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BEE WILSON is **THE KITCHEN THINKER**

Readers digest

'You have touched my rawest of nerves,' writes 'a keen reader.' 'Seeing food wasted is anathema to me,' writes another *Stella* reader. 'I get cross with myself,' writes a third, 'if I have to throw away so much as a mouldy orange!'

When I asked you back in January for your thoughts on how to avoid wasting food, I had no idea how passionate your responses would be. Several people told me that they felt they could write a whole book on the subject. One did just that. Pamela Le Bailly from Bodmin in Cornwall felt so 'appalled' at the amount of food being wasted in her village alone that she produced *Second Time Around*, a collection of leftovers recipes ranging from salmon and leek pasties to honey slices made with gathered-up cake crumbs. Another reader, Mrs Cole, recommends *Left Over for Tomorrow*, by Marika Hanbury-Tenison, a Penguin paperback from the 1970s that is surely due a reprint, judging from the prices that second-hand copies are fetching on abebooks.co.uk (£30 isn't unusual).

Some of you wrote about how your horror of waste was shaped by rationing. Mrs Pamela Taylor remembers the first time she saw people deliberately wasting food, at a Forces party in the 1960s. An officer explained that 'the young ones came from poor homes and it was the greatest luxury for them to take as much

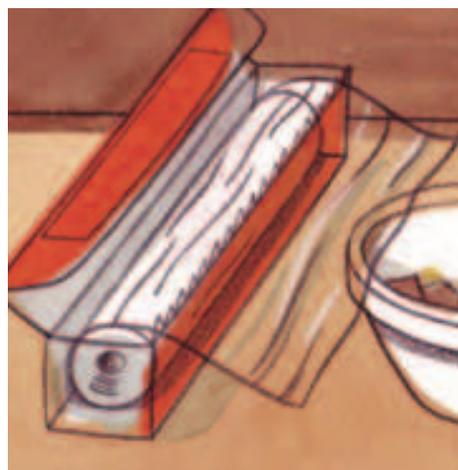
as they liked and leave as much as they liked. Now affluent society seems to throw away food as of right.'

Hearteningly, however, many letters came from younger readers, who are every bit as conscientious about food waste as the older generation. Margaret Priestley, a reader with her own seasonal food blog (thehomelyyear.blog.co.uk), notices 'a sea change in shopping' with more people supporting local shops and using up everything they buy. Thrift is fashionable again. Katie from London always weighs pasta and rice. 'I find that if you do it by eye, you always do far too much.' 125g per head of pasta is enough, 'even when greedy boys are present'. Alex Pocknell, a mother from Guildford,

'Thursday pie' combines 'all the leftovers one puts in the fridge to use later'

makes strategic use of her organic veg box, cooking delicious family soups and stretching meat across several meals. Leftover beef stew becomes beef cobbler. Gammon from yesterday's joint is transformed into fritters for tea.

You all agreed that the key to wasting less food lies in shopping carefully and thinking ahead. Maureen Sleeman is a teacher who transferred her skills in planning lessons to planning meals.



'Result - I hardly ever throw food away!' Anna Goldstraw recommends regular 'trawling' of the fridge to make sure you're not duplicating ingredients.

Another theme was how it pays to be inventive. S McArthur suggests using up the end of a cucumber in a risotto. Jane Lockyer says she once made some quince jelly that wouldn't set but was wonderful mixed into roasted vegetables along with a little mustard. Marie Eastham describes a 'Thursday pie' made by a friend, combining 'all the leftovers one puts in the fridge to use later'.

Your letters gave a sense of the sheer pleasure of leftovers. Mrs M Hemsworth sometimes makes a dish of what's left of the chicken in a well-seasoned white sauce, served on toast and topped with a poached egg. After Christmas, Judith Baran from Leeds makes soup from turkey with pulses and whatever vegetables are around. 'It seems to be greeted with more joy than the "bird".' ●