – such as electricity supply, trains, and roads.

Dan

And finally we had **abundance**. If you have an **abundance** of something, you have more than you need. Do have anything in **abundance**, Neil?

Neil

Well, when it comes to my children I have to have an **abundance** of patience....well, most of the time. And, that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Please join us again soon!

Dan

And we are on social media too - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. See you there.

Both

Bye!